

The pelican has been the symbol of the Elizabeth River Project since its beginnings representing rebirth and restoration. Pelicans were absent from the Elizabeth river until the 1980s, but have made a HUGE COMEBACK in recent years.



Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis

Size: Adult males can reach 11 pounds with a wingspan over 7.5 ft. **Lifespan:** Average 27 years. According to www.AllAboutBirds.org the oldest Brown Pelican on record was 43 years old.

Habitat: The Brown Pelican is a shore bird found along the Elizabeth River and nests on Virginia's Eastern Shore Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge. The female builds the nest in 7–10 days and the male gathers sticks. Nests can measure 30 inches across, 4 inches deep and 9 inches high on sides.

Diet: Mainly fish like menhaden, herring and anchovies. Brown Pelicans catch fish by plunging into water headfirst as high as 65 feet and coming to surface – filtering up to 2.6 gallons of water with fish in its expandable pouch bill. Brown pelicans fly in groups – squadrons and sometimes in a V formation.

Appearance: Brown pelicans have a large, dark body, long bill, and very large pouch under their bill. They have webbed feet and adults have mainly brown feathers, while young brown pelicans have mainly white feathers. They have great eyesight and can see fish as far as 65 feet away.

Predators: Wild cats, dogs, and raccoons may eat the young pelicans.

Voice: Adults are mainly silent, only making sounds during special “wing-jerking” displays. https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown_Pelican/sounds

What can you do? Loss of habitat, pollution, and sea level rise are the main threats to the Brown Pelican. Reduce plastic and protecting our shorelines can help these beautiful birds thrive.

On-Line Resources

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown_Pelican/id

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/S=0/fieldguide/critter/brown_pelican

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/species-profile-brown-pelican>

<https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/viewSpecies.php?species=979>

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/environment/article_8c2fece9-5d21-5ea6-a20a-2d60dcedd823.html



www.elizabethriver.org