



Mustang Island State Park

EASTERN BROWN PELICAN

Pelecanus occidentalis



Pelicans live in flocks made up of males and females. In flight, they glide in a "V" formation or in a straight line formation with their necks folded against their shoulders.



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Look for pelicans soaring in the air as they look for fish near the surface of the water. When a fish is spotted, the pelican goes into a dive, plunging 30 to 60 feet bill-first into the water. The impact of hitting the water would kill an ordinary bird, but the pelican is equipped with air sacs just beneath the skin to cushion the blow.

The loose skin on the underside of the bill extends to form a scoop net with an amazing capacity of 2.5 gallons. The pelican drains the water from its pouch and tosses its head back to swallow the fish. Their diet consists of menhaden and mullet fish.

They lay 2 to 4 white eggs during breeding season. Young pelicans are fed for about nine weeks. During this time, each nestling will eat about 150 pounds of fish.