

CALIFORNIA BROWN PELICAN
(Pelecanus occidentalis californicus)

STATUS: Recovered under the Endangered Species Act (November 17, 2009, [74 FR 59444](#)). The brown pelican remains protected under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Large (up to 3.6 kg (8 lb), dark gray-brown fish-eating water bird with webbed feet, a pouch underneath its long bill, and a wingspan of 2.1 m (7 ft). Adults have a white head and neck, a brownish-black breast and belly, and silver-grayish upper parts. Pelicans are excellent swimmers with a large dip-net like mouth pouch for holding fish.

HABITAT: Coastal areas, with nesting occurring on islands. Species found occasionally along Arizona's lakes and rivers.

RANGE: Historical: The subspecies occurred on the Pacific coast from Canada through Mexico, breeding as far north as central California. The pelican was occasionally found on the Lower Colorado River as an annual post-breeding wanderer.

Current: Most Arizona records are along the Colorado River including north to Davis Dam and Lake Mead (Yuma, La Paz and Mohave counties); and Gila Valley (Maricopa, Pinal, Yuma, and Gila counties); but stragglers reach most of the state (Tolani Lakes, Navajo Indian Reservation, Salt River, and other areas). Populations exist along the California and Mexico coasts. No nesting has been documented in Arizona.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: The primary cause was reproductive failure due to organochloride pesticide use (especially DDT use in U.S. prior to the 1980s and continuing today in countries south of the U.S.). Although low levels of DDE contamination will probably persist for many years in areas where DDT was used, the impact to pelican populations is now believed to be negligible and is expected to continue to lessen over time.

NOTES: A draft [Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan](#), designed to monitor and verify the recovered, delisted population remains secure from risk of extinction has been developed. For more information, contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Suite 101, Carlsbad, California 92011; or (760) 431-9440; or www.fws.gov/carlsbad/.