

OVERVIEW OF AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN IMPACTS TO SOUTHEASTERN AQUACULTURE

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Abstract: In 1990, USDA Wildlife Services offices in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi began receiving complaints concerning American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) foraging in commercial channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*) ponds. Because of the relatively shallow pond depth and high fish stocking rates used by most producers, commercial aquaculture provides a near perfect foraging environment for an increasing American white pelican population. Although pelicans are not currently as numerous as double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), individual farmer losses to pelican predation can be devastating. American white pelicans are capable of eating about 2 kg per day and as many as 2000 pelicans have been observed foraging in one catfish pond in the delta region of Mississippi. Not only do American white pelicans forage at aquaculture facilities, they also carry various diseases that can infect many aquaculture species. Since 1993, Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center biologists have conducted research to learn more about pelican ecology. Here, I provide an overview of American white pelican research and their impacts to southeastern aquaculture.

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