

A NOTE ON THE STATUS OF THE BROWN PELICAN IN MISSISSIPPI

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In the 1940s a flock of "100 or more" Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) was seen on the Mississippi Coast in August (Burleigh 1944). In the next decade, a decline was noticed and recorded (Turcotte 1965) and 10 years later the species had virtually disappeared (Williams and Martin 1968). On 13 October 1970, the species was placed on the U.S. Endangered Species list for the following reasons: (1) accumulation of chlorinated hydrocarbons in the egg; declining food supply, and (3) human disturbance of nesting colonies (Woodard 1980). These problems began to clear up when in the late 1960s DDT-laden pesticides were banned in the U.S. (Edgerton 1992), and when the food supply improved as populations of juvenile menhaden reached highs in 1974 and 1980 (unpublished data, GCRL).

This year (1994) the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources reports (personal communication) that the Brown Pelican is no longer on the Federal Endangered Species list, but is still on the state list as there is no known nesting in Mississippi at this time. The nearest known nesting is in Mobile Bay, Alabama, 15-20 miles to the east. Recently Jackson (1983) and Toups and Jackson (1987) mentioned increasing numbers of these birds on the Mississippi Gulf coast. A recent television commercial sponsored by International Paper Company mentions a comeback of the Brown Pelican in this area. On 19 July 1994, I observed a flock of 72 young Brown Pelicans land on Marsh Point in Ocean Springs, Jackson County, Mississippi. I have lived on the Mississippi Coast for 35 years and this is the largest flock of Brown Pelicans I have seen here.

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