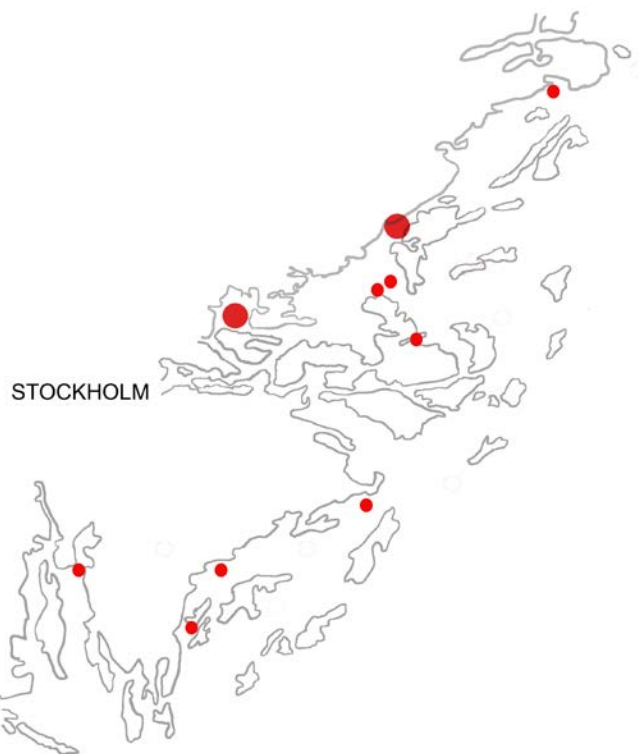




PHOTOS: SÖREN LINDEN & CLAES KYRK



Colonies in the Stockholm archipelago 2019.

The **Baltic Wings project** aims at developing the central Baltic area as a nature and birdwatching destination through infrastructure investments, capacity building in co-operation with local entrepreneurs as well as other stakeholders, marketing and information. Read more at www.balticwings.org.



Länsstyrelsen
Stockholm



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EU Project Baltic Wings

Cormorants in Stockholm



Cormorants with outstretched wings are a common feature of the Stockholm archipelago. It's crucial for them to dry the wings because they lack fat in the plumage, an adaptation to better dive and be underwater. They are related to pelicans.

In the Baltic Sea, the number of cormorants has increased in number since the 1980s and is now a common bird. Cormorant existed in the Baltic Sea area in historical times. Bones have been found in excavations from viking age, then the cormorants disappeared and has been absent for centuries in our region. The first breeding in Stockholm County in modern times took place in 1994 at Bodskär outside Nåttarö. Today, around 6,000 pairs breed on 15 islands (2020). Three of the colonies are large with over 1,000 nests. We call those who breed here, an intermediate type, the latin name of the subspecies is *sienensis*. Another subspecies breeds on the Norwegian Atlantic coast and is regularly seen in our waters during winter. The two are almost inseparable in field, but at least they are large cormorants.

Birds breeding in the Stockholm area usually spend their winters, in central and southern Europe. They return in February to March and leaving us in August to October. Like many migratory birds, some of them now also stay during the winter. Climate change may be guilty of it. In the spring, the adult cormorants have a beautiful plumage with white elements on the head and at the legs. They build nests out of twigs that can be used for years and become like "chimneys" when built on the ground. They prefer to build nests on the ground but can also breed in nests in trees. They lay 3-6 eggs that are incubated for about 28 days. After less than 2 months the young ones leave the nests. When many cormorants nest tightly together, the droppings have a joint affect at most of the vegetation. Trees are



broken down and the ground vegetation is declining. On the day the cormorants leave the site, however, an intense herb and shrub vegetation will occur and the islands become green oases. During the 19th century, bird droppings were imported, largely from cormorants, into Europe from South America. It was guano that was used as manure for Europe's fields.

The cormorant eats fish and is a so-called generalist: it eats what is available and is easiest to catch at the moment. In the Stockholm archipelago, surveys show that Herring, Eelpout, Perch and Carpfish are popular prey. Even small fish i.e Three-spined stickleback are on the menu. The cormorants fish both alone and sometimes in larger flocks.