



Founded in 1993, the Cormorant Research Group (CRG) is a specialist group from IUCN and Wetlands International. Its main aim is to provide a platform for people interested in cormorants and shags. We facilitate the exchange of information on both ecology and biology of the different species of cormorants worldwide and on the relationship between cormorants and human interests.

Some cormorant and shag species are vulnerable because of specialized feeding habits or changing conditions due to fish abundance, climate change or predators and need special attention and protection, a big contrast to the discussion about damage to fish stocks and other human interests which prevails in Europe, North America / Canada and Japan. Therefore we welcome you to join the group and bring in news about cormorants, shags and darters. Besides Europe we would like to extend our network into Australasia, Africa and the Americas. For news items to be included in the newsletter please [contact us](#). The newsletter is supposed to appear four times per year.

Visit our [official website](#)

N°1 / July 2013

From our Chairman



Communication is vital in the world of people and birds. Knowing where to be, who to meet where and what to eat are some of the key questions that are every day's practice for a colonial bird like the cormorant. But also for those interested in news about this exciting group of animals it is necessary to use an active network. We hope that this newsletter provides you with the information you need and will be of use of disseminating results, announcing meetings or the like. Enjoy reading!

Mennobart van Eerden, Chair

Foreseen: Ardea special issue

The issue 83(1) of [Ardea](#), published in 1995, has been a landmark in cormorant studies. Of course, a lot of progress has been made since then, new knowledge has been accumulating. The CRG is thus negotiating with the journal's editors to produce a new special issue of Ardea, scheduled late 2014/early 2015.

If you wish to express your interest for a contribution in this peer-reviewed journal, please contact [Mennobart van Eerden \(freebirders@kpnmail.nl\)](mailto:freebirders@kpnmail.nl)

Souvenirs from Medemblik 2011: 8th International Conference on Cormorants



This meeting, also the 5th Meeting of IUCN-Wetlands International Cormorant Research Group, was successfully convened in Medemblik, on the shore of Lake IJsselmeer, The Netherlands from 24 to 27 November 2011.

More than 50 people from 22 countries attended the meeting. Details from this conference (and the past meetings) are [available on our webpage](#).

Next International Conference on Cormorants: April 2014



The 9th International Conference on Cormorants (and the 5th IUCN – Wetlands International Cormorant Research Group meeting) will be organized in [Kopački Rit](#) (Croatia), a fantastic place near the confluence of Drava and Danube sometimes called the “European Amazonia”. Don’t miss this excellent opportunity to meet and share the latest research about cormorants and shags around the world.

The theme of this conference will be “Cormorants on the move: update on cormorant migrations”, but communications about other topics are more than welcome. The meeting will be held mid April 2014: more details will be provided in the next issue of this Newsletter... so watch this space

The CORMAN project

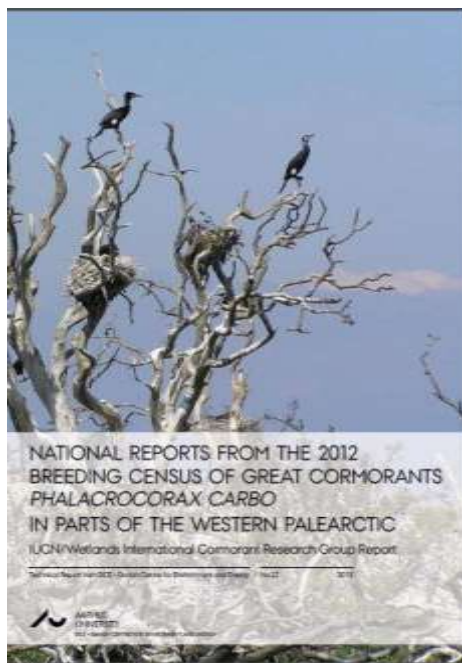
The CORMAN project ('Sustainable Management of Cormorant Populations') is now in its final year. The main goals have been (1) to collaborate with the CRG in order to assess the number and distribution of Cormorants in Europe during breeding and wintertime, and (2) to create the EU Cormorant Platform in order to disseminate information. The project has also engaged with key European stakeholder groups and formed a Stakeholders Liaison Group to support information exchange and discuss relevant issues. The project is carried out on behalf of DG Environment under the European Commission.

The platform is supposed to operate as an aid in dissemination of information about cormorants, cormorant numbers, cormorant-fish-fisheries conflicts and management. A new update of the EU Cormorant Platform was launched in the beginning of July 2013. It included results from the 2012 count of breeding colonies and a description of the situation with cormorants in Japan. Further updates will be launched during the coming autumn and winter. You can ask to receive an e-mail whenever an update has been launched by clicking at the bottom of the page:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/cormorants/home_en.htm

News from the Pan-European Great Cormorant counts 2012-2013

The project 'Cormorant counts in the Western Palearctic' is successful thanks to the large number of people who have dedicated a huge number of hours in counting cormorant nests in colonies and counting birds coming to their night roost in mid-winter. The national coordinators have worked hard to collate all the information. The CRG wants to express its greatest thanks to all contributors for their highly motivated collaboration.



The count of breeding colonies of Great Cormorants of the subspecies *P. c. sinensis* in the Western Palearctic has been carried out in most countries in 2012. An almost complete coverage has now been achieved. The two largest colonies were found in Kaliningrad and Ukraine with 9,000 and 18,000 nests, respectively (pers. comm. by G. Grishanov & V. Kostushyn and co-workers). The first results of these counts have now been published in a report from the Cormorant Research Group together with the European Commission project 'CorMan'. This first report is a collection of national reports from 23 of the 31 countries that participated in the breeding count. Each of the national presentations includes descriptions of the total size of the breeding population and presents information about numbers, sizes and distribution of 755 breeding colonies. Information is also given about the extent of human intervention in the breeding colonies. The report (25 Mb pdf file) can be downloaded from this site:

<http://dce2.au.dk/pub/TR22.pdf>

A second report with complete results from the breeding count is planned to be published before the end of 2013. It will include additional national reports and a description of the overall results and trends in numbers and distribution based on a comparison with the previous Pan-European count of breeding colonies that took place in 2006.

The count of wintering cormorants was conducted successfully in a large number of countries in January 2013. Unfortunately, it was difficult to ensure complete coverage in some of the most northern countries and some of the countries in North Africa. The compilation of data from the winter counts has started and will continue during the coming autumn.

More information about the counts project can be found at <http://www.cormocount.eu/>

Late spring affects breeding success of Great Cormorant in The Netherlands

In relation to the milder winters and earlier start of spring Great Cormorants have advanced start of breeding in the IJsselmeer area, The Netherlands with at least five weeks over the last twenty years (Stef van Rijn & Mennobart van Eerden). In 2013 some colonies started egg laying as early as 5 January (Vooroever near Medemblik). Following a cold spell which lasted from 11-27 January all these early starters gave up during the egg phase. Milder weather in February again tempted a renewed start of breeding in this colony. Of this small group of second clutches, many resulted in fledged young early April having overcome two more cold spells with freezing temperatures at night between 9-15 and 20-31 March. The majority of birds starting mid March and again in April faced strong winds and had difficulties in food provisioning. Breeding success in IJsselmeer was extremely low this year, with an all time low of <0.2 fledged young per nest in the old Oostvaardersplassen colony.



Great Cormorant, early breeders at Vooroever colony, IJsselmeer near Medemblik, The Netherlands at the start of the first cold spell, 15 January 2013 / Photo: Mennobart van Eerden

Danube delta census on Cormorants 2013 shows large shifts

Counting Cormorants at a continental scale is no easy enterprise. Especially large and remote areas need a lot of effort and good knowledge about the local situation to provide reliable results. This spring in May 2013 the Danube Delta was censused by a team from the Danube Delta National Institute for Research and Development. According to Dr Botond Kiss and co-workers the preliminary results show a strong shift of colonies from the interior part of the delta towards the sea. Great Cormorants have decreased in number at many places, but not Pygmy Cormorants. This might relate to the recent changes recorded in fish abundance in the delta. We look forward getting the full story!



Investigators checking Cormorant colonies in flooded willow forest, Danube Delta, May 2013 / Photo: Mennobart van Eerden

Update on colour-ring projects

In Europe, since the early eighties, studies about cormorants, especially Great Cormorant, have greatly benefitted by the development of colour-ringing. Recently there has been a decline of ringing effort in countries like Denmark and The Netherlands, while several other countries are starting new schemes. Ensuring that the entire work is internationally coordinated (i.e. no double codes...) has been since the start of the group one of the tasks of the Cormorant Research Group. You can find a list of all programs using different colour-ring types [on our official website](#). If you are running a scheme yourself, or plan to start, please have a look and see if the webpage needs an update. In that case, contact [Stefano Volponi](#).

Recent literature on cormorant

A recent study from the British Trust for Ornithology examined, on a local scale, the effect of shooting on the number of cormorants. These results provide no evidence that Cormorant removal at local scales is having an effect on a longer term (i.e. year-to-year) population size at a site level.

To read more about this study, [click here](#)

Good to know! The EU Cormorant Platform has a bibliography in which you can search for cormorant literature:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/cormorants/bibliography-and-links.htm>

We would like to improve this bibliography as well as [our database on the CRG website](#). Please send any relevant paper on cormorants, shags and darters to [Stefano Volponi](#).



Great Cormorant male in full breeding plumage, Oostvaardersplassen NL, 10 February 2013 / Photo Mennobart van Eerden

This Newsletter is yours! Please [contact us](#) to subscribe or for any suggestion or to bring a topic to the wider community of Cormorant researchers ...

At the moment we are updating our mailing list and would like to ask for your help building up our new address database. Please forward this Newsletter to colleagues and friends who might be interested in reading news about Cormorants! Thank you for contributing to our researcher's network.

