



Czech Anglers Union
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On 23–24 February 2012 the Czech Anglers Union held an international conference under the auspices of MEP Pavel Poc on the subject of the great cormorant and its impact on fish life in fishing grounds.

The event was attended by 135 anglers from the Czech Anglers Union and the Czech Republic Anglers Association, politicians from the European Parliament and both houses of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture and the Environment, regional authorities, nature and countryside protection bodies (Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, Protected Landscape Areas), scientists and researchers, as well as the media.

The proceedings and results of the conference and an overall assessment of the great cormorant problem with respect to fishing were used as a basis by the Czech Anglers Union in producing this

MEMORANDUM

The Czech Anglers Union hereby asserts:

1. The migrant population of Great Cormorants [*Phalacrocorax carbo*] indisputably represents a more than a serious threat to fishing in the Czech Republic.
2. The great cormorant at present enjoys unjustified protection. There is well-founded doubt as to whether the cormorant is a native species in our country.
3. The numbers of overwintering great cormorants do not correspond to an appropriate biological balance. Data on the numbers of cormorants in the Czech Republic vary.
4. The latest official data from the Czech Statistics Office note 43 000 specimens, the ornithologists talk about numbers of up to 15 000, and anglers estimate the number of cormorants at over 20 000. The numbers differ, but the trend is the same: an increase in Great Cormorants.
5. Damage to fish in fish rearing ponds and fishing grounds due to Great Cormorants is disproportionately large (approximately CZK 150 million a year); this is unacceptable to anglers in the long run and for some species of fish, almost irreparable.
6. One protected animal is destroying another protected animal. The cormorant is harming the population of protected fish species in the Czech Republic (ide [*Leuciscus idus*], burbot [*Lota lota*]) and also fish species enjoying protection under European regulations (asp [*Aspius aspius*] and European eel [*Anguilla anguilla*]).
7. In some watercourses, non-native cormorants are totally devastating the population of our native fish species.
8. The state only compensates for damage caused by cormorants to fish in fish rearing ponds. It refuses to compensate for damage to fish in fishing grounds, stating that such fish are nobody's property [*res nullius*] until they are caught. Users of fishing grounds are therefore in a completely unequal position and are discriminated against with

respect to compensation for such damage. This stance, which contravenes Section 2(d) of Act No 115/2004 Coll., is wrong and is no longer sustainable.

9. The brunt of the damage to fish in fishing grounds is being borne by members of anglers unions, who are paying for it through the cost of their fishing permits. Anglers, citizens of the Czech Republic, are standing in for the state. The state is protecting an over-abundant animal but refusing to contribute to alleviation of the damage which the protected animal is demonstrably causing, even though there is a legal claim for compensation for such damage.
10. The regulatory mechanisms to reduce the numbers of cormorants to an acceptable level have failed. Exemptions made for hunting the cormorant are mostly just local and come with conditions which greatly degrade their effectiveness. Obtaining exemptions is associated with excessively complex and time-consuming paperwork. The costs of the regulatory measures are met by the anglers themselves, who pay the huntsmen.
11. Anglers do not wish to exterminate the cormorant completely. They are only asking to reduce the numbers to an acceptable level to guarantee the sustainability of the fishing communities in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Anglers Union requests that:

1. The problem of the cormorant must be quickly examined by political and state authorities in order to adopt a set of effective legislative, methodological and practical measures to relax the protection granted to the Great Cormorant and to regulate the numbers of the migrant population in the Czech Republic. One option is to adopt a ‘Cormorant Act’ – i.e. amend several legal regulations at the same time.
2. The Ministry of the Environment should no longer issue the existing instructions for the granting of exemptions for rousing and shooting the great cormorant but, by agreement with all interested parties, the instructions should be revised so that non-bureaucratic and comprehensive exemptions can be granted for the entire territory of the Czech Republic, without any excessively restrictive conditions.
3. Section 2 of Act No 115/2000 Coll. on compensation for damage caused to fish in fishing grounds by selected, especially protected, animals should be quickly amended — in the event of damage caused to fish in fishing grounds, the condition that this must involve damage to a person’s property should be removed. This would supplement the meaning of Section 2(d) of this Act, i.e. provide for compensation for damage to fish in fishing grounds too.
4. It should be determined what number of Great Cormorants is acceptable for the Czech Republic with respect to the sustainable development of fishing, and effective steps should be taken without delay to achieve the target situation.
5. National legislation should be amended so that, in the period before the acceptable number of great cormorants is achieved, hunting should be allowed, with a contribution from the state (from resources earmarked for environmental matters) towards the costs associated with regulation of this species (total estimated costs of CZK 5-8 million; for comparison, the compensation paid by the state for damage caused to fish by cormorants is about CZK 20 million per year);
6. At the same time, the ability to provide the existing state compensation for damage caused by the Great Cormorant to fish in fish rearing ponds and fishing grounds

pursuant to Act No 115/2000 Coll. should be retained until such time as the ideal numbers determined for this species are achieved.

7. The Ministry of the Environment, through EU bodies and in cooperation with representatives of the European Parliament, should take steps to classify the Great Cormorant as a game species under the terms of the European legislation and create a pan-European plan to manage the population of this species.
8. Under the terms of the existing European legislation concerning non-native invasive species, the Great Cormorant should be classified as a non-native invasive species requiring regulation in order to protect the biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems.

Motto: The objective of the Czech Anglers Union is not to destroy the great cormorant as a species, but simply to regulate the currently excessive migrant population at an acceptable level.

Prague, 8 March 2012

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