



CROW

Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife



Angler Actions to Minimize Impacts on Pelicans

LIFE HISTORY



Like many seabirds, the Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) habitat and migration range includes the Gulf of Mexico from Texas through Florida. These birds roam from Virginia to the mouth of the Amazon River on the Atlantic side and from central California to south-central Chile on the Pacific side. Under perfect conditions, a pelican can live to be 30 or more years old, weigh between 5 and 8 pounds, and eat up to 4 pounds of fish per day. Their wingspan can range from 6 or 7-feet, tip to tip, and they can fly in winds up to 35 miles per hour. When fishing, a pelican pouch can hold up to 3 gallons of fish and water.

Brown Pelicans breed in large colonies, which may consist of several hundred pairs, nesting in bushes, or in trees, usually on small estuarine islands where they can be free from disturbance from terrestrial predators. The nests are built out of twigs and grasses constructed by the female. After breeding in late fall or early winter, the females lay 2 to 4 eggs. The eggs are incubated for 30 days. The young are full grown and able to fly by 11 to 12 weeks and are sexually mature at 2 ½ to 3 years of age.

Immature pelicans are brown with a white belly. Adults' colors change seasonally from a white head and brown neck to a yellow head with a white neck.

STATUS

In the mid-1970's, brown pelicans were in danger of becoming extinct. DDT, which was ingested by eating contaminated fish, resulted in the birds laying eggs with shells so thin, that they broke during incubation. The results were dramatic. No brown pelicans were left in Louisiana, where it is the state bird, and they were on the endangered species lists for Florida, Texas and California. DDT was eventually banned and in the spring of 1975 a brown pelican egg was hatched in captivity for the first time at the Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary in Indian Shores, Florida. In the last 15 years the brown pelican population has rebounded resulting in the removal of the brown pelican from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Species in 2009.

CURRENT ISSUES

Pelicans still face many problems. 90% of the injuries to brown pelicans are due to fishing hooks and line. Of this 90%, one-third of them have swallowed hooks.

Brown pelicans cannot digest large fish bones. The bones will get stuck and poke holes through their stomach. In the wild pelicans eat small fish with small soft bones.

HOW TO AVOID INJURING BROWN PELICANS

- Fish with deep running lures or bait with sinkers when pelicans are present.
- Do not discard fishing line except in trash receptacles or appropriate recycling bins.
- Do not cut up large fish carcasses and feed them to the birds.
- Dispose of large fish carcasses properly so birds cannot get them.

IF YOU ACCIDENTALLY HOOK A PELICAN

- Do not cut out the line
- Tighten the line before the bait is completely swallowed
- Gently pull the pelican toward you, grasp the beak, remove all sinkers and cut off the excess line.
- All hook and line injuries should be referred to your nearest wildlife rehabilitation center. 50% of birds with external hooks also have internal hooks.

TO REPORT VIOLATIONS OR HARASSMENT STATEWIDE:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission800 342-5367
 Wildlife Alert.....888 404-3922

TO REPORT INJURED WILDLIFE IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Clinic for the Rehabilitation Of Wildlife (CROW).....(239) 472-3644 ext 1
 The Conservancy of SW Florida’s Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic.....(239) 262-2273

This information was a cooperative effort on behalf of the following organizations to help residents of Lee County to learn about brown pelican conservation efforts.



CROW
Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife



Joy Hazell
Lee County Sea Grant Agent
239-533-7518
hazellje@leegov.com
www.solutionsforyourlife.com

The Extension Service is an off-campus branch of the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Extension programs are open to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. In compliance with ADA requirements, participants with special needs can be reasonably accommodated by contacting the Extension Service at least 10 working days prior to the meeting. Contact Extension at (239) 533-7500 or by fax at (239) 485-2305.