

November 5, 2004

**NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:**

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**Texas Finalizes Cormorant Control Permit**

Local areas in Texas besieged by the double-crested cormorant, a federally-protected bird more commonly referred to as the water turkey, can get depredation relief under a new Texas Parks and Wildlife Department control permit program.

The permit gained approval from the TPWD Commission and will be available to individuals and local entities later this fall.

The department estimates there may be around 2,000 cormorant-control permits issued in Texas in the first year. Permits cost \$12 and allow holders or their designated agents to kill cormorants on specific tracts of land. Permit holders will be required annually to report the number of cormorants killed.

The double-crested cormorant is a long-necked, long-lived waterbird that nests in colonies, meaning they tend to congregate in one area where present. Federal biologists estimate there are 2 million double-crested cormorants in the U.S., mostly breeding in Canada and the Great Lakes, making it the most abundant of six cormorant species in North America. Cormorant numbers have increased by about 7.5 percent per year since 1975. The birds eat mainly fish, up to one pound per day, usually smaller (less than 6-inch) bottom-dwelling school or "forage" fish.

The Texas cormorant control permit does not apply to several similar birds, including Gulf-coast natives such as the neotropic cormorant, the anhinga and other fish-eating birds such as kingfishers, cranes and herons.

Federal authorities say more study is needed to verify how cormorants affect fish populations, which fluctuate based on water quality, habitat and other factors. However,

recent research at Oneida Lake in New York and eastern Lake Ontario suggests that cormorants can diminish the number of fish of catchable-size available to anglers.

For information about the cormorant permit, including applications, contact TPWD Wildlife Permitting, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744 or call (512) 389-4491.

SL 08/30/2004

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