



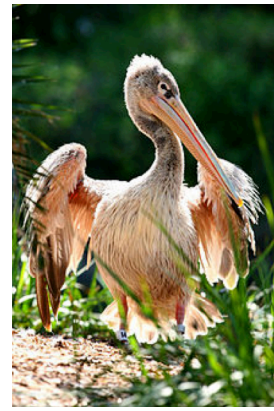
PINK BACKED PELICAN

PELECANIFORMES

Family: Pelecanidae

Genus: *Pelecanus*

Species: *rufescens*



Range: Subtropical and tropical Africa, Saudi Arabia, southern India

Habitat: Swamps and shallow lakes; may occur in alkaline and saline waters but prefers fresh

Niche: Aquatic, carnivorous, diurnal

Wild diet: mainly fish and amphibians, some vertebrates

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild) 15 – 25 years (Captivity) up to 45 years

Sexual dimorphism: males are larger and have larger bills

Location in SF Zoo: Upper lake

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

The pink-backed pelican is among the smallest of pelican species; it is a large water bird with a long, heavy bill, long broad wings and a voluminous distensible pouch. Its plumage is white, gray and pink with dark gray wing tips; the pink back and rump can only be seen when the wings are unfolded. The top of the beak is yellow and has a large hook at the tip for gripping fish. The pouch is usually greyish and is tucked between its long beak and neck; the inside of the pouch is pink. The large bill and gular pouch enable pelicans to catch a substantial amount of fish. A mature breeding adult has long feather plumes on its head.

Long necks allow pelicans to rest their heavy beak on their breast or their back and their short, strong legs and webbed feet facilitate swimming and paddling. Their feet are totipalmate, the webbing connects all four of their toes. They have preening glands for secreting oils that waterproof. A pelican may forage over distances of up to 100 miles per day

Weight: 8.8 – 15.4 lbs
Length: 49 – 61 in
Bill length: 12 – 15 in
Wing span: 7.1 – 9.5 ft

Pelicans are good fliers but must run over the water while beating their big wings and pounding the surface of the water with both feet in unison to get enough speed for takeoff.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

The pink-backed pelican is listed as a species of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List. They currently have a large range and stable populations. They are threatened by habitat loss and pollution. The pink backed pelican went extinct in Madagascar and in Saudi Arabia the numbers are low and near extinction.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Pink-backed pelicans are social birds, but not nearly as social as other pelican species. Unlike most other pelican species, pink-backed pelicans are solitary feeders. These birds feed while swimming, up-ending or partially submerging their bodies in the water. Their main method of fishing is looking out for fish and creeping up on it and capturing the fish with a rapid lunge. Pelicans must drain the water from their gular pouch before swallowing their prey; this makes them vulnerable to being robbed by other seabirds and are often seen with gulls nearby.

Birds cannot sweat, so when pelicans get too hot and need to regulate their body temperature, they flutter or pulsate the gular pouch to cool themselves.

Pelicans are excellent fliers and at soaring. Because of their size, they must run over the water while beating their big wings and pounding the surface of the water with both feet in unison to get enough speed for takeoff.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

This pelican nests in small groups or in large, loose colonies of 20-500 pairs. Each nest is a large heap of sticks. Nesting trees have many nests built close together. These nests are re-used every year until the trees collapse, although the birds will normally remain in the area.

Their bare parts, such as facial skin and pouch, take on more vivid colors during breeding season.

The female lays two to three large white eggs and both sexes incubate the eggs. The chicks feed by plunging their heads deep into the adult's pouch and taking the partially digested regurgitated fish.

Incubation: 30 – 36 days	Sexual Maturity:
# of eggs: 2 – 3	Fledging: 10 -12 weeks

MISCELLANEOUS

It shares its habitat with the great white pelican, which is generally larger and has white instead of greyish plumage.

Pelicans are among the heaviest flying sea birds.

Sources:

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