

SCRATCHPAD

All about pelicans

By **LISSA BREWER**
COAST WEEKEND EDITOR



Drifting over breaking waves and gathering on sandbars in large flocks, majestic pelicans have again arrived on the shores of the Columbia-Pacific region, returning to summer feeding grounds along the coast.

With long, colorful beaks and impressive wingspans, local pelican varieties stay near the shore, feeding on small fish and amphibians. Both American white pelicans and brown pelicans call the North Coast home, and nearby sightings of these gracious birds are on the rise.

After decades of declining numbers due to habitat loss and commercial pesticide use,

both pelican varieties have seen population increases in recent years. The American white pelican, with the longest wingspan of any Oregon bird, has been spotted in many parts of the lower Columbia, including at Youngs Bay and at Jones Beach, near Clatskanie.

Some weeks ago, on a walk near Ecola creek in Cannon Beach, I came upon a resting flock of brown pelicans. Numbering in the hundreds, some were mingling with gulls and others were diving for fish. Their shadows were difficult to miss, even from afar.

Other favorite sites of the pelicans also include East Sand Island, near Astoria, and the Cape Falcon Marine Reserve at Oswald West State Park. And many of these birds are returning visitors – brown pelicans can live for over 40 years. So greet a summer pelican, and return through the years to visit an old friend.



Lissa Brewer

A group of brown pelicans stand by the shore at sunset.

our coast weekend

ON THE COVER

Actors set the stage in costume during a rehearsal for 'Letters to Anne of Green Gables,' staged by the Peninsula Association of Performing Artists.



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