

Cormorant



Scientific name

Phalacrocorax

Other names

Shag

Description

Cormorants are medium to large sized waterbirds. There are over 40 species in the world and Mandurah has five species that reside in the region including the pied cormorant, little pied cormorant, little black cormorant, great cormorant and darter. Species in Mandurah are predominantly black in colour and the pied cormorants have white under parts (chest). They have large fully webbed feet. As their feathers are not waterproof cormorants are regularly seen perched on posts, rocks and dry land with their wings outstretched to dry after fishing.

Diet & Habitat

Cormorants are found in coastal regions, salt and fresh water estuaries, rivers, swamp and marine areas. They are diving birds that eat fish, insects, crustaceans and other small marine life. Cormorants catch their prey underwater, by diving and swimming using their large fully-webbed feet for propulsion. They have special nictitating membranes that cover and protect their eyes underwater. Their catch may be eaten under the water or when the cormorant returns to the surface.

Social Life

Cormorants are very sociable birds and breed and nest in large colonies, usually in well vegetated wetland areas. Breeding can occur at any time depending on food supply. They build their nests in trees or on rocky areas with sticks, leaves and seaweed. Both parents build the nest, incubate the eggs and care for the young. They start breeding at around 2- 3 years of age and usually lay 2 to 5 eggs.

Threats

Major threats to cormorants include habitat destruction, introduced predators, over fishing by humans, pollution and fishing waste.

Did you know?

In the first few days of life the chicks feed on liquid regurgitated by the parents, they then take solid food from the parent's throats.

