



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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For Release November 10, 1983

THE BROWN PELICAN HAS RECOVERED IN EASTERN STATES,  
MAY BE REMOVED FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

The eastern brown pelican has recovered from the former devastating effects of pesticides and is doing so well that it may be taken off the endangered species list, G. Ray Arnett, Interior Department Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks announced today.

"The recovery of the eastern brown pelican is very good news," Arnett said. "This is the ultimate goal of conservation efforts on behalf of endangered species--to bring them back to a healthy status."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed removing the brown pelican from the endangered species list in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and elsewhere along the east coast. The proposal published in the November 10, 1983, Federal Register, does not affect brown pelicans in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, California, Mexico, Central and South America, or the West Indies, where the birds are still considered endangered.

The brown pelicans' recovery is due mainly to decreasing environmental residues of persistent pesticides, according to wildlife biologists. Brown pelicans are particularly sensitive to pesticides and may suffer ill effects even when other bird species do not. During the late 1950's and early 1960's, brown pelican populations crashed along the Louisiana and Texas coasts, where the birds had numbered about 50,000. The brown pelican disappeared as a nesting bird in Louisiana and only a few pairs nested in Texas. Brown pelicans in the east did not decline so severely, but pelican populations in South Carolina experienced eggshell thinning and decreased reproduction. The species was listed as endangered throughout its range in 1970. Research has since shown that pesticides probably caused the bird's decline both through direct poisoning and through effects on reproduction. The decline in Louisiana has been traced to the organochlorine pesticide endrin, while the problems in South Carolina were caused by DDT, and its principal metabolite, DDE.

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The status of the eastern brown pelican has been improving gradually since the 1972 ban on DDT and restrictions on other pesticide use. Censuses of breeding brown pelicans show that the number of nests in Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Texas has doubled since 1976 to more than 16,000 in 1982. In South Carolina alone the number of nests increased from 2,540 in 1976 to nearly 5,000 in 1983. Biologists say the pelicans now occupy all the suitable rookery sites in South Carolina and the pelican population is expanding into North Carolina, where the number of nests has increased from 75 in 1976 to 1,250 in 1983.

Other signs of recovery include the first recorded nesting by brown pelicans in Alabama, which occurred this year. Corresponding with the rise in pelican numbers, biologists have noted a decrease in chemical contaminants in pelican eggs. And although still considered endangered in Louisiana and Texas, pelican numbers in those States have also improved. Pelicans have been transplanted from Florida to Louisiana, and there are now some 300 pelican nests in Louisiana. The number of nests in Texas has increased from only 2 in 1968 to more than 100 last year.

Biologists are optimistic about the future of the eastern brown pelican because most of its rookeries are protected by the Federal government, States, or private conservation groups. Because of its sensitivity to pesticides, however, the eastern brown pelican will continue to be closely monitored. The species receives Federal protection from injury or taking under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Comments on the proposal to remove the eastern brown pelican from "endangered" status are welcome for 60 days and should be addressed to: Field Supervisor, Endangered Species Field Station, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jackson Mall Office Center, Suite 3185, 300 Woodrow Wilson Avenue, Jackson, Mississippi 39213-7685.