

American White Pelican

Pelecanus Eurthrorhynchos

Description

The American White Pelican is one of the largest (2.8+ m, 8-11 ft wingspan) and heaviest (5-8 kg, 11-19 lb) birds in the world, and that's with the typical hollow bones of flighted birds! This is a pure white bird, with black wings. It lives near lakes and rivers with shallows and good fish populations. White Pelicans feed on the surface of the water by dipping their heads and pouches (gular sac) in unison into schools of fish while swimming together in formation (like synchronized swimmers). The gular sac can hold 13 liters of fish and water! Their flight is distinct as they have slow wing beats seeming to flap in sequence down a line of birds. They come in their long 'V' shaped lines to Alberta every spring to breed in large colonies in our wetlands. An average of 2-3 eggs are laid, incubated for 4 weeks, the young leave the nest after 3-4 weeks. Migration in the fall is to the Gulf of Mexico coastal area.

FUN FACTS

- Breeding adults develop a horny knob on the end of their long bills which falls off after breeding season.
- They face many hazards on their migratory journey from oil spills, to weather events such as hurricanes to power lines.
- American White Pelicans are very sensitive to human presence and may abandon nests if disturbed.
- On their wintering grounds they forage by day but at their breeding grounds forage by night.

If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal in distress, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at **403-214-1312** for tips, instructions and advice, or visit the website for more information www.calgarywildlife.org



Contact Us

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