



FACTSHEET

Australian Pelican



Australian Pelican

Common Name: Australian Pelican

Scientific Name: *Pelecanus conspicillatus*

Noongar Name: Budalang

Conservation Status: Listed as Least Concern under ICUN (2014). All Rottnest Island's fauna is protected under the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987*.

Habitat: Coastal habitat, Wetlands.

Body length: 1.6-1.8 m

Weight: 7-9 kg

Gestation period: 35 days

Number of young: 1-3 (1-3 eggs)

Description:

Pelicans are a very large bird with males being slightly bigger than females. Their most distinctive feature is their long pink bill with its yellow tip and big throat pouch. A pelican's bill is 40-50cm long. It has black eyes ringed with yellow and grey legs and feet. This bird has a white body and very large black wings with white patches.

When the wings are outstretched they give a wingspan of 2.3-2.5m.

When courting for a partner, the colour of the pouch and bill change drastically to shades of bright salmon pink and yellow with the bill changing to cobalt blue with a continual strip from base to tip.

Diet:

Fish, crustaceans, frogs, tadpoles, occasionally young birds like ducklings.

In the Wild:

Pelicans may feed alone but mostly they feed in groups. These groups can be very large ranging from tens to about 1000 birds. They work as a group to drive fish together which makes them easier to catch. Pelicans plunge their bills into the water and use their throat pouches as nets to catch their food. The bill and pouch are sensitive to help find fish in murky water.



When a pelican has caught something, it pulls its pouch into its chest to drain out the water. This also helps it to move the fish so that the head is pointing down the pelican's throat. This makes the fish easier to swallow.

Pelicans spend most of their time on rivers, lakes and coastal waters. You often see them in Thompson Bay. For the breeding season, they fly to breeding sites where groups of thousands are formed. These sites are on isolated islands or shores. The two main sites in Western Australia are Emu Point in Albany and Peel Inlet near Mandurah. They can sometimes travel hundreds of kilometres to breed. Pelicans are excellent at conserving energy, using thermals (updrafts of air) in order to cover these distances as they cannot flap their wings for very long. They commonly fly at around 1000m up in the air, but heights around 3,000 m have also been recorded.

Threats:

- Pollution particularly rubbish and fishing gear.

DID YOU KNOW?

A pelican's throat pouch can hold up to 13 litres of water!