



NEWS

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Secretary Kempthorne Announces Proposal to Remove the Brown Pelican from the Endangered Species List

BATON ROUGE, La – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today celebrated the brown pelican’s remarkable recovery from the brink of extinction by formally proposing to remove the remaining protected populations of the bird along the Gulf and Pacific coasts, and in the Caribbean, and Central and South America from protection under the Endangered Species Act. Kempthorne announced the proposal at the Louisiana Governor’s Mansion in Baton Rouge during a joint appearance with Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal.

“Thanks to decades of coordinated efforts on the part of state and federal agencies, conservation organizations and private landowners, the pelican has rebounded to historic levels,” said Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne. “I’d like to thank Governor Jindal and the State of Louisiana for their contributions to the pelican’s recovery and for inviting me here to mark this milestone in conservation history.”

Kempthorne also noted that the pelican’s recovery is due in large measure to the federal ban on the general use of the pesticide DDT in 1972, after former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* and alerted the nation to the dangers of unrestricted pesticide use.

“The brown pelican is known for its fishing displays, plunging headlong from the air into the water and rising with a mouthful of fish. In the same dramatic fashion, the pelican has pulled off an amazing recovery after a steep plunge toward extinction,” said Kempthorne. “There are now more than 620,000 brown pelicans found across Florida and the Gulf and Pacific Coasts of our nation, as well as in the Caribbean and Latin America.”

Louisiana, long known as the “pelican state,” has been a key partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in efforts to recover the pelican in the Gulf Coast region. For

example, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission jointly implemented a restoration project. A total of 1,276 young pelicans were captured at sites in Florida and released at three sites in southeastern Louisiana during the 13 years of the project.

"The mechanism put in place to protect these birds and the dedicated people on the ground who brought them back from the brink of extinction demonstrate how ecosystem protection does make a difference," said Robert Barham, secretary of the Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries. "Over 350,000 brown pelicans have been produced in Louisiana since 1971."

Efforts to protect the brown pelican led to the birth of the National Wildlife Refuge System more than a century ago in central Florida, where a German immigrant named Paul Kroegel became appalled by the indiscriminate slaughter of pelicans for their feathers. His impassioned pleas to President Theodore Roosevelt led Roosevelt to create the first National Wildlife Refuge at Pelican Island in 1903 and name Kroegel its first refuge manager. More than a century later, there are 548 national wildlife refuges, many of which have played key roles in the brown pelican's recovery.

In the southwest, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, The Nature Conservancy and numerous other conservation organizations helped purchase important nesting sites and develop monitoring programs to ensure pelican rookeries were thriving. Other habitat protection and restoration efforts within the U.S., Mexico, and some Central and South American countries have also contributed to the pelican's recovery.

"Exactly 24 years ago this week, we celebrated the recovery of brown pelicans on the Atlantic coast," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall. "The legal protections provided by the Endangered Species Act, coupled with the banning of DDT in 1972, provided the means for the Service and its partners to accelerate the pelican's recovery. State wildlife agencies, universities, private ornithological groups and individuals participated in reintroduction efforts and helped protect nest sites during the breeding season."

If the brown pelican is removed from the list of threatened and endangered species, federal agencies would not be required to consult with the Service to ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out will avoid or minimize harm to the species. Other federal laws, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act, would continue to protect the brown pelican, its nests and its eggs from harm should the bird be removed from Endangered Species Act protection.

Further, the Service is working with state natural resource agencies where the brown pelican occurs to develop cooperative management agreements to ensure that the species continues to be monitored and protected should it be removed from the endangered species list. The Endangered Species Act also requires the Service to work with the state natural resource agencies to monitor the population and threats to the species for a minimum of five years after it is delisted. Should the population numbers decrease or the

threats to pelicans change, brown pelicans can be relisted under the Endangered Species Act.

The brown pelican was first declared endangered in 1970 under the Endangered Species Conservation Act, a precursor to the current Endangered Species Act. The brown pelican in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and northward along the Atlantic Coast states was removed from the list of endangered species in 1985. There are now more than 620,000 brown pelicans found across Florida and the Gulf and Pacific Coasts of our nation, as well as the Caribbean and Latin America. Today's proposal would remove Endangered Species Act protection from all remaining protected populations of brown pelicans.

The proposal to remove the bird from the list of threatened and endangered species will be published in the Federal Register. The Service will seek comments on the proposal for 60 days following publication. Comments may be submitted by hand-delivery or mail to the Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AV28, Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222, Arlington, VA 22203. Comments may also be submitted electronically on the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

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