



NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center

N E W S

Wildlife Specialists To Launch Smolt Protection Project

*A team of biologists will use noise and lights
to chase cormorants away from the Lower Narraguagus
during the smolt run*

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Cherryfield, ME -- Fish and wildlife biologists will be working in the lower Narraguagus River in May to protect endangered Atlantic salmon smolts from double-crested cormorants. The biologists will use noises and lights to discourage the birds from congregating and feeding on salmon below the Ice Control Dam in Cherryfield and in the lower Narraguagus River.

The Narraguagus is one of just eight Maine rivers known to host a population of naturally reproducing salmon. From mid-April to Mid-June, endangered juvenile salmon (smolts) migrate down river to spend a year or two living in the open ocean. As they migrate down river, the fish are vulnerable to predators – especially cormorants.

To protect the salmon, a team of biologists will use fire cracker shells, pyrotechnics, and lasers to discourage the cormorants from feeding in this five-mile stretch of water. These tools are not harmful to wildlife when used in a controlled manner by trained specialists.

The cormorant displacement project is a multi-year study that began with similar fieldwork in May, 2004. This year the biologists will work from the shore and from a boat in the estuary, beginning a half hour before sunrise and continuing for ten hours, Tuesdays through Fridays. Digital

cameras in fixed locations will monitor cormorant abundance in the river and estuary to determine whether, or how quickly, the cormorants return on the days when the biologists are not in the field.

The cormorant displacement is part of the salmon protection effort conducted collaboratively by the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, and USDA – Wildlife Services.

A fact sheet and photographs are available at http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/press_release/. For more information, contact Rory Saunders at (207) 866-4049 or Rory.Saunders@noaa.gov

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