

Belize's pelicans under attack!



Juvenile birds are under human attack, resulting in a sure and untimely death.

by Belize Bird Rescue

The majestic pelican is one of the iconic symbols of wealth that the Caribbean boasts. But something sinister is happening to these amazing creatures. In the last few months there has been a stark increase in the number of brown pelicans suffering from badly broken wings.

Belize is home to two species of pelicans: the uncommon American White Pelican (*eleanus erythrorhynchos*), and the more familiar Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) which graces our coastline in large numbers.

The brown pelican spends most of its time out at sea or on the shore, rarely flying close enough to trees or buildings resulting in injuries. This is why it is believed that the injuries seen of late are a direct result of deliberate human interference.

Brown pelicans have a 6-foot wingspan and can weigh up to 30lbs. To make them buoyant in the water and enable them to fly, they have air sacs in the skin around their throat, chest and under-wing, as well as inside their bones - and all of that air is connected to their respiratory system. So when a pelican breaks a wing-bone, it's usually a death sentence.

Even though the birds are big, their bones are light and brittle. The wing injuries seen recently, indicate they may have been broken by a stick or metal bar, but even a well-aimed rock could cause that kind of damage.

All of the injured birds so far were juveniles. Youngster's heads are brown, not white with a

yellow crown like those of an adult. Young birds are usually the ones who fall prey; they are less wary of humans and are not as adept at flying and fishing as an experienced adult, and this is most likely why people are able to get close enough to them to harm them.

Brown pelicans live for 15-20 years, and produce 1 or 2 babies a year. They migrate from north to south and back, following the weather and the fish, and visiting their breeding grounds. We only notice them when they fly over the sea, but when they are travelling long distances, they can reach heights of up to 10,000ft. Often the migrating juveniles arrive exhausted and desperate for food, which is an opportune time for anyone intending harm to strike.

Believe it or not, the brown pelican is the smallest of the world's eight species of pelican. It's the only one that lives exclusively around the coast and oceans, and the only one that dives into the water to fish. Brown pelicans soar just above the sea, searching for shoals of fish, and once they spot a likely meal, they fly up to 30 feet in the air, then turn and plummet head-first into the water, scooping up seawater and whatever fish are unlucky enough to be swimming there at the time.

They have a massive, elastic pouch which stretches to accommodate up to 3 gallons of seawater and fish. As they come to the surface, they close their beak, much of the water

INTERNATIONAL FREE ZONE SIGNS TRADE & INVESTMENT AGREEMENT



Chairman Salvador E. Habet and CEO Arturo Lizarraga of the International Free Zone signed an agreement with a Colombian Group, BCG Ltd located at the Design Center in Zona 10 of Guatemala City for the purposes of promoting trade and investment opportunities in Belize and Colombia. This

group's main offices are in Colombia but they also operate in Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

While the agreement covers many areas, the priority areas in the International Free Zone are infrastructure, in roads, drains, water, light and fiber optics in addition to steel structures including hangers, commercial centers, terminals, towers and hotels. The group has experience in industrial park development in Colombia and Guatemala where they have their own industrial zones. The original company has been operating for thirty years with its main focus on heavy duty steel structures before it began diversifying in other areas.

The Zone officials visited the Techno Park located near Puerto Quetzal on the Pacific coast where the Puebla-Panama highway is being constructed, a main thoroughfare for container traffic from Mexico and Panama. Part of the visit also included discussions with the Business Center of virtual offices—a high tech corporate service rental business which is complimentary to free zones and call centers. BCG Ltd has already commenced work on improving the design of the International Free Zone with the intention of starting major infrastructure improvements in the Zone.

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