

If You Accidentally Hook a Pelican:

1. Do not cut the line.
2. Tighten the line before the line is completely swallowed.
3. Gently pull the pelican toward you, grasp the beak, remove all sinkers and cut off the excess line.
4. Release the bird or call one of the numbers below for further instructions.

Reporting Violations or Harassment Statewide:

Florida Marine Patrol 800-342-5367
 Florida Resource Alert 800-342-1821

Reporting Injured Birds - Miami:

Pelican Harbor Seabird Sanctuary 305-751-9840
 Florida Keys Wild Bird Center 305-852-4486
 Wildlife Rescue of Dade 305-235-5315

For More Information on Brown Pelicans:

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
 Office of Protected Species
 3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

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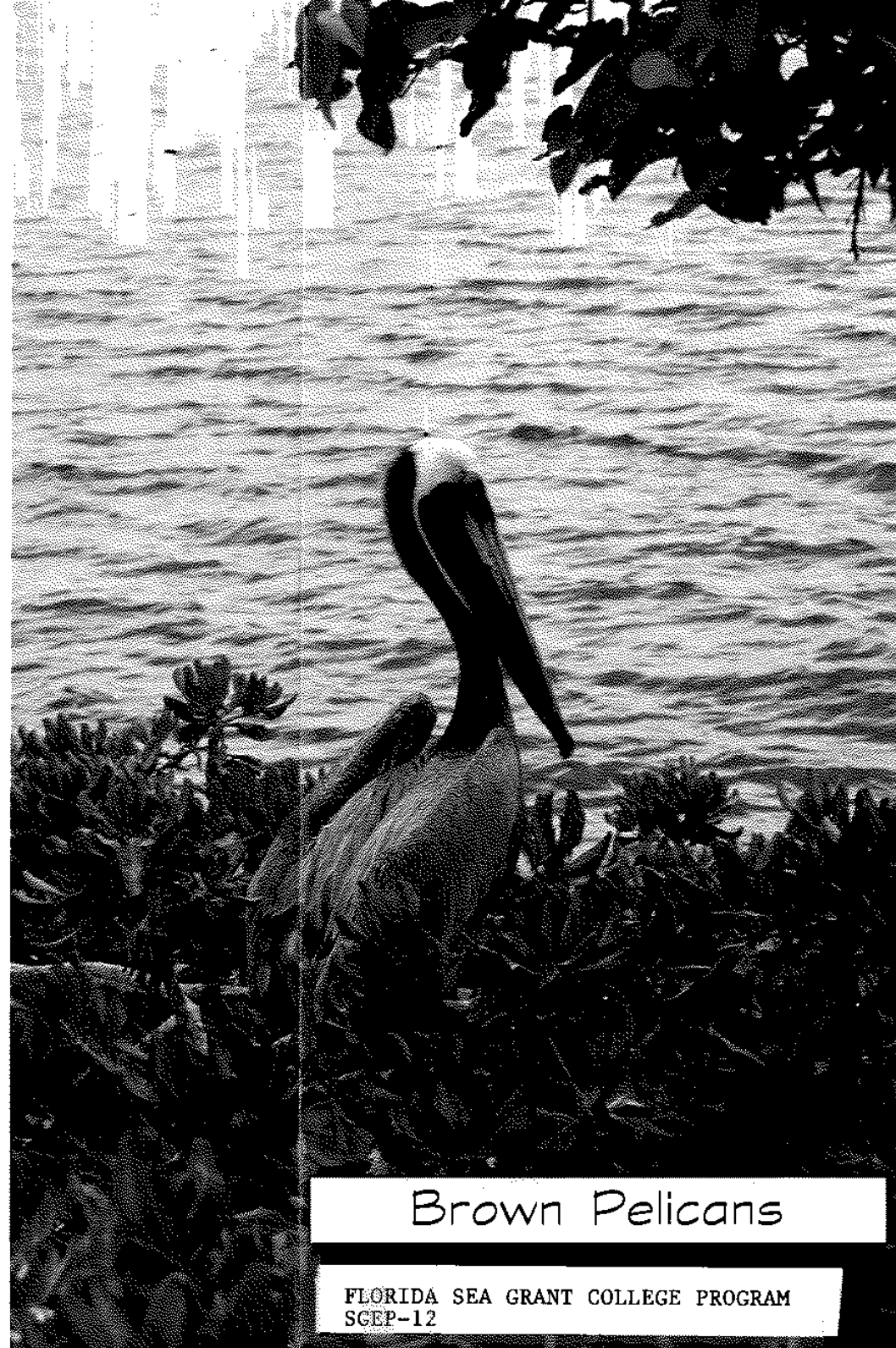
This brown pelican fact sheet was produced by Harrison Bresee, the Miami - Dade County Marine Extension Agent for the Florida Sea Grant College Program.

For more information, contact the Miami - Dade County Marine Extension Office at: 305-461-4017 or the Florida Sea Grant College Program at: University of Florida - P.O. Box 110400 - Gainesville, FL 32611-0400 - 352-392-5870.

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Florida Sea Grant College Program -
 Research, extension and education for a better coastal environment.



Brown Pelicans

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INTRODUCTION

The good news is that brown pelicans are making a comeback from near extinction. These pelicans are not shy birds and they share the same desires as many coastal fishermen; they want to catch and eat fish. The bad news is that while pursuing these goals, thousands of the birds are injured or killed each year by humans.

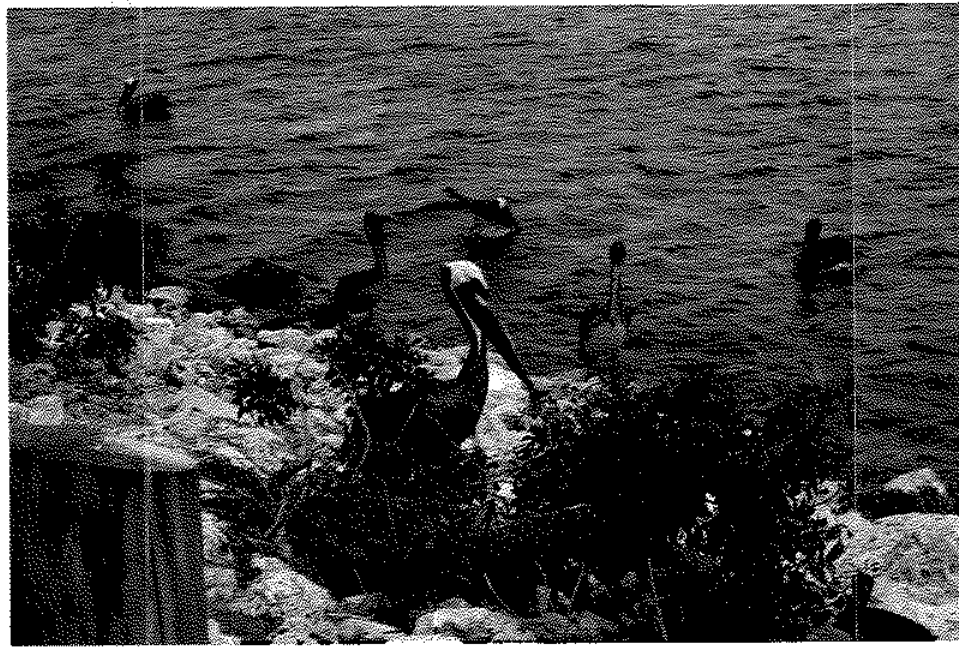
Many of these incidents could be avoided. Below is information about brown pelicans, tips on how to avoid injuring them and contact numbers if you observe an injured bird.

LIFE HISTORY

Like many seabirds, the brown pelican's (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) habitat and migration range includes the Gulf of Mexico from Texas through Florida, and parts of the Atlantic and Pacific coastal regions. Typically, these birds roam from Virginia to the mouth of the Amazon River on the Atlantic side and from central California to south-central Chile and the Galapagos 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 up to 6 or 7-feet, tip to tip, and they can fly in winds up to 35 miles per hour.

In Florida, the birds nest in mangrove trees. The nests are built out of twigs and grasses constructed by the female. After breeding in the late fall or early winter, the females lay between 2 to 4 eggs. The eggs are incubated for 30 days. The young are full grown and able to fly at 11 or 12 weeks and are sexually mature at 2 ½ to 3 years of age.



Immature pelicans are brown with a white belly and mature pelicans have a blackish belly with a silverish back. Adults have a white head and reddish brown neck during the summer and a yellow head and white neck during the winter. The yellow head is mating plumage.

STATUS

In the mid-1970s, brown pelicans were in danger of becoming extinct. The cause of the brown pelican's decrease in population was directly attributed to the pesticide DDT. 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 they are 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 downgrading from an endangered species to the status of protected species.

CURRENT ISSUES

- ❖ Fully 90 percent of the injuries associated with brown pelicans are due to fishing hooks and line.
- ❖ The majority of the other 10 percent of injuries is due to pelicans ingesting large fish carcasses offered by coastal fishermen.
- ❖ Even though degraded and lost habitat is a problem the population is increasing.

HOW TO AVOID INJURING BROWN PELICANS

- ❖ When fishing avoid casting lures near flying, swimming, or perching birds.
- ❖ Do not attempt to hit a brown pelican with a lure.
- ❖ Do not discard fishing line except in trash receptacles or appropriate recycling bins.
- ❖ Do not feed brown pelicans large fish carcasses -- the bones will get stuck in their throats. Large fish carcasses are carcasses from fish that pelicans would not naturally be able to catch. For example, dolphin (*Coryphaena hippurus*- not the mammal) are not a natural part of the pelican's diet.
- ❖ Do not cut up large fish carcasses and feed them to the birds.
- ❖ Dispose of large fish carcasses so that brown pelicans can not get them.