

(Jeff Lemons)



Pelecanidae the PELICANS

Pelicans are one of the most distinctive types of birds found in America. Their large size and oddly-shaped head, bill, and throat pouch, make them appear awkward to many observers, but in truth, they are graceful fliers and powerful divers. When soaring, flocks of pelicans fly in tight V-formations, sometimes just a foot or two above the water. When they are feeding, pelicans break ranks, fly up high, and then dive, crashing headfirst into the water in search of a bill full of fish. Two species of pelicans can be found in the Carolinas and both have been seen in this region. The Brown Pelican is native to coastal areas in the southeastern United States, and it currently breeds in a few colonies along North Carolina's coast. The American White Pelican is a much larger bird. It is a resident of the central and western United States, breeding there and northward into Canada.

Inland pelicans are a special find anywhere in the Carolinas. These birds are so big and appear so out of place that they can cause quite a stir. Non-birders who are boating or fishing along our lakes and rivers, usually take immediate notice of them and often quickly report their presence.