

THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER



About Our Cover

The American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) is one of the largest birds in North America, with a wingspan of 2.7 m (9 ft) and a weight of >7 kg (16 lbs). Spending summers along rivers, lakes, and marshes, these birds primarily eat fish, amphibians, and crayfish.

However, unlike their close relative the Brown Pelican, they do not plunge dive for food, preferring to paddle along the water with their powerful webbed feet and dunk their head or dive down from the surface to find food. These birds nest in colonies on small islands to protect their young from mammalian predators, leaving them vulnerable to changing water levels due to droughts or floods. Fortunately, the population of American White Pelicans is generally stable, with some areas of local concern.

This particular bird was photographed on a cold winter day near Fulton, IL, at Lock and Dam 13 on the Mississippi River. It is unclear why it did not migrate south to the usual wintering grounds in Central America and southern North America. It did not appear to be injured and was observed making short flights and catching fish. The photograph was taken by Bob Remedi with a handheld Canon 50D using an EF 100-400 zoom lens at 400 mm with an exposure of 1/1250 second set at F10 and ISO 400.

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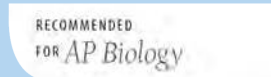
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