

Animals of the World: Birds

THE PELICAN

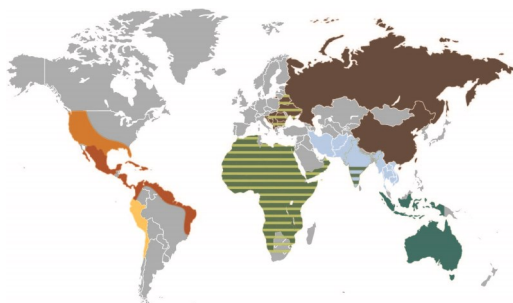
Pelicans are waterfowl found in almost every marine ecosystem. Its distinguishing feature is its elongated bill with a pouch inside that expands to catch and store its prey.

Its favorite habitats are places with warm temperatures, so they tend to concentrate within the earth's equator.



There are eight species of pelicans worldwide:

- American White Pelican lives between Mexico and the United States. It is completely white, except for the inner part of its wings, which is black.
- Brown Pelican lives in the Americas, especially the Caribbean Sea. It is the smallest of all the species. They weigh no more than four and a half kilos and are not more than a meter and a half high.
- Peruvian Pelican lives on the coasts of Peru, Ecuador, and Chile. It is dark with white stripes.
- Great White Pelican is found in many places in the world, from the Mediterranean Sea to Indochina to South Africa. It has a white face and pink legs.
- Australian Pelican inhabits Oceania. It has the longest beak.
- Pink-backed Pelican lives in Africa with gray and white plumage.
- Dalmatian Pelican lives in India and China. It's a large pelican with gray plumage.
- Spotted-bill Pelican inhabits the southern part of Asia and is mainly gray-white.





Pelicans are omnivorous animals, which means they eat both animals and plants. Its preferred food is crustaceans, such as shrimp and crabs. They also eat fish, turtles, and squid. To catch its prey, the pelican uses the pouch inside its bill. It immerses its bill in the water to catch the fish and discards the extra water through the membranes of its pouch.

They live in flocks of more than 100. They sleep and nest altogether, but prefer to hunt and feed alone when it's possible. Only the females hunt with their young. They teach them how to fish while protecting them from predators.



Because of their size, adult pelicans have few predators. They are only threatened by land carnivores, like coyotes or some cats. Humans also affect the population of pelicans because some people hunt them to eat its meat and sell its feathers.

The male chases the female on land, air, or water to mate. Once they mate, the female builds a nest on the ground or in the tops of trees. She uses materials brought by the male. The female lays two eggs, which are incubated by both parents. After a month, the eggs hatch. The chicks are pink and don't have feathers for the first few days. The



young are fed for three months but can walk and swim on their own by the second month.



Name _____ Date _____



THE PELICAN

Answer the questions.

1. Why do pelicans need a pouch inside their bill?
 - a. They don't have to carry their food in their hands.
 - b. They can store their food in it.
 - c. They can catch fish that are bigger than them.
 - d. They won't pollute the environment.
2. In the text, it says that the pelicans usually live near the earth's equator. Which of these countries is in that territory? Color the correct answers.

IRELAND	PERU	INDIA	SWEDEN
ECUADOR	CHINA	RUSSIA	NORWAY
SOUTH AFRICA	MEXICO	GREENLAND	CHILE

3. Compare a pelican to a chicken. What do they have in common?
 - a. both are omnivorous birds.
 - b. both have a pouch inside.
 - c. both are farm animals.
 - d. both live with in groups of more than one hundred.
4. Who does the hunting in the pelican family?
 - a. the oldest in the group, like grandparents
 - b. the baby pelicans since they are the youngest
 - c. the females
 - d. the males



5. Adult pelicans have few predators _____
 - a. because of their small size.
 - b. because their meat is not eaten.
 - c. nothing threatens them except lions and cheetahs.
 - d. All answers are false.

Name _____

Date _____

6. Pelicans build _____ on _____ after they mate.

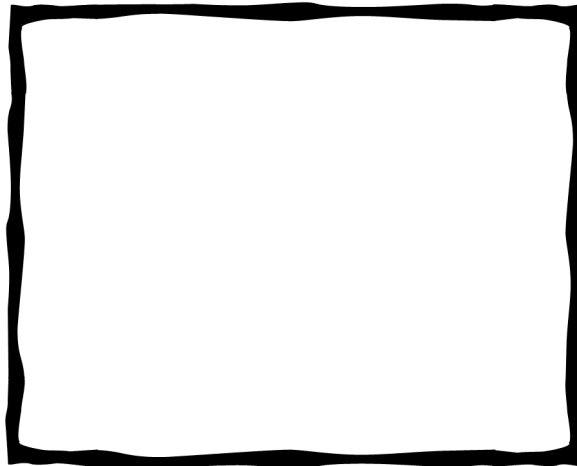
- a. caves / the earth
- b. nests / the top of a tree
- c. houses / land
- d. cages / the top of a tree



7. Number the sentences in the order they happen chronologically.

- _____ Eggs are incubated by both parents.
- _____ The male chases the female to mate.
- _____ The female builds the nest on the ground.
- _____ The offspring are fed for three months.

8. Read in the text about the different species of pelicans. Choose the one you like and research it. Write some things you learned about it and then draw its picture.



9. According to the text, pelicans live in groups of more than 100 and prefer to mate and build their nests in community.

- a. True
- b. False

10. Connect the columns to complete the sentences.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. The pelican's ecosystem | 1. is crustaceans. |
| b. The inner pouch allows them | 2. is marine. |
| c. They have flocks | 3. with over one hundred pelicans. |
| d. Their favorite food | 4. to capture and store prey. |