



New Year 2011

Dear Friend,

Documents I received through Access to Information at the beginning of this New Year sickened me. The information was so dire that we need to reassess our campaigns for 2011, and we'll need your help and support to do that.

The over 400 pages of information show our worst fears about Parks Canada's cruel, murderous slaughter of cormorants on Middle Island being wildly exceeded.

Middle Island, you'll recall, is part of the Lake Erie, Ontario, Point Pelee National Park. In fact, the island is the southernmost point of land in Canada. In 1999, groups, including Nature Conservancy Canada and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, raised funds from people like you to buy Middle Island from its US owner. The donors gave because they were led to believe that the island and its wild inhabitants would be protected.

The groups and their donors entrusted Parks Canada to protect the 18 hectare (46 acre) island and its fauna and flora and, in particular, its colonial water birds, including herons, egrets, and cormorants. The Access to Information documents show that Parks Canada has betrayed their trust.

Parks Canada did not protect the birds. It spent the last three years slaughtering almost 6,000 cormorants, all the while harassing thousands of cormorants and other species. More killing is planned. Despite the massive death toll and horrific cruelty, Parks Canada failed to achieve the population reductions it predicted – a population reduction that it claimed (falsely, in my view) was crucial to protect vegetation and other birds on Middle Island.

As *we* predicted (and as Parks Canada wildlife managers should have known and yet refused to acknowledge) as cormorants are killed, others come to the empty nests. And, the relentless, stupidly-conceived carnage has driven off other birds. Again, as we had warned Parks Canada.

In its *Draft Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Implementation of the Proposed Middle Island Conservation Plan: Reducing Double-Crested Cormorants Impacts, April 2nd, 2008*, Parks Canada stated,

“... the residual adverse effect of disturbance to wildlife species (i.e. non-target colonial waterbirds) is **not expected to be significant**. The magnitude, geographic extent, duration of the activity, frequency and reversibility of the identified residual adverse environmental effect is expected to be **negligible**.” (my emphasis)

Not expected to be significant! Negligible! Parks Canada could not have been more wrong – as it so often is. As the trove of Access to Information documents reveal, since the cormorant slaughter began Great Blue Heron

nests have declined by 20%, Great Egret nests by 53%, and Black-crowned Night-Heron nests by 48%. Nothing else explains these massive population declines except Parks Canada's brutally disruptive cormorant slaughter.

*Here's the truly bloody and awful irony in these figures. The population decline in "non-target colonial waterbirds" is **greater** than in the "target" species – the cormorants!*

Middle Island is no longer a bird sanctuary. It's a killing field.

Thanks to your support, we're going into 2011 with a full campaign agenda that includes:

1. running 10 Animal Alliance / Environment Voters Party of Canada candidates in the next federal election (expected in the Spring) who will make the Harper government's anti-environment and anti-animal policies local ballot box issues;
2. changing or abolishing the Canadian Council of Animal Care: the government-funded organization charged with protecting animals used in research but that, in fact, protects researchers, not animals;
3. stopping the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans slaughtering over 220,000 grey seals living on Sable Island;
4. forcing the federal government to obey its own laws and not approve using the deadly poisons Compound 1080 and strychnine to kill animals that agri-business deems "pests" – animals like bears, wolves, coyotes, and ground squirrels;
5. working with municipalities across Canada to solve people/wildlife conflicts so that animals are not cruelly and unnecessarily trapped, shot, or poisoned.

Now, in addition to these crucial campaigns, we must expand our campaign to protect the cormorants and other species on Middle Island. If they are to live, we have no choice, and we must have your help.

If Parks Canada continues its current policy of slaughter, Middle Island will soon be a wildlife wasteland. That's the undeniable warning in the Access to Information documents. We must stop Parks Canada.

With your support, we can.

With your help, we can implement an enhanced two-part strategy, and still maintain our current campaign load. The first part of the enhanced Middle Island strategy involves further documenting the carnage of the cormorant slaughter and its effects on other waterbirds and wildlife, building on the evidence we've gathered in previous years.

This evidence forms the basis for the legal complaint we've lodged against Parks Canada with the Wildlife Enforcement Division of Environment Canada. The evidence, in our view, is unequivocal. The Parks Canada Middle Island cormorant slaughter contravenes the Migratory Bird Convention Act. Our complaint is now under active consideration, but we need more evidence. And we need your help getting it.

A further point: the evidence about Parks Canada's Middle Island cormorant slaughter must always be current. Why? Because Parks Canada lies about the state of affairs on Middle Island.

If our evidence is even a year old, Parks Canada will argue, "Ah, yes. But, that was the year before last. Last year, when you didn't make observations, everything was improved."

The second part of the new strategy, called "Parks Canada, Give the Money Back!", will publically expose Parks Canada's and the Minister of the Environment's betrayal of their legal mandate which, according to the Canada National Parks Act, is,

*Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the **protection** of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks.*

We want Parks Canada to do one of two things, and we need your financial support and determined advocacy to make them. With your help, we want to force Parks Canada to stop killing cormorants on Middle Island. If Parks Canada refuses we want the Minister to give the money back that people like you contributed to buy Middle Island. The money can then be used, as it was intended, **to protect** animals and the environment.

For the first part of the strategy, we've budgeted \$10,800 for our investigative team to be on site at Middle Island for the whole month of May when Parks Canada plans to kill the cormorants. The funds will be used to charter a boat. A boat is necessary because Parks Canada keeps people like us off the island during the slaughter to try to stop us from documenting the carnage. We can only observe – and get the evidence we need – by taking videos and photographs with super-telephoto lenses from a stable vessel safely anchored off shore.

As we've done in past years, we rent a local house to provide accommodations for our crew and for observers from the press, other organizations, and academic institutions. This saves on food and accommodations.

Last year, PhD students from the University of Toronto joined us. We expect them to join us again. Also, invitations have been extended to the International Fund for Animal Welfare. As of this letter, the IFAW has accepted.

Cell phones are a major expense. We use them to communicate with Parks Canada staff. When we find injured birds on the water, we alert Parks Canada and they dispatch qualified personnel to shoot them. A sad and tragic, but unavoidable, consequence of the cruel shootings.

The objective of the second part of our strategy is to *publicly* expose Parks Canada's cruel Middle Island cormorant killing policies. In light of the damning evidence in the Access to Information documents, we want to force Parks Canada to *publicly* defend their policies, *publicly* explain their failures, and *publicly* make their case for killing even one more cormorant. We want to hold Parks Canada accountable in public for the ecological devastation, killing and cruelty it's causing on Middle Island.

We can't do that unless we make the plight of the cormorants on Middle Island "interesting" and "newsworthy" to the media. We need the media – print, television, and radio – to tell Canadians across Canada the story of Parks Canada's ecological and animal cruelty disaster on Middle Island.

For the media the simple facts of the cormorants' case are not "interesting" or "newsworthy" enough, so we developed the "Parks Canada, Give the Money Back!" theme. The message is that Parks Canada accepted money from people like you on false premises, and is cruelly killing animals in ways and for reasons that you would never condone.

Because Parks Canada has violated its implied contract with people like you, it should give the money back so that it can be used as intended, and not to kill cormorants and wreck the ecology on Middle Island.

With your support, we'll start the "Parks Canada, Give the Money Back!" campaign with a half page advertisement in The Hill Times, the newspaper that goes to all federal Members of Parliament, the Ottawa press corps, and senior federal government bureaucrats, including those at Parks Canada.

Based on your support, we'll also promote the campaign on radio and on the Internet with videos on YouTube and shown by sympathetic bloggers. Press releases will be sent to all major news services.

We also plan to promote the "Parks Canada, Give the Money Back!" campaign in Environment Minister Peter Kent's own electoral district: Thornhill (Ontario). I believe we can make Parks Canada's cruel and horrific wildlife management policies on Middle Island a significant ballot issue for Mr. Kent. We'll be asking Mr. Kent, the minister responsible for Parks Canada, personally to give the money back or obey the law he's supposed to administer and stop the killings.

Let me conclude this letter with profound thanks for your support in 2010. You and others like you made it possible for us to make enormous gains for animals and the environment. Lives were saved. Cruelty ended. Ecosystems protected.

Please, trust us again with your generous financial support and activism as we begin a New Year, a New Year that starts with documenting and publicly exposing the plight of the cormorants on Middle Island and battling Parks Canada's treachery.

Yours for the animals and the environment,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Liz White
Director

P.S. Included with the letter is a "Parks Canada, Give the Money Back!" action flyer. Please, send it, postage free, to Minister Peter Kent. Add your personal message demanding that Mr. Kent either stop the wanton, senseless slaughter on Middle Island, or do the honourable thing and return the money that people like you contributed to protect Middle Island and the animals who live there.