

Email: admin@fbyc.co.za

Endangered Cape cormorants breeding on vessels in the False Bay Yacht Club

Dear False Bay Yacht Club management and members,

Endangered Cape cormorants have started their breeding season, their main breeding season is from September to February (but birds may already start breeding earlier), coinciding with many members wanting to start maintenance on their vessels to have them ready for summer. Cape cormorants are already using vessels moored in the False Bay Yacht Club to build nests and in many cases, cormorants have already laid eggs and are raising chicks.

We would therefore like to take the opportunity to remind management and members that Cape cormorants are an Endangered species (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species). This is because of ongoing rapid population declines across their range. They are also listed as a Threatened and Protected Marine Species under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (No. 10 of 2004). This means that no person (without having the required permits) can move or disturb eggs, chicks or adult birds on any vessel or infrastructure.

The best way to prevent cormorants and other seabirds from breeding on vessels is to conduct regular maintenance and prevent birds from establishing nests. The installation of nets can be one such prevention measure but these nets need to be fastened and tightened securely and maintained (especially after strong winds and storms) during the entire breeding season. Otherwise, birds can get entangled in them and die.

Prevention is best, but where birds have laid eggs or have chicks, maintenance or use of the vessel should be postponed until the birds have completed their breeding cycle. Cape cormorants are easily disturbed, and any approach to a vessel where they are breeding may lead to chicks falling into the water and drowning, and adults getting entangled in ropes and netting. This results in a slow and painful death.

We have also noted with concern that many nests on vessels in the False Bay Yacht Club are made of plastic (e.g. cable ties, fishing line and rope). Chicks will often pick at these plastic bits in the nest and ingest the plastic or get entangled. We encourage all boat owners and club users to dispose of these items responsibly.

We are grateful for your cooperation and hope these Endangered birds can raise their chicks successfully, which will help the species to survive. Let us know if you have any questions, and we are also happy to give a presentation to members to share information and discuss solutions.

Yours faithfully,

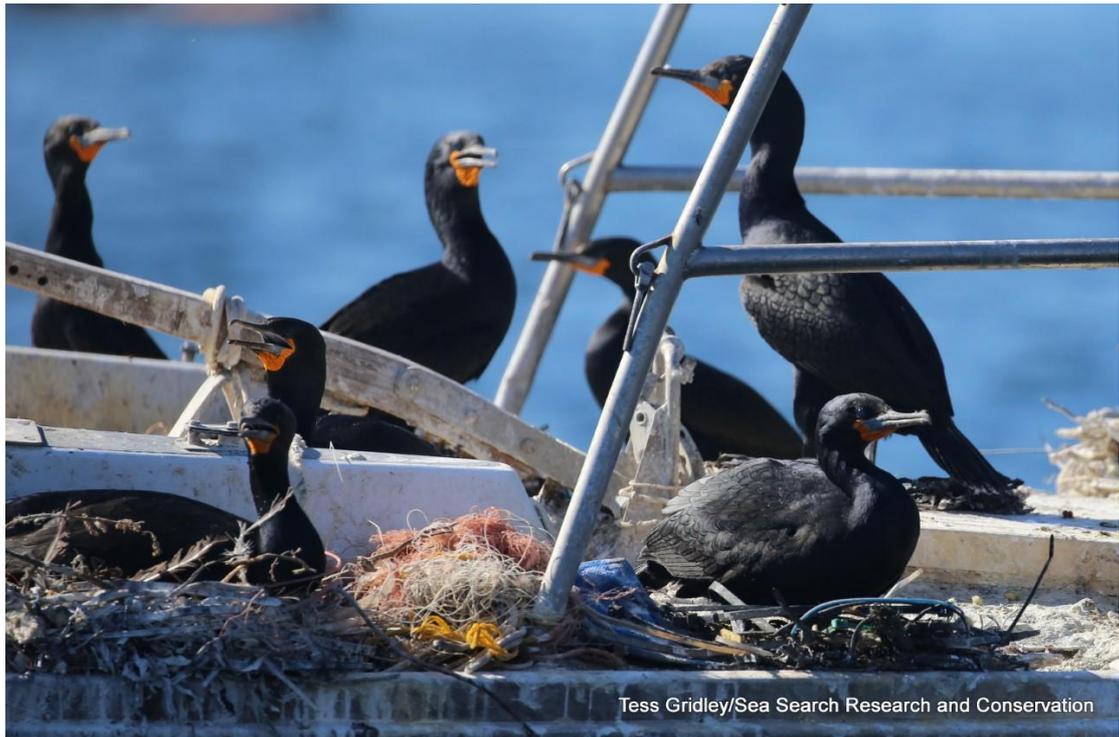
Romy Klusener (romy@sanccob.co.za) & Dr Katta Ludynia (katta@sanccob.co.za ; SANCCOB)

Dr Tess Gridley (Sea Search/ University of Stellenbosch)

Dr Alison Kock (alison.kock@sanparks.org)
(False Bay Yacht Club member and marine biologist at the Cape Research Centre, SANParks)



Cape cormorants having died due to entanglement in netting on boats at False Bay Yacht Club. Photo: Dr Tess Gridley, Sea Search Africa and Conservation



Cape cormorant nests made almost exclusively out of fishing line and cable ties at False Bay Yacht Club. Photo: Dr Tess Gridley, Sea Search Africa and Conservation