



WISE OLD BIRD — The American White Pelican is shown here at close quarters. A close inspection reveals the black-tipped quill feathers which identify this species in the 10 different families of pelicans. The long mandible on the mature pelican is from 12 to 14 inches long and sometimes there is a straw-colored feathered section on the head and on the breast, as one can see here.

Big Pelican Dominates Local Bird Life

The big, graceful white bird that has become the symbol of Klamath Falls and the king of the water fowl in this area bears an impressive title, "Pelicanus erythrorhynchos."

Actually, for convenience of those of us who can't pronounce that long title, this amazing bird is known simply as the American White Pelican.

There are 10 species of pelicans known to inhabit various areas of the world, but only three of these are known to live in this country.

Two of these three are marine species, inhabiting the coasts of the southern states. Pelicanus occidentalis is found on the Atlantic Coast of tropical and subtropical America. The general color of this bird is mottled silvery

gray and brown, the top of the head is white and there is no crest on the beak.

The Pelicanus Californicus is the representative on the Pacific Coast of the brown pelican which it closely resembles. Its head and neck are white, the general color being silvery gray streaked with brown. It is found from the Galapagos Islands as far north as British Columbia.

The American White Pelican ranges from the Gulf Coast westward into Canada and is common here on the Pacific Coast.

With the exception of the black primary wing-quills and neighboring parts, the plumage is entirely white, often with straw color on the breast.

The nest of the white pelican is a rude heap of earth and trash

on which is laid, generally, a single egg, although nests have been found with more. The eggs have a thick, chalky white shell.

When the young are hatched, they are naked, but soon grow white down and later this becomes heavy plumage.

The young pelican is a pink shade when born.

While the pelican has become famous in this area with many structures named after him, and KUHS adopting him as its mascot and nickname, the pelican actually has been famous since early times.

Popularly accepted as a symbol of solitude and desolation, the pelican found a place in early Christian art. Popular fancy has ascribed the red tip at the end of its beak to blood drawn from

its own breast for the nourishment of its young, and in ecclesiastical symbolism it represents the church feeding her children with her life.

Locally, the pelicans long have dominated Upper Klamath Lake, and other waterways such as Clear Lake.

They frequent the upper reaches of Agency Lake and range over all water in the area. Oftentimes they can be seen on Lake Ewauna near the Link River bridge, floating calmly like a huge white battleship on the ocean.

Another apparent favorite spot of the pelicans is the white rock at the tip of Bare Island on Upper Klamath Lake. Here one finds hundreds of pelicans at times.

His long bill which is 14 to 18

inches long on top has made him the subject of a humorous poem which also refers to the membranous pouch under the lower bill.

The mature pelican ranges from four to six feet in length and may have a wing spread from eight to nine feet.

Two particular habits of the pelicans are easily identifiable to the watcher. Especially during the warm summer months, one can see large groups of pelicans, high in the sky, soaring around and around. Their large wings are heavily quilled and especially adapted to soaring like gliders.

This appears to be one of the sports that pelicans enjoy very much.

The other interesting habit of the pelicans is that of feeding

When feeding individually, they skim the surface of the water or dive beneath it, scooping up small fishes in their net-like pouch. Then, after draining off the water, they swallow them.

Contrary to belief, they do not catch fish in their pouches and feed them to their young. Instead, the pelican feeds the young on fish regurgitated from the crop.

It is fascinating to watch them fish as a group. They form a long semicircle, each bird seeming to know his appointed place, then they start beating the water with their large wings.

The fish, particularly chubs, start rushing away from the noise, which is what the pelican wants. Slowly, they move their activities toward shore, forcing the fish ahead of them.

In the shallow water they then begin to feed on the fish.

Although it is said that the American White Pelican nests far to the north in summer and then moves to salt water districts in the south in winter, white pelicans can be found in this area year round.

One distinct feature found in the American White Pelican not in others of the species is the rough horny crest that the male develops midway on the top of the upper bill. This crest reaches about three inches at its highest, occurring at the peak of the breeding period and is subsequently molted.

Perhaps the biggest monument to the pelican in this area was the magnificent White Pelican Hotel which was a landmark of Klamath Falls from its construction in 1911 until it was destroyed by flames in 1924.

Oldtimers maintain that the pelican, however, has decreased considerably in this area in recent years. While there are many pelicans in the area at times, especially summer, whether they are actually decreasing in number, is not known.

A huge male pelican, once the symbol of the Pelican Bay Lumber Company on Upper Klamath Lake, is currently exhibited at the Klamath County Museum. This stuffed specimen apparently was captured during the peak of the breeding season since the horny crest is at its peak of about three inches.

Yes, a majestic bird is the pelican, whose beak can hold more than his "bellican," but in addition, the pelican is a wise and beautiful bird, the proud symbol of Klamath Falls.



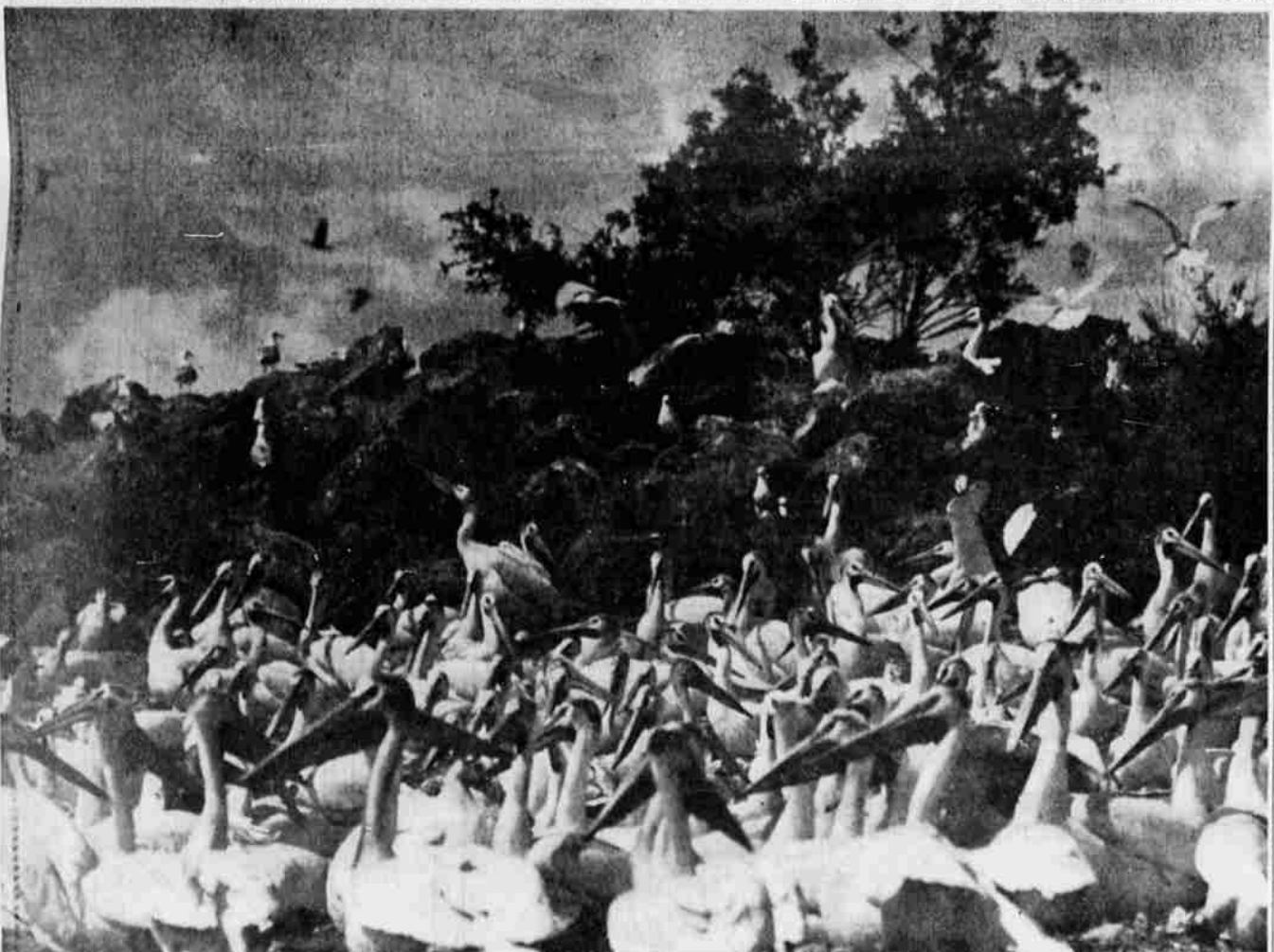
BELIES THE FACTS — While authorities on the pelicans indicate that they generally lay a single egg with a thick chalky shell, here is a nest of five eggs made in the usual pelican fashion from mud, straw and debris.



HATCHED OUT — Five young pelicans huddle together on the beach. This sort of life is all new and requires careful examination by the ungainly looking characters.



NEW OUTLOOK ON LIFE — These two baby pelicans survey the world around them. A pink shade, they quickly grow a crop of fuzz and later ample feather protection.



PLENTY OF PELICANS — This view, one of many loaned for this story by the Klamath County Museum, was taken by R. H. Cook, Klamath Falls, as were most of the pelican pictures at the museum. This view shows a huge group of pelicans assembled at Clear Lake, a favorite area for the huge white bird.



FEEDING TIME — Pelicans gather for feeding. In this view they may actually be gossiping over the events of the day, but such groups as this are a familiar sight on parts of Upper Klamath and Agency Lake.



YOUNG PELICANS — A crop of young pelicans, many without any feathers yet at all, are shown gathered together around a rock in Upper Klamath Lake. An ungainly looking youngster, the pelican develops into a proud, graceful master of the air.



HEY, THEY WORK! — These two young pelicans find that they can use their wings for balance, and they prepare to step out on their own, for a little way anyway.



AN UNCOMMON SIGHT — It's unusual, these days, to see a gathering of this many pelicans. This view, however, is a view taken quite a number of years ago when pelicans appeared more plentiful on the waters of Upper Klamath Lake than they do today.