

## CALIFORNIA

### Delisting of pelican proposed

[Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer](#)

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A federal wildlife agency said Thursday it will consider removing the California brown pelican from the Endangered Species Act's protected list as a result of the bird's rebound in coastal waters.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it would conduct an official review of the pelican's health, population size and nesting range, and make its finding in December.

Conservationists have considered the California brown pelican a success story under the Endangered Species Act as its numbers have increased in the decades after the 1972 banning of the insecticide DDT and the initiation of other protective measures.

There are about 60,000 nesting pairs in the world, and they mostly breed and fledge young in Baja California, Mexico. About 7,000 pairs breed in California on permanent rookeries on the Channel Islands of Anacapa and Santa Barbara.

While the pelicans have increased in numbers, they haven't returned to the nesting range that they occupied before the pesticide poisonings. They once nested as far north as Point Lobos, just south of Carmel.

The California pelican is about 2 million years old as a species and dives at speeds up to 40 mph from 100 feet in the air. Ornithologists think the way the birds hit the water stuns the fish.

In the mid-1950s, the National Audubon Society's Christmas count began to record the drop in numbers. Scientists discovered the link to DDT and other chlorinated pesticides, which caused thinning and breakage of eggs and other reproductive damage. The plight of birds such as the pelican, bald eagle, peregrine falcon and cormorant were publicized by biologist Rachel Carson in her 1962 book, "Silent Spring."

In 1970, the pelicans abandoned their rookeries. At one point, there was only one fledging pelican on Anacapa. That year, the bird was listed as endangered under the act.

The petition to remove the pelican from the protected list was submitted by the Endangered Species Recovery Council, a nonprofit group of scientists. Peter Galvin, conservation director of the Center for Biological Diversity in San Francisco, said he wasn't aware of efforts to petition for delisting the pelican. But his group didn't plan to oppose it.

"We're excited about the success of the brown pelican's recovery," Galvin said.

A disease has attacked the birds in recent years, he cautioned. Any animal that is reduced in status from endangered to threatened or delisted must be monitored for several years, and surveillance of the disease would be part of fulfilling that task, he said.