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• *Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Wildlife Research
Projects Office, 4005 South Main Street, Gainesville, Florida 32601.*

CORRESPONDENCE

Editor

Florida Field Naturalist

I believe I must comment on the article "Singular Brown Pelican Feeding Behavior" (*Fla. Field Nat.*, 2: 44), by S.J. Stedman. This is an interesting observation but I question the interpretation. Additionally, Brown Pelicans on fresh water in Florida are not unusual. I have spent the past six and a half years observing Brown Pelicans in Florida and during this time have observed them on fresh water on numerous occasions and have received several similar observations from other individuals. While I have not observed the specific behavior described in the second paragraph of this note on fresh water, this type of behavior is normal activity of immature birds on salt water. In fact, for a few weeks immediately after fledging, immature birds spend considerable time singly or in small flocks, billing each other, grasping at and pulling branches and leaves through their bills, dipping their bills into the water, lifting and tossing branches, leaves, and other vegetation, making apparent swallowing motions of the pouch and head, and generally learning to manipulate the bill and undoubtedly developing the neural-muscular coordination necessary to begin capturing fish.

I believe that the correct interpretation of this "singular feeding" observations lies not in the fact that Brown Pelicans can utilize fresh water for feeding and that non-fish food is eaten, neither of which is demonstrated in this note, but merely that this was a young, inexperienced bird still in the process of learning to behave as a pelican should.

Ralph W. Schreiber, Seabird Research, Inc., 11008 Teegreen Dr.,
Tampa, Fla. 33612.