



## **Virtual Fisheries Forum 17/11/2021 – Managing Cormorant Predation**

### **Q&A Session with Richard Bamforth & Jake Davoile**

#### **Q. What laser for scaring away Cormorants was recommended?**

A. (Richard Bamforth) [Portek laser strike](#) is a reliable and legal model that is commercially available. [Agrilaser](#) is another model that has been successful when used. There are potential legal implications if purchasing a laser online from an un-regulated supplier such as eBay items shipped from overseas. The legal power limit for handheld lasers in the UK is 5-milliwatt which both the Portek and Agrilaser models comply . Obviously there are other reputable brands available.

#### **Q. Will a cheap laser from eBay not be sufficient?**

A. (Jake Davoile) Cheaper eBay options will work for some applications but be wary of the 5-milliwatt legal power limit. Look for one which comes with a lawful power output certificate.

#### **Q. How do you tell the difference between pike damage to fish and cormorant etc?**

A. (Jake Davoile) Pike you can typically see the teeth damage/marks whereas Cormorant's damage is in the form of strike wounds on both flanks and slices where the fish has been grabbed by the bird's bill. The best way is if you send us a photo to have a look!.

A. (Richard Bamforth) Indeed, email me or Jake a photo and we will get back to you.



E,g. Cormorant



**Q. Thanks for the presentation Jake, very interesting. Is it the bird muck that causes the tree bleaching?**

**A. (Jake Davoile) Yes, it is.**

**Q. Are starter pistols legal to buy?**

A. (Richard Bamforth) Any reputable UK based supplier will sell you a legal model, which is compliant with the current Home Office Regulations. A few models off the top of my head are an [Olympic .22](#), [Bruni P4](#), and [ROHM](#) blank starter pistols. They are legal to have in your possession if you have a good reason which for purpose of bird repelling is a qualifying criterion. Some waters on public ground like park lakes or protected sites like SSSI's will be more problematic using this method as opposed to private fisheries so be cautious and ensure you have the appropriate permissions in place., whether that be from the landowner, Natural England etc. You do not need a specific gun license for using starter pistols, but depending on the location consider discussing the matter with your local police force in the first instance, to avoid any misconceptions of your activities.

**Nice to see there are lots of options, we adopted a number on advice from Richard and last two years our visits from the cormorants have been negligible.**

A. (Richard Bamforth) Glad to hear the measures are working!

**Q. How long does a lethal licence from Natural England take and what is expected to get an approval?**

A. (Jake Davoile) This can vary really. I would strongly recommend you contact us for guidance on filling in the application before submitting anything as we know what can potentially be a reason for difficulties/delays in obtaining a license. As a minimum it is expected you have already undertaken an extended period of shooting to scare which has been unsuccessful.

A. (Richard Bamforth) Natural England have suffered staffing cuts like many Government bodies and as such their turnaround time for reviewing these applications can be 30-60 days.

**Q. If a club manages to get a licence to shoot (with evidence of predation) how many cormorants can a club shoot?**

A. (Jake Davoile) 3 birds is a typical quota for the licensing period, but then some licences are for double figures. Its all depends on the level of evidence provided to substantiate an increase in your quota (and the local cormorant population).

**Q. Are agricultural gas-powered bird scarers effective as a shoot to scare method?**

A. (Richard Bamforth) Yes, but the birds will become habituated to them in time. Some sites will have issues due to the noise irritation factor so are not suited to them, e.g. proximity to residential properties, bridleways, equine establishments etc

**Q. Really good presentation, do you know if and when more funding will be available for small clubs to combat predation?**

A. (Richard Bamforth) All I can say with regard to the Angling Improvement Fund (AIF) is the funding round is currently closed, but we are hopeful another round will be announced in the New Year (2022). Please contact the FMA's and the AIF team for further details. .

**Q. Hi Jake. Great presentation. Thanks for your help given to our club in Norfolk. We have implemented most of your suggestions but find the most effective are the flags strung across the lake BUT we have had to move them so close together that fishing is disrupted. If we were to lift them higher, what do you consider the maximum practical height they should be?**

A. (Jake Davoile) I would ask what height are they currently. Also, I would want to get down there and see how the birds fly into the site.

A. (Alex Clegg) He has come back and said they are 2ft off the water.

A. (Jake Davoile) I will arrange a call with you and discuss this matter after the meeting.

**We have a park lake which is council owned. We use balloons and burst them as a scaring tactic.**

A. (Alex Clegg) Yep that is certainly a cheap option which is worth experimenting with.

**Q. Is the nesting site the same as the feeding site? and if not, what area do they cover for feeding?**

A. (Jake Davoile) Yes Cormorants will feed in/around their nesting sites but they will also extend further away depending on food availability. Cormorants have been known to fly 25km to feed on a daily basis.

**Q. Will the Angling Trust be doing more zoom seminars on other topics?**

A. (Alex Clegg) Absolutely, all the upcoming events are listed on the [REGIONAL FORUMS PAGE](#) of our website.

**Thanks for the reply, it definitely looks like the laser option is best for our situation.**

**Q. Cormorants are a problem on our water on the South Tyne, but Goosanders are probably more destructive during low water periods such as last summer. Does this advice also apply to Goosander licence applications?**

A. (Richard Bamforth) To obtain Goosander licences, more information is required by Natural England than is the case for Cormorants. This is to meet the licencing criteria.

**Q. How much can a cormorant eat per bird per day? Is it true its 6lb per day?**

A. (Jake Davoile) The consensus currently is that Cormorants consume around 1-2lbs of fish per day on average, but they will take more if feeding offspring. Whilst it is not uncommon to witness cormorants consuming large fish, the gut analysis research undertaken by CEFAS

found that on average a cormorants daily food intake is 1.1 - 1.2 lb per day.

**Q. Is any survey or research being done to look at the damage cormorants are doing to our other birds such as kingfishers?**

A. (Jake Davoile) I have seen first-hand how more native water birds like Kingfishers, Grebes and Herons can be pushed out by numbers of Cormorants descending upon a waterway however I am not aware of any published research into the matter.

**Q. Going back many years - possibly as far back as the late 90's Sky had a program about the effects of cormorants. Sir David Attenborough narrated. He highlighted the damage they cause and stated they should be controlled. Are you aware of this film and if you can get hold of it surely such an influential naturalist calling for lethal control would help us?**

A. (Jake Davoile) I have not come across this video myself, but I'd be interested to see it. I shall try find the footage.

**Q. Do cormorants spread disease?**

A. (Jake Davoile) To my knowledge the disease transfer risk of Cormorants is no more than other common water birds.

**Q. Regarding the refuges, what is the recommend sizes and how far would you space them?**

A. (Jake Davoile) The bigger the better really and try to proportionally distribute the refuges around the venue depending on the fishery size or even place them at vulnerable areas where you see the birds hunting the most.

**Q. Once shot at, do you think Cormorants communicate this to the other birds and they all stay away for a while?**

A. (Jake Davoile) I think they become more wary and learn by association rather than communication that the area they were shot at is not safe.

**Q. What is your view on fisheries removing cover/trees/'snags' etc to make fishing easier, and then complaining about predation in a winter when angler numbers drop? I appreciate that not all snags are made equal!**

A. (Richard Bamforth) There is a happy medium to be found. Natural and artificially created cover is beneficial for predation resistance but obviously can inhibit angling access/netting, or fish safety with lost fish breaking angler's lines etc. Some specimen fisheries are not overly concerned about small silverfish and juvenile (nuisance) fish being taken by Cormorants. It is very situationally dependant.

**Q. This year we had cormorants taking ducklings. How unusual is this? We also have few silverfish left anymore.**

A. (Jake Davoile) I have heard about it but never come across it. If you could send me some evidence, I would be very interested to see it.

**Q. Do cormorants effect the activity of large or specimen fish? Great presentation also!**

A. (Jake Davoile) They do predate on longer bodied fish like Pike but generally large Carp, Bream and Tench are not predated on. They will be stressed by the Cormorants hunting.

**Q. Do you think the growth rates of fish which are too large to be eaten by the Cormorants but are in constant state of stress from being chased around can be affected?**

A. (Jake Davoile) Fish are very stressed by Cormorant predation and often adopt very odd habits not feeding plus migrating into parts of a fishery they wouldn't normally be in mass such as shallow areas in winter.

**Q. What is the best deterrent to keep Cormorants off lakes?**

A. (Jake Davoile) Shooting to scare and then if that is not having an effect shooting to kill but really a combination of non-lethal scaring measures is very effective.

**Q. Would a goshawk keep cormorants away?**

A. (Jake Davoile) A license from Natural England is required but it can be done.

A. (Richard Bamforth) The license is required as an insurance policy for if the goshawk actually captures a protected bird and kills it. Falconers are often reluctant to intentionally fly their birds over water.

**Q. Evening, what can we do to protect our fisheries if they are park lands owned by the council? We have both cormorants and goosanders on lakes and rivers?**

A. Again, this a very difficult situation to cover, because you will undoubtedly be restricted by the council. It's about opening discussions with the council to discuss what options they are open to. You are not alone! Even if the cormorant was put onto the General licence, I doubt any local authority would authorise lethal control.

If you contact me directly tomorrow, I'll discuss further and arrange a visit, free of charge. Regards

Richard Bamforth

**One of the things to think about with floating refuges, if the water is prone to flooding the refuges can move or even be swept away by flood water. One of our fisheries had a number of platforms installed a number of years ago (think by the EA) that were swept away or pushed onto the bank despite being anchored down. Just something to consider if looking at this route**

A. Hence on open expanses of water, it's better to have them around the margins. Floating refuges and their construction often raise concerns from utility companies and C&RT having artificial structures in their waters.

**Q. Do you find most cormorant damage on larger fish down the back end towards the tail?**

A. Ideally send a photo across and I will have a look.

**Q. Does bird flu effect Cormorants?**

A. Its known that swans, ducks, geese suffer along with chickens/pheasants etc. Not heard of cormorants being picked up though!

**Q. We are next to the river Ouse, we have tried mannequins and we are using ropes at the moment, we do have a licence to shoot 3 this year, it use to be 5 but it got dropped because we are next to the Earith reserve in Cambridgeshire.**

A. Please contact Jake directly to discuss further as that is within his area!

**Q. Is there such a thing as a Cormorant proof size fish? as we seen a carp around 8lb damaged by cormorants sadly?**

A. Sadly, I have to agree. The bigger the fish the less likely they are to actually take them, but you do find an increase on damage. But the cormorant would prefer to expend its energy on actually catching fish, then struggling on bigger ones. Again, we can discuss when we meet.

**Q. Hello there, will the slides be available as a download to pass on to my membership?**

A. Yes, the video recording of the presentation will be made available on the Angling Trust website soon after this event.

**Q. What period of the year are they usually with us?**

A. We have a resident population both inland and coastal, but then we suffer from migratory birds moving down from Scotland and across from Europe, hence the peak in the winter months and hence the licensing period.

### Key contacts from this forum meeting:

- Jake Davoile (Angling Trust Fisheries Management Advisor)  
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- Alex Clegg (Angling Trust National Angler Engagement Manager)  
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