



**Council**

**CNL(02)46**

***Predator-Related Mortality  
Tabled by the European Union***



## **PREDATOR-RELATED MORTALITY**

### **EUROPEAN UNION**

#### **SEALS**

In 2000 there were an estimated 114,200 grey seals and an estimated minimum of 32,000 common seals in Scottish waters. The UK has about 40% of the world and 50% of the EU population of grey seals and about 5% of the world and 45% of the EU population of common seals. Approximately 90% of the UK populations of both these species are in Scottish waters.

Seals are protected under the EC Habitats Directive. A number of Special Areas of Conservation have been designated which support more than 40% of the grey seals and some 20% of the common seals living in UK waters.

Powers to take action against seals to protect fisheries already exist under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970.

In Scotland there are currently relatively large populations of seals and relatively small populations of salmon. This means that a small proportion of seals which regularly predate on salmon or a large proportion of seals which only occasionally predate on salmon could potentially have a significant effect on salmon populations.

The information currently available on seal diet does not suggest that the majority of seals spend their time feeding on salmon. On current evidence it seems more likely that small numbers of "rogue" seals predate on salmon as they enter river mouths.

There are a number of projects currently underway which are seeking to clarify the relationship between seals and salmonids in order to inform the management of seal populations.

#### **BIRDS**

Salmon are also predated by a number of bird species, notably Goosanders, Red-breasted mergansers and cormorants. These species are protected under the EC Birds Directive, but may be killed where they can be shown to be causing serious damage to fisheries. Licences may be issued under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Applications for licences must provide information on numbers of birds, estimates of the level of damage, and details of non-lethal methods of control that have been attempted.

A 2-year EU-funded programme, REDCAFE, to coordinate information from across Europe on cormorant numbers, their impact, and existing and potential management tools is due to finish and report this year.

An Intergroup of the European Parliament met earlier this year to discuss the status of cormorants and their impact on fisheries. The meeting called for the creation of a Europe-wide management plan. This call has been supported by all European angling NGOs.

In the UK there has been close cooperation between Government, angling groups and conservation organisations, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. A leaflet outlining the way forward has been produced jointly by the 17 organisations involved in a meeting held earlier this year.

These initiatives are to be extended to consider the impact of sawbill ducks on fish and fisheries.