

If this project is approved, all Maritimers will be affected. In the past, similar developments have proceeded too fast and without proper environmental impact studies. I feel it is important that we become informed and be prepared to make a decision in favor or against such a project. What we don't know can sometimes hurt us very much.

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SUMMER STORM IN A CORMORANT COLONY

Have you ever stopped to think what happens to wild birds and mammals during high winds and rain storms, while you are sitting home, warm and dry? Such a day occurred on June 12, 1976, on Prince Edward Island. I would like to relate some consequences of this storm at the Cape Tryon Cormorant colony which I observed while conducting research on these birds.

Cormorants nest in colonies on inaccessible cliff ledges on Prince Edward Island. The colony at Cape Tryon is the largest on the Island with approximately 500 nests built during 1976. Approximately 375 of these nests were built by Double-crested Cormorants (Phalacrocorax auritus) and 125 built by Great Cormorants (Phalacrocorax carbo). The colony is crowded and competition is intense among the birds for suitable nesting ledges. Early arriving birds in March and April claim the most desirable ledges for nesting while late comers must utilize ledges which are marginally suitable. Wide ledges are most preferred because they offer secure support for the nest and there is less chance that young birds will fall off. High ledges are better than low ledges as there is less chance of losing the nest in rough weather. However, birds nesting on very high ledges close to the cliff top may lose eggs or young to marauding foxes, as was observed several times this past summer.

On June 12, 1976, the wind was from the north at 30 knots, gusting to 45 and accompanied by heavy rains. That day along the north shore the gulf was a sea of foam rolling in great swells on to the beach. Waves breaking against the nesting cliffs sent up sheets of spray well over 100 feet. The cormorants probably sensed the oncoming storm and braced themselves to withstand the onslaught. Adults which remained on their nests, covered their eggs and young as best they could. Extremely large waves were capable of sweeping entire nests off the low and more vulnerable ledges.

The following day, June 13, I recorded the losses. Forty-five Double-crested cormorant nests built among the fallen rocks at the west base of the colony were destroyed. This area is especially vulnerable to rough weather. In 1975 all nests built here suffered a similar fate although in 1974 most of these nests were successful. The majority of nests built on ledges less than 30 feet above the water were also swept away. However, 3 Double-crested cormorant nests built at 20-30 feet above water on ledges in a small cave were still intact, the crashing waves obviously missing them. Birds nesting on ledges higher than 30 feet were largely unaffected although in several instances, young birds apparently fell from these ledges as well. On June 13, birds which suffered no losses were carrying on their parental duties as usual, while birds which lost their nests stood on vacant ledges, some already showing interest in trying to nest again.

One rather unusual consequence of the storm involved lost chicks on a ledge approximately 40 feet above the cliff base. This ledge held six nests - three Great Cormorants and three Double-crested Cormorants. During the course of the storm, three young Great Cormorants (approximately three weeks old) from a central nest on this ledge somehow managed to make their way past two adjacent Double-