19 Status of the breeding population of Great Cormorants in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland in 2012

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National summary

There were 4,605 occupied nests of Great Cormorants (Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis) in seven colonies in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland in 2012. This is an increase of approximately 18% (706 nests) over a period of six years (3,899 nests recorded in 2006). During the 2012 count, a total of 23 islands in the Russian part of the Finnish Gulf were surveyed as part of the national cormorant count. Breeding colonies were found on 15 islands. In some cases, colonies were located on islands within archipelagos and the distance between some of the colonies was relatively small (less than 2 km). Colonies located within 2 km from each other were categorized as sub-colonies. Consequently, seven colonies were defined, of which two had multiple sub-colonies. It is judged that complete coverage of all breeders was obtained during the 2012 count.

Distribution

In 2012 cormorants were breeding in two districts in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland. 70% of the nests were located on islands in the Kingisepp district and the remaining 30% were breeding in the Vyborg district (Fig. 19.1). When compared to the breeding numbers from 2006, an increase was observed in the Kingisepp district, while a decrease in the number of nests was seen in the Vyborg district.
In the Kingisepp district, located in the southern part of the Gulf of Finland, 3,225 nests were counted in three colonies. The largest colony contained six sub-colonies (defined as less than 2 km apart) and was located on the western part of the Seskar archipelago, which lies 19 km north of the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland. In this colony, cormorants built nests on small islands ranging in size from 0.1 to 1 ha and the colony housed 38% of the total population (1,733 nests). The remaining breeders in this district were found on Reimosar Island and the small islands of Severny Virgin. Reimosar Island is located 2 km from the west coast of the Kurgalsky peninsula and housed 1,306 breeding pairs (28% of the breeding population). The Severny Virgin islands located in the middle of the bay held 186 nests, 4% of the national population.

In the northern district of Vyborg, the remaining 30% of breeders (1,380 nests) were found in four separate colonies located on islands off the northern coast of the Gulf. The majority of the breeders in this district (79% 1,088 nests) were located in one colony within the Bolshoy Fiskar archipelago, which is approximately 8 km south of the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland. In the archipelago, cormorants bred in five sub-colonies on islands located within 2 km of each other. The remaining breeders were found in three

![Figure 19.1. Distribution and size of breeding colonies of Great Cormorants in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland in 2012. Source: A. Gaginskaya, St.-Petersburg State University.](image-url)
colonies located at Dolgy Rif (241 nests), Soglasny (50 nests) and Rondo (1 nest).

**Colony size**

In 2012, the cormorant population in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland bred in seven colonies. The three largest colonies contained over 1,000 nests each, with the largest single colony containing 1,733 pairs. These three colonies contained 90% of the breeding cormorant population in 2012 (4,127 nests). Of the remaining breeders, 9% (427 nests) were found in two colonies holding between 100 and 500 nests and 1% (51 nests) were found in two small colonies containing less than 100 nests (Fig. 19.2 and 19.3).

All breeding colonies of cormorants in the region were located on uninhabited islands with no trees. All nests were located on the ground either on or between rocks or small areas with reeds, at a distance of 5 to 25 m from the water. The islands where cormorants built their nests are situated in zones with strict border controls, so the number of visitors and human disturbance is limited. Colonies located on the northern shore of the Gulf build their nests using twigs and reeds. In the colonies near the south coast nests are built entirely of reeds.

**Human intervention in colonies and other factors**

In 2012, as in previous years, no actions were carried out to control cormorant breeding numbers in colonies in the Russian Gulf of Finland. A significant reduction in the number of nests in colonies was observed on the islands located close to the coast of the Gulf, where ground predators are present (fox and raccoon dog). Evidence of predators and large scale destruction of nests in colonies were recorded in colonies on the Dolgy Rif, Rondo and Kurov island (part of the Seskar archipelago).
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References and further information