

CORMORANT ADVISORY GROUP MEETING #5
Wednesday February 4, 2009
6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Mennonite New Life Centre, 1774 Queen St. East, Toronto

FINAL MEETING NOTES AND ADDENDUM

Present:

Ralph Toningner, TRCA
Karen McDonald, TRCA
Gord MacPherson, TRCA
Andrea Luger, TRCA
Suzanne Barrett, Barrett Consulting
Gail Fraser, York University
Ainslie Willock, Canadians for Snow Geese*
Julie Woodyer, Zoocheck Canada*
Leslie Coates, City of Toronto
Janette Harvey, City of Toronto
Paul Scott, Aquatic Park Sailing Club
John Almond, MNR
Patrick Hubert, MNR
(* denotes member of Cormorant Defenders International)

These notes reflect the general nature of the meeting discussion. If there are errors or omissions, please contact A. Luger at aluger@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600 ext. 5762.

Comments contained herein reflect the opinion of the individual and do not necessarily reflect the position of the organization they represent.

1. Welcome

S. Barrett welcomed the Advisory Group members and everyone introduced themselves. S. Barrett then presented the evening's agenda.

2. Review of Draft Meeting #4 Notes

S. Barrett asked the Advisory Group if there were any errors or omissions in the Draft Meeting Notes from Meeting #4. No edits were suggested therefore the notes will be posted to the cormorant webpage on TRCA's website.

3. Review of Additional 2008 Data

R. Toningner began his presentation by reviewing the goals and objectives of the Cormorant Strategic Approach, which continues to apply and guide the process. Data from 2008 presented at meeting #4 were then reviewed in more detail. In 2008 DCCO numbers on Peninsula C reached a new peak of 4906 nests. The population

growth on Peninsula C has increased at a much faster rate than for Peninsulas A or B, and has been much higher than the rate observed for the rest of the Great Lakes basin. BCNH populations have fluctuated over the years, but dropped significantly in 2008 with nest numbers dropping below 600 for the first time since 1994. The observed decline appears to be equal on Peninsulas B and C.

Nest count and tree health data from the last 10 years were mapped to illustrate the expansion of the DCCO colony; the shift in BCNH nesting locations; and the decline of tree health in the preferred DCCO nesting locations. In 2002 DCCO nested in trees on Peninsula C that had been historically nested in by BCNH; in 2006 DCCO continued to expand on Peninsula C causing BCNH to move further down the Peninsula; in 2008 DCCO continued to expand into the BCNH colony.

To date approximately 4,000 trees have been nested in by DCCO and BCNH at TTP. G. Fraser asked if the data has been looked at in terms of percent occupation on each Peninsula. R. Toningier replied that he estimates 85% of the trees within the colony on Peninsula C have been nested in and 100% of trees on Peninsulas A and B. Detailed calculations tracking population density and changes in tree health can be achieved using GIS software. G. Fraser asked if there are DBH (diameter at breast height) data. R. Toningier replied that these data were collected more frequently at the beginning of the monitoring program when the colony was small but has since been only sporadically collected. Unfortunately all of the control trees on Peninsulas A, B and C have been nested in since DBH monitoring started, however, there are trees in other areas of the park that are of the same species and similar age class to the colony trees that could be used for comparison.

Tree health is monitored annually using a rating system developed in partnership with the University of Toronto. Rating level 1 is awarded to trees that are healthy and exhibit no signs of impact [90% canopy intact]; level 2 is for trees that have experienced a mild impact [60-90% canopy intact]; level 3 is for trees that have experienced a moderate impact and have mild epicormic branching [40-60% canopy intact]; level 4 is for trees that have severe impact with substantial epicormic branching [10-40% canopy intact]; and level 5 trees are dead standing or severely damaged with severe epicormic branching [<10% canopy intact]. As illustrated on the map, trees ranked 1 and 2 are green dots, representing healthy trees; trees ranked 3 are yellowish dots, representing trees whose fate could go either way; and trees ranked 4 and 5 are black dots, representing severely damaged and dead trees. Using this system forest decline and loss have been documented on all three peninsulas. Peninsula C has had a far more rapid decline in tree health since DCCO colonization in 2002 than Peninsulas A or B.

J. Woodyer asked why a decline in tree health at the base of Peninsula B has not been observed and if it could be related to a difference in tree species. R. Toningier replied that the majority of nest trees on the Peninsulas are Eastern cottonwood and the health rankings can likely be attributed to the fact that these were historically BCNH nest trees that typically do not decline in health as rapidly as DCCO nest trees and have been only recently colonized by DCCO.

Typically DCCO prefer to nest in trees on the perimeter of the Peninsulas near water and move into the interior as the perimeter trees die and fall down. However, this was

not the case on Peninsula C. DCCO first nested on Peninsula C near the center and were concentrated in the area where BCNH nest. They have since radiated outward to the Peninsula's perimeter. G. Fraser wondered if the trees along the edge are dying as a result of DCCO activities or if wind stress and other natural factors could be more important contributors. She mentioned that the likelihood of survival is reduced along the edges and observed that the decline in tree health on Peninsula C does not match the pattern of colonization. K. McDonald agreed that perimeter trees are subject to more extreme weather that is likely a contributing factor in their decline. In addition some of these trees have been lost due to beaver activity and this is noted during the tree health survey. Data also show that tree health is better when the tree is occupied by BCNH. P. Scott and G. Fraser discussed tree mortality as a factor of the edge effect compared to DCCO presence and the effect of seasons on tree health. R. Toninger indicated that this question was to be addressed by E. Davis for his PhD thesis, but he has decided to change his research focus. Previous undergraduate thesis work has indicated that tree health is a function of a number of factors. G. Fraser suggested that tree health data from Peninsula D could be used as a control. G. MacPherson replied that tree species could be a contributing factor [Eastern cottonwood are shallow rooted, relatively short-lived trees] and suggested that only a small percentage of factors other than DCCO pressures contribute to the rapid decline in tree health that has been observed.

J. Woodyer commented that the Peninsulas appear to be getting smaller as seen in the air photography through the years. R. Toninger reminded the group that erosion was one of the concerns presented at the first Advisory Group meeting. He replied that the form of the Peninsulas is indeed changing due to erosion in some locations and deposition in other locations. For example the tip of Peninsula B has eroded away, but has formed a natural spit on the east side of the Peninsula. Methods to reduce and prevent further erosion are currently being examined.

4. Proposed Strategic Approach for 2009

The proposed 2009 Strategic Approach (Table 1) builds upon the 2008 Strategic Approach with the addition of pre-nesting deterrents on Peninsulas B and C. Since the goal of the Cormorant Management Strategy is to achieve a balance between the DCCO colonies and the rest of the park ecosystem, several management zones have been identified. Peninsula A and the tip of Peninsula B are classified as DCCO conservation zones, Peninsula C is a buffer zone and Peninsula D is the area that DCCO are being discouraged from occupying.

Table 1. Proposed 2009 Strategic Approach

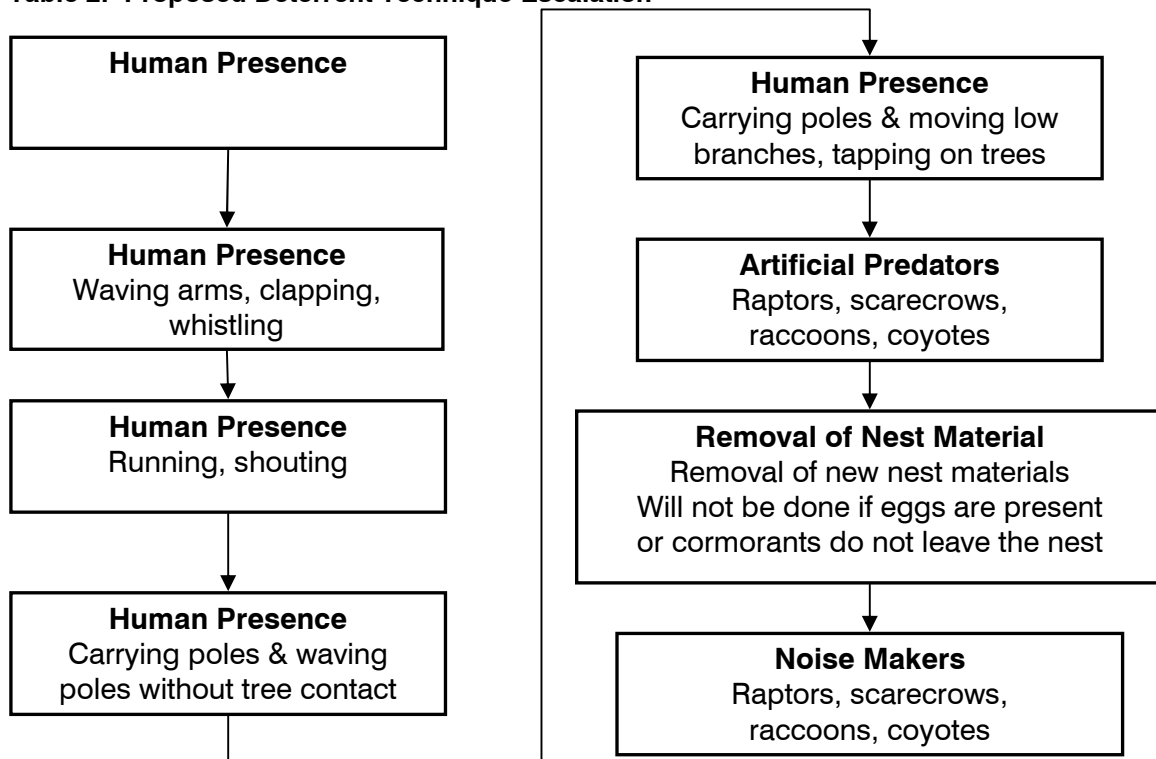
	Peninsula A	Peninsula B	Peninsula C	Peninsula D
Pre-Nesting Deterrents		*	*	*
Post-Breeding Deterrents			*	*

Enhanced Ground Nesting	*	*		
Restoration	*	*	*	*
Experimental Egg Oiling (follow-up on nest attendance)		*		

Pre-nesting deterrents will be again used on Peninsula D, as well as at the bases of Peninsulas B and C to discourage DCCO from expanding. Pre-nesting deterrents will also be used at the tip of Peninsula C to protect non-nest trees around the wetlands. Deterrent techniques will be discontinued if it is noted that disturbance to non-target species is occurring (i.e., BCNH). Deterrence will also not occur after eggs have been laid. A scale of deterrent escalation is presented in Table 2. Experience from 2008 post-breeding deterrents showed that human presence on Peninsula D was sufficient to deter DCCO roosting.

Post-breeding deterrents will be used on Peninsulas C and D to discourage roosting DCCOs. The objective of preventing roosting on Peninsula C is to slow the decline in tree health and to interrupt prospecting birds for future nest sites. Deterrent techniques will escalate as needed (Table 2). Deterrent techniques will be discontinued if it is noted that disturbance to non-target species is occurring.

Table 2. Proposed Deterrent Technique Escalation



Ground nesting habitat will be enhanced on Peninsulas A and B. Several techniques will be used including placement of artificial structures (tires, stakes), as well as natural structures (fallen logs). Fallen nests collected from Peninsula B and C will be placed along the structures and additional nest material (fallen branches, straw) will be placed in and near the ground nesting area. Pre-nesting deterrents used on Peninsulas B and C will assist in making the ground nesting area look even more attractive. Decoys will be used in the enhancement areas. G. Fraser will be conducting a study to examine social attraction techniques for DCCOs and will be using some of the decoys in her study area. This study design is based in part on DCCO research from the Columbia River Estuary, Oregon.

Restoration will occur in several areas in and around colony locations in spring 2009. The former nesting area of DCCOs on Peninsula A, where no trees are left, will be planted with native trees and shrubs to improve overall wildlife habitat and provide future colonial waterbird habitat. The backshore area of Peninsula B will be planted with native shrubs to improve BCNH habitat. The areas just outside the active colony on Peninsulas A and B will be enhanced with native tree and shrubs to provide a more physical barrier to active colony locations and enhance the shrub layer for BCNH habitat.

The experimental egg oiling study carried out by York University in 2008 will not be repeated, but follow-up observations of nest attendance and DCCO behaviour will occur in the spring.

4. Discussion

G. Fraser asked why, in terms of management and tree health, would dying trees at the tip of Peninsula C be targeted as an area to deter DCCO. K. McDonald replied that while the dead and dying trees will be lost, if DCCO do not nest in the area it will provide an opportunity to restore the site. G. Fraser then commented that it is important to know the cause of tree mortality as it is pointless to restore trees that will ultimately die. R. Toningler clarified that the tip of Peninsula C has a healthy stand of trees that DCCO have just recently started to colonize and many trees that are not currently occupied.

G. Fraser commented that specific criteria for measuring BCNH disturbance should be created. It is important to measure the amount of disturbance experienced by BCNH as DCCO are flushed from trees, circle around the colony and land on BCNH trees. K. McDonald agreed that observers are needed for this purpose. R. Toningler said that there are protocols from the work carried out at other locations that could be referred to. It is important to be familiar with the colonies ahead of time, and based on past observations, TRCA is familiar with traditional DCCO loafing areas. G. Fraser said that staff should be trained ahead of time to be capable of properly identifying disturbed BCNH. J. Woodyer commented that when people are doing the deterrent work they are not in a position to fully observe and track DCCO as they fly out over the water and around the colony. R. Toningler replied that observers would be set up in locations where they could clearly track DCCO as they flush.

G. Fraser asked what would be classified as a disturbance and asked how it will be assessed whether a DCCO is moving into a BCNH tree after being flushed. R. Toningner replied that the behaviour of BCNH has already changed in response to DCCO pushing further into the Peninsulas. G. Fraser then clarified that she does not want to see BCNH pushed out of the colonies by deterrence activities and to assure this a threshold of disturbance must be pre-determined. R. Toningner agreed and indicated that it is not TRCA's intention to negatively impact BCNH nesting and disturbance criteria will be established.

G. Fraser commented that if DCCO are being flushed from trees to encourage ground nesting, ground nests need to be available for them or else they will have nowhere left to nest. R. Toningner responded that the ground nest enhancement area is considerable in size and should be able to support DCCO that relocate there from trees. He said that it is interesting to look at density values that G. Coady mentioned in previous meetings. DCCO tree nesting density is approximately 0.1 nests per square meter, while DCCO ground nesting density is approximately 2.5 nests per square meter. This means that more DCCO could be sustained using ground nesting compared to tree nesting. The intent is not to shift all the DCCO from Peninsula C to Peninsula A or to attract birds from other nesting location in the Great Lakes basin. G. MacPherson commented that if the ground nesting enhancements work they could take the pressure off the trees on the other Peninsulas.

R. Toningner said that BCNH tendency is not to rebuild nests once their first attempt is unsuccessful, where DCCO will continue to rebuild nests and/or move from tree to tree. J. Woodyer asked if spring arrival dates of the colonial species are known. R. Toningner presented the data in Table 3 and mentioned that DCCO now arrive earlier and stay later in the season than compared to the early 1990s.

Table 3. 2008 Arrival Dates for RBGU, DCCO and BCNH

Species	Date	Location	Comments
RBGU	March 4	Pen A	Sitting and calling loudly on breeding site despite the heavy snow and ice cover
RBGU	March 6	Pen A & B	Thousands observed
RBGU	April 3	Pen A & B, Endikement	Sitting and calling loudly on breeding site
DCCO	April 3	Pen B & C	Approximately 100 on Pen B; 0 on Pen A; 65 on the shoreline of Embayment B, and 120 at Pen B nest sites plus more nervously flying over Pen C
BCNH	April 18	Pen C	Approximately 110 at or near nests on Pen C

J. Woodyer asked how to avoid BCNH deterrence while employing DCCO deterrent techniques. R. Toningier replied that DCCO deterrent techniques will be primarily utilized in areas where BCNH do not nest or where they will not be affected. We do not want discourage BCNH from nesting. J. Woodyer replied that she does not understand why DCCO will be deterred from areas where there are no BCNH if the goal is to reduce nest site competition. R. Toningier responded that the goal is reduce tree canopy loss, so DCCO will be deterred from nesting in trees to protect the trees and encourage ground nesting on Peninsulas A and B. K. McDonald noted that based on the observed arrival dates there is a two week window where DCCO are present, but BCNH are not. This would be the ideal time to deter DCCO from trees in order to encourage ground nesting and make more trees available for BCNH nesting. J. Woodyer asked how realistic the progression actually is with the short two week window before BCNH arrive. K. McDonald replied that DCCO seem to be more uneasy with human presence so it is likely that deterrents will not need to be escalated very high. Once the BCNH arrive some human presence deterrence may be able to continue as BCNH are much less frightened by people, as well in some areas there is physical separation between DCCO and BCNH nests. No deterrents will be used if adverse effects on other species are noted or once eggs have been laid. R. Toningier suggested that using poles or shouting might be successful on a selective per tree basis. In the past deterrents were used before BCNH arrived.

J. Woodyer commented that she is worried about deterring DCCO from areas where they are the only species nesting and the trees are already dead; she is concerned that this will encourage them to nest on Peninsula D. R. Toningier replied that if any negative impacts are detected deterrent activities will be stopped immediately; the intent is to preserve living trees. The reason for deterring them from this area is to preserve the stand of healthy trees at the tip of Peninsula C.

G. Fraser stated that she was still not clear as to why DCCO will be deterred from the tip of Peninsula C. She also noticed last summer on Peninsula B that there were many empty trees where BCNH could potentially nest. She wondered if we could maybe attract BCNH to those empty trees. R. Toningier replied that BCNH had nested there in 2002 but not in 2006, so there could be something pushing them out of that area, possibly predators. K. McDonald noted that in a mid-April 2008 visit to Peninsula B all the BCNH nests had DCCO in or around them. She observed only one BCNH in the traditional BCNH nesting area.

A. Willock said that she does not approve of nest removal as a deterrent technique on the escalation chart and wonders why noise makers would not be used before nest removal. R. Toningier replied actual nests will not be removed, the intent is to remove new nesting material. Furthermore, the proposed deterrent escalation will be changed if necessary, based on staff assessments of the techniques during deterrent activities. J. Woodyer asked if the chart has been employed before. R. Toningier replied TRCA was prepared to escalate post-breeding deterrents on Peninsula D in 2008 as indicated in the 2008 Strategic Approach, but it was not needed as human presence was sufficient. J. Woodyer asked how long a deterrent would be used before escalating to the next. R. Toningier replied that it would be based on the response from the colony. As an example, in the gull colony human presence is sufficient early in the season, but escalating methods are required as time passes.

G. Fraser asked if TRCA has considered deterring people from using the trails at the base of the peninsulas to allow BCNH to expand toward the base. R. Toningier said that BCNH population used to move quickly in response to DCCO pressure, however, they are now stationary since they are at the edge of the mature tree stand. Beyond the trail the forest community is younger and may not provide suitable habitat. He noted that certain trail sections are regularly closed during sensitive periods and that the same can be done for the trails near the colonies if needed.

J. Woodyer asked about egg laying dates of DCCO. R. Toningier said that these dates are not consistently monitored but could be taken from previous studies. He also said that nest count surveys are carried out during the last week of May, around the time that DCCO are laying eggs. J. Woodyer then asked for confirmation that no deterrent techniques would be applied after the eggs had been laid. K. McDonald replied that once eggs are laid it is pointless to deter DCCO from an area as they will constantly return to their nests once the disturbance has stopped. K. McDonald agreed to provide this data as part of additional information.

P. Hubert asked where the BCNH at TTP originally came from. R. Toningier replied that they came from the Toronto Islands. P. Hubert said that they are showing up in the North Channel of Lake Huron and are also found nesting in marshes. He suggested that we may not be successful in attracting them to the interior forest habitat on Peninsula B. R. Toningier stated that the management techniques and objectives are not intended to change BCNH behaviour, but to avoid disrupting them.

J. Woodyer asked where the GREG nests are located and what their productivity is. K. McDonald replied GREGs nest on Peninsula C and while productivity data have not been collected, GREGs have fledged chicks over the last several years.

P. Scott asked about predators and ground nesting. R. Toningier replied that there is no intent to isolate the colonies from other wildlife, although we do want to minimize predation of ground nesting DCCO so they continue to ground nest in future years. Based on previous mammal surveys, it is known that the population of raccoons is greatest near the park's front gates. As well, we are looking to expand our understanding of the raccoon population at the park beyond the work undertaken by G. Fraser. R. Toningier suspects that predation on Peninsula A will not be a big concern since the colony is located on the tip and the predator would have to walk through the gull colony to get to the nesting DCCO.

6. Next Steps and Wrap-Up

The 2009 Strategic Approach is the same as the 2008 Strategic Approach with the addition of deterrents and the ground nesting enhancements. Comments from this meeting will be used to refine the strategy which will then be taken to the Authority Board for approval.

S. Barrett suggested that more details are needed regarding several aspects of the 2009 Strategic Approach, specifically regarding tree health, productivity and egg laying timing, deterrent techniques and a protocol for monitoring effects on BCNH and other species (i.e., GREG). She recommended that TRCA address these questions as

additional notes to be circulated for comment to the group. Aside from these outstanding issues, S. Barrett asked if the group is generally comfortable with the 2009 Strategic Approach outline. Most group members agreed. J. Woodyer responded that her only concern is about deterring DCCO from the tip of Peninsula C. It doesn't make sense to her given the proximity to Peninsula D. R. Toningier replied that Peninsula D continues to be the priority but that there are trees at the tip of Peninsula C that are worth protecting because they have not been colonized or are newly colonized. To reduce stress on the rest of the colony, staff will take measure to minimize disturbance and approach the tip of the Peninsula by water. J. Woodyer suggested that observers to the colony should be in boats so they can have a clear view from the water.

S. Barrett thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Although no further meetings are scheduled, Advisory Group members should expect to receive the meeting minutes, answers to all the questions asked at this meeting, and a notice about the TRCA Board meeting. A meeting will be scheduled for in the fall to follow up on the 2009 Strategic Approach.

Addendum to the Meeting #5 Notes

To: DCCO Advisory Group Members

From: Julie Woodyer

Sent on: 02/05/2009 01:07 PM

Subject: Additional comments regarding the management plans for 2009

I was a bit distracted last night because of how cold the room was (I am sure I was not the only one based on the number of people wearing winter coats in the meeting) and the noise from the “heater” (if you could call it that) made it very difficult to hear everything that Ralph was saying. Also, I felt that there was not enough time to really discuss all of the issues related to the management plan that Ralph proposed at the meeting last night.

Therefore, I want to offer the following comments which I want to be included as an addition to the minutes for last night’s meeting.

First, I wanted to let you all know that the City of Vancouver has a large heron colony in Stanley Park with similar issues to Tommy Thompson Park. While other jurisdictions in BC have been talking about managing herons in order to protect trees, the Vancouver Park Board have taken the approach of finding value in, and protecting, the large bird colony rather than trying to control it. The issues about guano impact on tree health are essentially the same in Vancouver as have been expressed by TRCA staff regarding the cormorant colony at Tommy Thompson Park. In Vancouver the Park Board has taken the position that they will work on managing the soil and plants rather than the bird colony. I have attached the Vancouver management plan for your reference. Some of the plans for managing soil in Stanley Park include:

- Washing foliage of nest trees and landscape vegetation after the bird colony has been vacated at the end of the season.
- De-acidify the soil with lime or other non-toxic substance.
- Putting a liner down under the colony. Cover with wood chips and remove at the end of the nesting season. Remove debris after the season is concluded.
- Mulching areas underneath the bird colony – cover ground with 6-8” of mulch to intercept most of the guano before it reaches the ground; remove it at the end of each season.

I would like the committee record to clearly note that CDI does not support invasive cormorant management tactics such as egg-oiling, nest removal or disturbance programs in the already colonized areas of the park (namely peninsulas A, B & C). As you all know it has always been our position that the colony should be allowed to evolve naturally. However, we understand that there is little support for this option. **We therefore suggest that the TRCA should be following the lead of the Vancouver Park Board by employing soil management activities rather than bird management activities in these areas.** We are not opposed to allowing human presence on Peninsula D as a deterrent to the expansion of the cormorant colony into this area, however we do not support any other sorts of invasive deterrent activities.

As I am sure you are all aware Stanley Park is the most well known and protected park in the City of Vancouver. Unlike the Leslie St. spit which is a series of man made peninsulas comprised from waste materials, Stanley park is a natural island with old growth trees. If the City of Vancouver is willing to try soil management over bird management in a natural, prized park, I think that the City of Toronto would be well advised to make the same efforts in the already colonized areas of Tommy Thompson Park (namely peninsulas A, B & C) before even considering more invasive action to disrupt the bird colony.

Second, I noticed that the “experimental” egg-oiling management was still up on the chart that Ralph had in his presentation. I was under the impression from last year’s discussion that, Gail’s study was a one time effort to access if night-time egg oiling was less disruptive to the colony than day-time oiling projects being used elsewhere on the Great Lakes. We were interested to learn from Gail at the last meeting that, in her opinion, the disturbance was in fact less disruptive and we hope that other government agencies that are already engaged in egg-oiling programs will stop day time oiling in favour of this less disruptive method. That said, there was no discussion about why egg oiling is being proposed again for 2009. As I said before, we feel that TRCA should be focusing on soil and plant rehabilitation rather than cormorant management, however we would still like to understand what, exactly, is being proposed as an egg-oiling project for 2009.

Finally, I just wanted to remind Karen to send along the egg-dates for cormorants on Tommy Thompson for the past few years.

Karen (or Ralph) can you please respond to this e-mail to confirm that these comments will be included as an addition to the minutes from last night’s meeting.

Thank you,

Julie Woodyer
Campaigns Director
Zoocheck Canada Inc.
788 1/2 O’Connor Dr.
Toronto, ON M4B 2S6



Campaigning for the protection of wild animals...

Visit Zoocheck's website www.zoocheck.com

To: DCCO Advisory Group Members
From: Ralph Toninger
Sent on: 02/05/2009 02:08 PM

Subject: Re: Additional comments regarding the management plans for 2009

Hi Julie.

Thanks for your comments and yes of course they will be included in the minutes. We will respond to all of your comments shortly, but I wanted to quickly respond to the egg oiling comment. **We will not be oiling nests in 2009.** We will only be continuing with observations looking at nest re-occupancy and attendance to see if the oiling last season has an impact on nest re-colonization in this season. We assumed that the research around the 2008 egg oiling study was made clear in our last meeting on December 10th where the project findings, and goals for the 2009 season, were discussed in detail. I should have restated this last night, but we will make sure to include this in the minutes. I have attached the Matrix that I showed last night. We will make sure that this is clear as we move forward.

	Peninsula A	Peninsula B	Peninsula C	Peninsula D
Pre-Nesting Deterrents		*	*	*
Post-Breeding Deterrents			*	*
Enhanced Ground Nesting	*	*		
Restoration	*	*	*	*
Experimental Egg Oiling (follow-up on nest attendance only)		*		

Thanks again, and we will have additional comments back to you all shortly.

Ralph

Ralph Toninger

Senior Project Manager

Restoration Services
Toronto and Region Conservation

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this year. And, that the other measures including noise makers were in the plan - just in case - the human presence didn't work - so they likely wouldn't be used. Also, it was stated that no other birds would be disturbed and that no action would be taken if eggs were present.

If you want to come to a position of consensus - we should have another meeting and see if we could actually achieve that. Given that many people weren't able to attend and it was sooo cold in the room and so hard to hear with the fan going on and off - maybe we should have another meeting.

The TRCA owns the Spit and while TRCA staff presented to the public that the Advisory Group had agreed to the TRCA's past plans - that was misleading. When we objected to what had been presented - we were told that we were there just to advise... and that the TRCA makes the final decisions.

Ralph, please e-mail me back that you will not present last night's meeting as reaching "consensus" with the group.

Thank you!!!

All my best,
Ainslie

To: DCCO Advisory Group Members
From: Ralph Toningner
Sent on: 02/06/2009 04:47 PM
Subject: Re: Additional comments regarding the management plans for 2009

Hello all.

Sorry for not being clear and complete in my first response to Julie yesterday (February 6), I was focused on correcting the confusion around the 2008 egg oiling research, and did not properly address her request to add her comments to the minutes. In our goal to conduct a fair and transparent process, we cannot simply add comments sent to us after the meeting to the minutes. The points Julie raised were not part of the evening's discussion, and other members of the committee have not had an opportunity discuss the points raised.

We will therefore distribute all the additional comments received after the meeting as an addendum to the February 4th meeting minutes. We anticipate that the draft meeting minutes and addendum will be circulated for comment by February 13th.

The discussions at the February 4th meeting raised a number of issues that require further consideration and investigation prior to completing the 2009 strategy. We will be compiling this information and making appropriate refinements to our Strategic

approach for 2009 in the next two weeks. We will circulate the results to our research and any refinements to the strategy by February 20th for your comment.

Thanks again Julie for attaching the Stanley Park Great Blue Heron report to your email, we are looking into the Stanley Park example and have contacted the park managers to discuss their colony, and gain insight from their experiences. However, I would like to clarify a couple of key points. In 2008 the Stanley Park Great Blue Heron rookery consisted of 21 nest trees occupying a fenced off area measuring approximately 3600 m². In 2008 our colony of Double-crested Cormorants on Peninsula C totaled 4906 nests in approximately 1000 trees and covered an area of 49,700 m². The goals and objectives of the Stanley Park Plan and our TTP strategy, have some similarity, however we would like to be careful about directly comparing the two approaches. We will strive to incorporate any relevant ideas or approaches to improve our 2009 strategy.

We also wanted to clarify concerns that Ainslie brought forward in her email. First and foremost we want every one to be clear that this group is an advisory group, and TRCA seriously considers and appreciates all advice provided by the members. As a refresher this excerpt is from the Workplan that was developed last spring and agreed to by the group:

TRCA will establish an Advisory Group with a mandate to:

- *Provide input and advice*
- *Ensure that all perspectives are considered*
- *Provide linkages with other stakeholders*

The Advisory Group will:

- *Identify and discuss the values and interests associated with Tommy Thompson Park in order to understand the range of views held by different stakeholders*
- *Discuss existing conditions and concerns*
- *Review a short list of management options (including "do nothing")*
- *Help TRCA staff to evaluate the management options*
- *Participate in the public meeting*
- *Advise TRCA on a recommended management plan, if appropriate*
- *If management actions are recommended, provide advice on implementation*

Most of the proposed members of the Advisory Group have considerable experience with various aspects of research, management and protection of colonial waterbirds and associated issues. They will bring a range of expertise, knowledge and perspectives to the process. The committee will develop consensus where possible. Any dissenting views will also be recorded.

We acknowledge the concerns raised at the February 4th meeting and they will be included in the draft minutes just as previous objections have been noted. At the conclusion of the meeting, when Suzanne asked if there was general agreement to proceed with the 2009 strategy provided that modifications were made to address the concerns raised, Julie responded that she did not agree with deterring cormorants from the tip of Peninsula C. This will be reflected in the draft minutes. All advisory group members will have the opportunity to review the draft meeting minutes as well as the addendum to the minutes, and the results of the research and strategy refinement.

Members that were not present on February 4th will be able to express their opinions if they wish. Once circulated we will set appropriate dates for comment via email.

Thank you everyone for all your time and effort, we sincerely appreciate all of your time and commitment to this process. In addition we welcome any comments at any time.

Ralph Toninger
Senior Project Manager
Restoration Services
Toronto and Region Conservation
[Redacted]
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To: DCCO Advisory Group Members
From: Cathryn MacFarlane and Paul Scott
Sent on: 03/01/2009 09:40 PM
Subject: Re: DRAFT DCCO AG Meeting #5 Notes

Karen,

Thank you for the opportunity to add the Aquatic Park Sailing Club's comments to the debate surrounding the double crested cormorant colony in Tommy Thompson Park.

TRCA's plan for 2009 is not effective. TRCA's past stated goal of preserving forest canopy is not accomplished by this plan. Further canopy loss, as evidenced by the progressive tree death on Peninsula C, should not be accepted.

Actions taken to date have been inadequate to preserve the forest canopy on Peninsula C from the destructive force of the expanding Double Crested Cormorant colony. TRCA is proposing to execute only one half of the strategy in any meaningful way through the encouragement of ground nesting on Peninsula's A & B. The shift in focus by the TRCA from preserving the forest canopy on Peninsula C leaves APSC deeply concerned. We note that the Ring-billed Gulls, the Canada Geese and the Mute Swans are all managed through comprehensive plans including, where necessary, egg-oiling to preserve habitat and for the safety of air transport.

Our representative wanted the following noted regarding the latest cormorant strategy meeting: Throughout our proceedings science is being used as a call to inaction. For example, another representative of the scientific community at the meeting introduced doubt about the effects of the cormorants versus other natural forms of tree health

decline. Seriously proposing that erosion or wind could have had a major material effect that so far has been overlooked and needs investigating is a cause of concern.. As we all know now, the climate change debunking lobby had great success in sowing doubt for many years as an impeding strategy for societal change. All of us can take lessons from this. Appropriate control of the cormorant colony will not be championed by scientists whose protocols must be, by their very nature of the scientific method, to collect a portion of the facts and mull them over for decades. There is no time left for this approach. The movement of Double Crested Cormorant to areas of forest canopy and the rapid and significant destruction of that same canopy within 5-6 years is not being disputed.

Our representative specifically requested the review of the tree health data to determine if there were other significant natural health decline factors other than Double Crested Cormorant nesting behaviour and guano. This is not reflected in the minutes.

We would also like noted that the soil remediation plan for Pacific Great Blue Heron in Stanley Park, referred to by other attendees, while interesting, is of very little relevance. The Great Blue Heron nest in colonies a fraction the size and with far fewer nests per tree. Thus, they have a limited effect on the immediate tree and overall forest canopy where soil remediation might work. Even as a non-scientist this criticism is immediately evident. However, much time was spent on the topic by those who continue to argue for inaction. It seems evident that some representatives see preservation of the forest canopy and associated habitat as frivolous.

A third point we would like noted in the minutes is that the discussion of the peninsula's getting smaller was based on inaccurate data. Two separately scanned photo's from the same satellite/aerial photo original with different scale and colour registration appeared to be different. Since tree health and nesting data were presented against these over time it confused matters and led to pointless discussion. (This took sometime to figure out and hopefully a more consistent presentation of the visual data we are relying on will occur in future.)

It is a contradiction to APSC that the conservation authority is failing to conserve the forest canopy, and by extension, all the species that rely on it. As previously stated, other bird colonies are appropriately controlled, and have been so for many years. Some \$8 million is being spent to realize the TTP Master Plan, open up and control park usage and develop new habitat. While the goal of humane treatment of animals is laudable, its exaggerated and misrepresented application to a single species - irrespective of any other consideration or other species well-being - by the groups responsible is being given too much weight in this dialogue and in subsequent plans. There is only one Spit ; it has been successfully managed for a long time. To disrupt the remarkable success of this unlikely urban wilderness is incomprehensible to us.

Unfortunately, many other species who visit or reside seasonally on the Spit are seeing their meagre – but essential – habitat destroyed. The park itself will not be viewed in future as more than a former garbage dump if this continues. All the parks values need to be taken into consideration when managing the massive rebounds in native populations - or growth in invasive populations - occurring through regional and global environmental changes of all forms. Significantly neglected is conservation of the Spit's

forest canopy on the peninsula's. These trees intrinsically – and by their function – have significant value on the Spit beyond being maligned as scrub forest.

In 2004 footage was taken of the Spit from a city perspective of the lush canopy of Peninsulas C and D in contrast to Peninsulas A and B. The same shot this year will show that C has been substantially destroyed, with subsequent reduction in the black crowned night herons numbers. And in three more years? It is surprising that no public comment on Urban Forest is forthcoming from city representatives, as the loss of over 25% and 11 hectares of urban forest on the Spit in the past 17 years should be of concern.

APSC has offered on numerous occasions to be engaged in further stewardship activities beyond our Spit garbage cleanups. APSC have a limited and purely voluntary labour pool from our Community Club members. However, we are ready to assist in tree planting or beaver wrapping (as in past years) whenever called upon to the extent we can assist.

TRCA is the only party truly accountable at this time. We trust that it will do everything possible to conserve the forest canopy of the Spit and its peninsulas.

Paul Scott & Cathryn MacFarlane
Members-at-Large, Aquatic Park Sailing Club (APSC) Board of Directors