

# PREDATION: BIRDS

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**ANGLING TRUST**  
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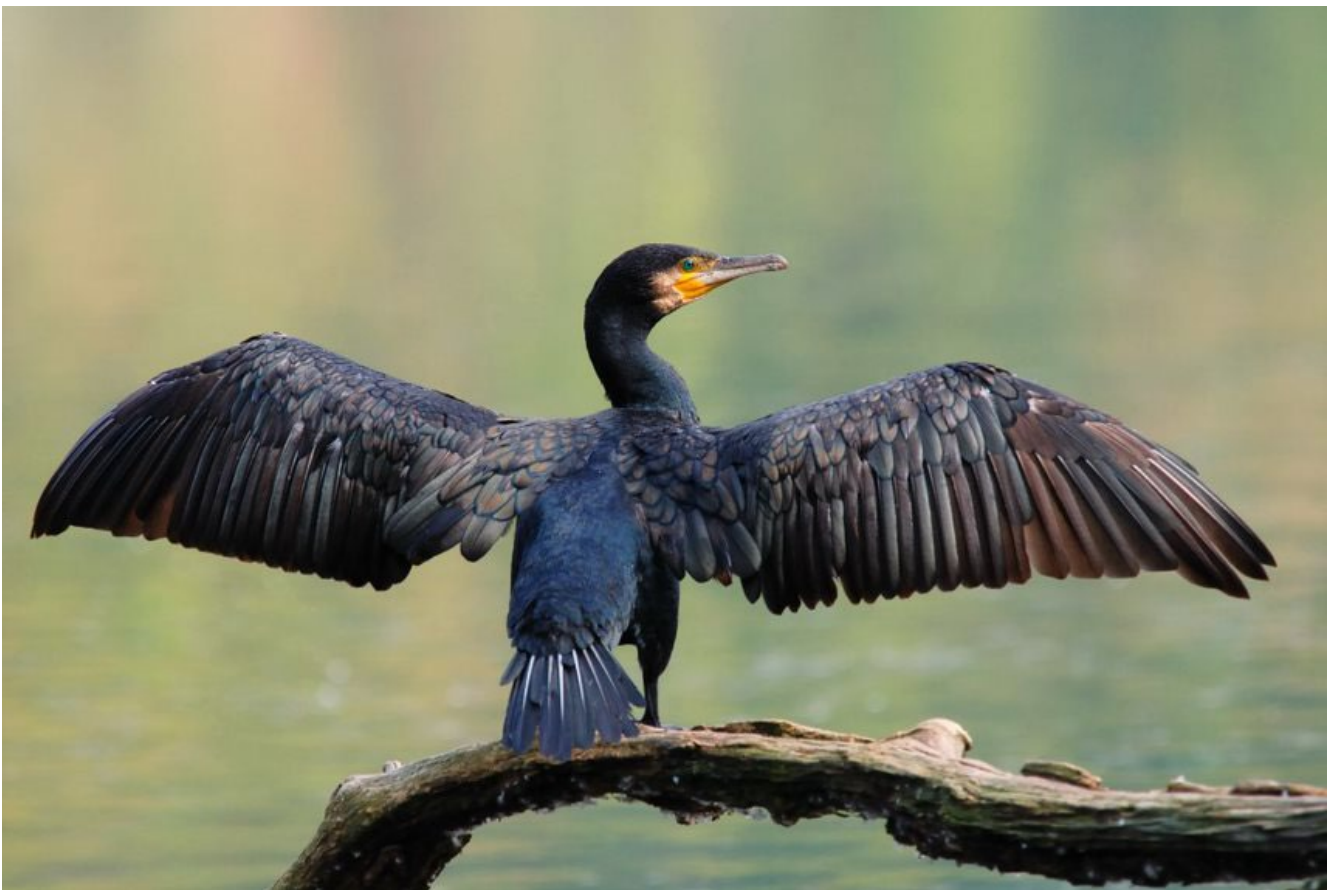


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## Background

Whilst predation is part and parcel of the natural world there is no doubt that any imbalance between predator and prey can have a serious long-term effect on fish stocks. Particularly when those stocks are already under severe pressure from other factors including pollution, over-abstraction of water and loss of habitat. The three most damaging predators impacting our freshwater fish populations are cormorants, signal crayfish and otters.

Here we look at the impact of fish-eating birds.



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## Why it matters

The cormorant is an apex predator, unmatched in nature, and is unquestionably one of the biggest threats to the health of our inland fish populations, with there being hardly a country in the world that accepts it as an acceptable coexistent without robust management.

**Cormorant numbers in the UK have increased from 2,000 in the 1980s to a current over-wintering population of more than 62,000, and with each bird requiring at least one pound of fish every day, the level of conflict is immense.**

This burgeoning population, now over-wintering here in the UK, is mainly made up of the European sub-species *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*, which prefer living and hunting inland in the freshwater of our rivers, streams and lakes.

Goosander numbers have also been increasing in recent years. Initially in Scotland, these birds are now regularly seen across the north of England, in Wales, and the west of England around the Wye and the Severn.

With the range of pressures on our freshwater fisheries, this explosion in birds is having a demonstrable impact on many rivers and fish.

## What is the Angling Trust doing?

Since its conception in 2009, the Angling Trust has been campaigning to make it easier for fishery managers to protect their precious fish stocks from cormorant and goosander predation and for greater control of these extremely damaging fish-eating predators. We continue to believe that the best outcome would be for cormorants to be included on the general licence as long as the conservation status of the birds is not threatened.

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However, despite strong representations made during the last review of the General Licence in 2019/20 we have not been able to persuade ministers to adopt this approach, which is why we are pressing for the best possible outcomes within the licensing framework.

Pressure from angling organisations and angling-related businesses initially saw a previous government introduce a limit on the number of cormorants licensed to be shot to 2,000, with a temporary increase to 3,000. Since then, the work of the Angling Trust has led to fishery managers applying for a greater number of cormorant licenses, and the introduction of area-based licenses.

**The Trust's two fishery management advisers are available to support clubs in managing fish predation from both cormorants and goosanders and to apply for the necessary licenses from Natural England.**

## How can you help?

By joining the Angling Trust, you will be supporting our work including providing advice on the management of fish-eating birds and for us to campaign for more effective policies and controls on the impact these birds have on fish stocks.

# Thank You!

TO ALL OUR TRADE  
ASSOCIATE PARTNERS  
FOR SUPPORTING THE  
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IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE ANGLING TRADE AND WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR WORK, FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED BY EMAILING [JOHN.CHEYNE@ANGLINGTRUST.NET](mailto:JOHN.CHEYNE@ANGLINGTRUST.NET)



## ANGLING TRUST

We are a not-for-profit organisation representing anglers, fighting for fish, fishing and the environment. We are recognised by the Government as the National Governing Body for angling in England and partner with Visit Wales and Natural Resources Wales to promote Fishing in Wales. We are a member-based organisation made up of anglers of all disciplines providing a united front to represent, grow and protect our sport. By becoming a member of the Angling Trust you are helping to protect the waterways you fish in and the fish which live within them, ensuring their health and protection for future generations.

[Click here for more information about how to join the Angling Trust](#)

Angling Trust Limited is a company limited by guarantee, company number 05320350.

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