

Topic 2

The Great Cormorant

Keywords: The Great Cormorant, Lake Biwa, Damage

1. About the Great Cormorant

The Great Cormorant, which belongs to the Phalacrocoracidae family, is distributed widely in parts of the world such as Asia and Europe. It is also found in coastal and freshwater areas throughout Japan.

The Great Cormorant is a piscivorous bird and consumes about 330 g of fish per day in captivity. Some Great Cormorants are known to consume as much as 400 – 620 g a day. These birds are said to feed within about 10 - 20 km from their nests.

2. The Habitat of The Great Cormorant in Shiga Prefecture

The Great Cormorant inhabits Shiga generally from February to October, and its breeding season is from March to August.

The population drastically declined nationwide from the 1960s to the 1970s due to environmental degradation, and, as a result, cormorants became a rare sight in Shiga Prefecture. Subsequently, numbers grew rapidly from the 1990s, reaching 75,000 in the autumn in 2008.

3. Damage caused by the Great Cormorant and Countermeasures

The high density of cormorants is causing serious damages to fisheries of Lake Biwa and rivers. In addition, the large colonies of cormorants inhabiting areas such as Chikubushima Island and Isaki Peninsula cause damage to forests by breaking branches to build nests or by their droppings.

To prevent such damage caused by cormorants, the following measures have been taken in river areas: installation of anti-bird netting, fireworks and noisy cannons to prevent birds from catching fish or drive them away. Furthermore, in large colonies, the number of cormorants is controlled by culling to reduce numbers to a level where peaceful coexistence with the local population is possible. Consequently, the population of the cormorant in Shiga Prefecture decreased to 9,400 in the spring of 2013, resulting in recovery of the vegetation on Chikubushima Island.

(Forest Policy Division,
Shiga Prefectural Government)



Fig. T2-1 The Great Cormorant