

BROWN PELICAN
Pelecanus occidentalis

Location: Lake Henry; Ordway; Crowley County, Colorado

Date: October 30, 1994

Setting:

Brandon Percival first spotted this bird standing on shore. It was perched at the edge of a flock of about 1400 American White Pelicans. We observed the bird for about a half hour, from about 9:10-9:40 a.m., then off and on for about an hour. We called Bob Dickson, who arrived about noon and the three of us observed the bird a little longer. We saw it both perched and floating out into the lake. On several occasions we saw it in flight. In short forays across the lake, it flew at a very low height so that its stiff wingtips nearly brushed the surface of the water. At about noon it took off, circled for a few minutes and then flew off to the southwest until it was out of sight. We watched the bird initially from as close at 50 yards distance, using binoculars and scopes (Kowa). The morning was quite overcast but conditions were reasonably good and actually you don't need much to I.D. a Brown Pelican.

Description:

We thought that this bird was probably a post-breeding adult. Overall it was a dark brown bird. It was very large, about 4 feet long, with a long neck and a huge dark bill about a foot long. Compared to the White Pelicans it was considerably smaller in length and bulk and didn't sit quite so high on the water. I was surprised at the difference in size as I guess I have not observed these two species side-by-side before. The body was dull brownish-grey with darker flight feathers. The head was whitish, the face dark, the hind neck grey and the foreneck white. The bill was long and grey with a paler yellowish culmen and a yellow-orange gullet. The legs were dark.

Similar Species:

None really. The only other similar bird is the American White Pelican which in no plumage is overall dark brown.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many pelicans of both species. In Colorado I saw a Brown Pelican in Denver in 1991 and one at Nee Noshe Reservoir in the summer of 1994.

This report was prepared from notes made after observation.

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Snow Goose - fof 18 + 30

* Brown Pelican - 1

post-budg? Body dull

brownish-grey w/dark

flight feathers. ~4 ft

long, but noticeably

smaller than White Pelican

(shorter & less bulky).

Head whitish; face dark;

hind neck grey; foreneck

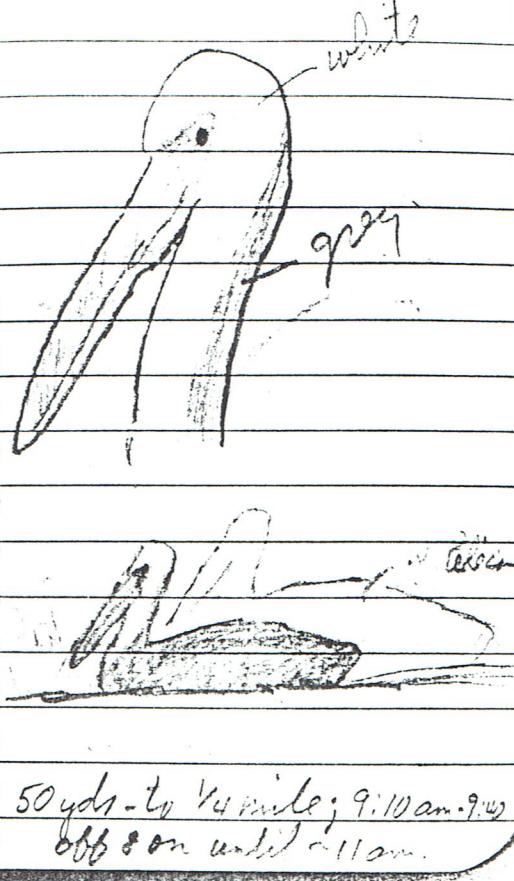
white;

Bill long, grey with

sober yellowish culmen

g. claws & orange feet

g. bill - Dark legs



50 yds. to $\frac{1}{4}$ mile; 9:10 am - 9:45
off & on until 11 am.