

Migratory Bird Depredation Permits Issued to Southeast Aquaculture Facilities

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Abstract: This paper summarizes the issuance of federal depredation permits to commercial aquaculture facilities in the Southeast Region by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 1989 to 1996. Data were evaluated from 1,103 depredation permits issued to individual aquaculture facilities allowing lethal take of fish-eating birds. The take of 21 species of birds comprised of waders, fliers, and swimmers was permitted. In the 9 states where permits were authorized, the number of facilities receiving permits increased from 54 in 1989 to 228 in 1996. The number of birds allowed in the take increased from 7,401 in 1989 to 28,991 in 1996. Sixty percent of the birds permitted for take at aquaculture facilities were reported taken. The double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) was the species most often requested for taking (N = 70,888). Most depredation permits were issued to aquaculture sites in Mississippi (N = 459) and Arkansas (N = 448). We conclude that the trend in permit issuance reflects the increased number of commercial aquaculture facilities in the Southeast, increased awareness of the problem, and increases in some fish-eating bird populations such as the double-crested cormorant.

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