



American white pelican

Pelecanus erythrorhynchos

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| Kingdom: | Animalia |
| Division/Phylum: | Chordata - vertebrates |
| Class: | Aves |
| Order: | Pelecaniformes |
| Family: | Pelecanidae |

Features

An adult American white pelican is a huge bird standing 62 inches high. Its long white wings, the longest of any Iowa bird, have black tips. Both sexes are similar in appearance. This bird has a long, flat, yellow-orange bill. The neck is long and has a throat pouch.

Natural History

The American white pelican breeds in the northern plains states (including Minnesota) and Canada. It may be seen on rivers, ponds, lakes, or marshes. It eats crustaceans and fish. It does not plunge to get fish, but simply scoops up fish while it is paddling on the water. These birds often work in groups to feed. Its call is a long groan. These birds fly in lines, each bird closely following the bird in front of it. It often can be seen on large reservoirs and rivers or overhead during migration. Birds are found in northern Iowa during the summer, but it does not nest here. Some of these are thought to be migrant.

Habitats

interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

summer: northern Iowa, but it does not nest in Iowa;
migrant: statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.