



Mountaineire Avian Rescue Society
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Brown Pelican

by Sandy Fairfield

Gregarious and comical by nature Brown Pelicans are one bird that almost everyone can identify. These pelicans are found along the southern reaches of the eastern and western seaboards of North America, migration takes them into Mexico and South America, occasionally they can be found as far north as the coast of British Columbia.

Brown Pelicans are one of seven species of pelican and prefer shallow water along the coastlines where they rarely venture more than twenty miles off shore. Although they are quite at home sitting on pylons, piers, or docks they usually roost on sandbars and spits, but when breeding they choose small islands devoid of mammalian predators. Waddling from side to side Brown Pelicans are clumsy on land but in the air they are graceful fliers that glide above the surface of the water keeping an eye out for the reflection of schooling fish.

These are large birds that can weigh between 2 to 5 kilograms; they have stocky bodies, long broad wings, and short tails. Their legs are short and their feet are unique having all four toes united by webbed skin. Probably the most recognizable feature of the pelican is its "gular" pouch, which hangs from the lower mandible of a long bill and extends to become

a huge soft skinned fishing net. This pouch can hold up to ten liters of water and fish, it is also the pelican version of an air conditioner as it flutters the moistened pouch to cool its body during hot weather.

Adult Brown Pelicans have gray-brown bodies and wings, but their necks are white and they have a yellow crown on the top of their heads, the juvenile necks and heads are all brown. During the breeding season, their coloration becomes more vibrant especially the eyes that turn blue surrounded by bright pink skin and the gular pouch turns bright red.

Breeding takes place in large colonies often the nests are within pecking distance of each other. The male chooses the nest site and then proceeds to lure and impress a female with complicated head movements, if successful he will offer her sticks from his pouch and she will build the nest. Nests are usually built on the ground and can be quite elaborately woven, both birds will roost together at night, one will always remain on the nest during the day to incubate the eggs. Between one and four eggs are produced and incubation is very unique, the adults will essentially stand on the eggs holding them under the webbed skin that stretches between their toes. Hatchlings are blind naked, pink and helpless, the parents will regurgitate food in the bottom of the nest for ten days, by then the young are able to put their heads inside the parent's bill and help themselves.

Do not forget you can support us by donating your Club Z, Mohawk, Canadian Tire Dollars, Quality Foods, Q points to MARS, Call 337-2021 and ask how.

MARS recently purchased new 2 way radios with collected Canadian Tire money. These radios help staff keep in touch with volunteers on our 3 acre property. Thanks to all our contributors efforts, especially Jenny Christmas.



Brown Pelican populations have fluctuated over the last few decades they were on the endangered list mainly due to pesticide poisoning, which caused their eggs to break during nesting. They were also hunted for meat and their skins by the first Native Americans, and shot for their feathers to supply the millinery trade. Today they face new perils from habitat locations in shipping lanes, close proximity to oil and chemical refineries, and also from entanglement in sport fishing gear or pouches being torn by fish hooks. Climate changes are also affecting these birds and El Nino has pushed some of their fish sources further north or further out to sea.

A Brown Pelican was admitted to MARS on November 22, 2006 found at Oyster Bay after first spotted on Nov 17 in Comox Harbour.

Our thanks to Dr. Stacey Gastis who examined the pelican, took X-rays, and completed blood work in order to rule out any major injury. On admittance to our center hypothermia was the main concern, after four days of force-feeding she was eating on her own, ten days later her appetite seemed insatiable.

We are grateful yet again to the **International Bird Rescue & Recovery Centre (IBRRC) in San Pedro, California. Walcan Sea Food, & Bluewater Bait, D.F.O. and Coldstar Trucking** who supplied all the herring needed for her recovery.

Thanks to the many donors for their interest and financial support. Thanks to CH TV and Global as well as A Channel the CV Echo, and the CV Record for media exposure. Finally thanks go to Pacific Coastal and Air Canada for air transport to LAX and IBRRC Thanks to Worldwide Animal Travel for help in transfer she was shipped on February 26, 2007.

The paper work to ship her included import permits from US Fish & Wildlife, and US Dept of Agriculture. Also, a Heath certificate from Canadian Food Inspection Agency, prior to departure and Export Permit from Ministry of Permits and Authorization Branch Service. Thanks to **Sunrise Vet clinic, and Dr. Livingston from the CFIA.** Our sincere appreciation goes to Michelle Belizzi from IBRRC for her good advice from the beginning and for hanging in there.

The pelican was finally released on March 26, 2007 with an adult bird in California. in good health.



LEAVE A LEGACY FOR WILDLIFE

Consider leaving a legacy for wildlife in your community by considering MARS in your will or by donating to wildlife care in memory of a loved one. Bequests will help MARS in planning capital projects to build more cages and pens for the future. MARS must grow with its growing need in the community.

We wish to express our sincere sympathy to Sandy Fairfield and her family at the recent passing of her "mum" Peggy (Antoinette) Croucher. She was passionate about nature and with Sandy's work as the educational coordinator at MARS. Peggy enjoyed her life at Casa Loma and would sometimes visit us here.



Worm Roundup ...



Did you know that a robin can eat 14 feet of earthworms every day? By my calculations that is about 120 earthworms laid end to end. Robins are the first ones up in the morning and the last ones to be quiet at night – because they are busy feeding babies. They feed them often from dawn to dusk. The male robin continues to feed newly fledged (out of the nest) young on the ground, while the female is beginning to incubate a 2nd, 3rd or even 4th clutch of eggs.

Often, robins can be seen picking up several worms or bugs in their mouth before finding the young to stuff them full and then go looking for more. The babies will usually stay in one spot in the yard or on a bush and chirp loudly so the father can find them. Later, as they get older, they can be seen following “papa” (he’s the one with the very dark, black head) around the yard as he teaches them to find the worms and how to pull them out of the ground.

Baby robins don’t usually fall out of the nest but jump or are pushed out. Often, fledgeling baby robins are picked up by thoughtful folks thinking they are injured because they don’t fly very well. These birds are KIDNAPPED!!! If you find a baby robin you can move it to a safe branch nearby or if it is in the road. Then watch from a distance to see if the parents are nearby. They have a much better chance to learn how to survive if they stay with their parents. If you are unsure call us first.

Robins are very good parents and you can often hear them nearby if you listen closely. Sometimes you can hear the alarm calls of the robins and can find an OWL sitting in a tree nearby. Robins are very persistent when they think there is danger near their nest.

MARS WORM ROUND UP – help us feed the baby robins. While digging in your garden, keep a container and lid with airholes, put a bit of moist soil. Keep it handy and add any worms you find. Keep them cool, dark and not too wet.. Bring to MARS dropoff box.

Wish List

We can always use consumables such as:
Paper products: toilet paper, paper towels.

Cleaning Supplies:

Detergent, Bleach, Dawn Dishwashing soap, plastic spray bottles Mops, brooms

Feed:

Nuts & Berries – Walnuts, Hazelnuts, Blueberries, strawberries, blackberries
Cat kibble and canned cat food, freeze dried fish food such as krill, plankton, bloodworms and tubifex worms

Other needs:

Lawn Mower
Building material for the new Mews.
Dimensional lumber (2X6 and 2X4), Plywood, Roofing Material, Siding.
Pressure Washer

Pedialyte, vanilla ensure, Strawberry boost (can be outdated) Vitamins, B50, C, Cod liver oil, E, B1, Calcium carbonate

Volunteering @ MARS

By Laurie Ulm

It all began about a year and a half ago when I saw a short piece in one of the local papers about the Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society (MARS) looking for new volunteers and to attend an open house if interested. The timing was right in my life. My kids were all on their own now and I was looking to do something meaningful outside of the usual realms of home and work. I had always loved animals, especially birds so this seemed like a good fit for me. I decided to check it out.

The facility, located at 6817 Headquarters Road in Merville, is a short drive from Courtenay through some very beautiful agricultural land. Having arrived at the site I was met by several of the volunteers and Maj Birch, the founder and senior rehabilitator of the Society. Everyone was so friendly and obviously enthusiastic about the work carried out at the Centre. I was impressed and decided I would sign up for training as a caregiver. This meant undergoing a training period of once a week for 6 weeks and committing to work a minimum of 4 hours a week for at least 3 months. Thus, my time at MARS began.

