

High number of California brown pelicans show signs of sickness

May 10, 2024



The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has received increased reports of California brown pelicans, a fully protected species, stranded along the coast from Santa Cruz County south to San Diego County, since late April. Central and Southern California wildlife rehabilitation facilities began admitting an unusually high number of sick pelicans as reports were received.

The pelicans exhibit characteristics of emaciation, and some have secondary injuries. CDFW along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), wildlife rehabilitation facilities and other state partners are coordinating to assess the ongoing situation.

CDFW is conducting postmortem examinations and testing pelicans admitted to wildlife rehabilitation facilities. Preliminary results indicate that pelicans are succumbing to starvation related problems.

Stranding events have been documented to occur periodically along the California coast in a variety of seabird species. A similar pelican stranding event occurred in spring 2022 with nearly 800 pelicans admitted

into wildlife rehabilitation facilities and 394 successfully returned to the wild.

Officials ask the public not to touch, harass, attempt to feed or take photographs with pelicans. Do not attempt to remove any fishing lines or embedded fishing hooks from entangled birds.

CDFW and agency partners will continue to track this stranding event.

How Can the Public Help?

Report an injured or sick pelican:

Call your local wildlife [rehabilitation facility](#)

Call [your regional CDFW office](#)

Report a dead pelican:

Residents can report dead wildlife to CDFW's Wildlife Health Laboratory using the [mortality reporting form](#), which helps biologists monitor the event- please include photos if possible.

Support a local Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility:

Contact permitted facilities intaking brown pelicans directly for how to best assist.