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FEB 15, 2010 by Stephanie Dearing - 2 comments

Large California Brown Pelican die-off worries officials



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Approximately 1,000 California Brown Pelicans have been found dead, washed up to shore, and bird rescue centers have been swamped with hundred of Brown Pelicans to care for.

California - The birds, say marine biologists, have some sort of substance on them which appears to be causing the feathers to lose insulation value, resulting in cold and even hypothermic birds. Living birds have been reported to be disoriented and hungry. The birds have been [washing up](#) on United States shores from southern California to southern Oregon since mid-January, many of them already dead. The California Fish and Game Department announced Friday it would join in a [collaborative effort](#) by a number of organizations investigating the unexplained deaths. Bird rehabilitation organizations have been taking the live birds into their care, and say they have been swamped. Jay Holcomb, speaking for International Bird Rescue Research Center told [press](#)

"As someone who has been rehabilitating marine birds for more than 40 years in California, I must say I have never seen anything like this that has lasted this long. There seems to be no end to this."

Preliminary necropsy results show starvation has been a factor in the deaths. It is believed that there are a combination of factors that have worked to impact on the pelicans, although pelicans have not been the only birds affected. The pelicans have, however, been the bird species most affected. El Nino is thought to be the greatest contributor, driving the pelican's food sources into deeper than normal waters; causing more winter storms. It is thought that toxic run-off somehow contributes to the weather. Karen Benzel, a Californian who has been working to save pelicans the Carmel area of California told [press](#)

"I'm guessing it's a perfect storm, a trifecta, of the storms, polluted runoff from the rains and lack of food."

Scientists have not ruled out an algae bloom as a contributing factor.

Sick and distressed Brown Pelicans have been reported all along the United States Pacific coast up to Oregon, where officials [advised](#) residents to not feed the starving birds. The Project Leader from the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex told [press](#)

"In one parking lot, there were people in cars surrounded by pelicans asking for food. We have never seen that before. These birds literally have lost all fear of humans."

This isn't the first time the species has suffered from a mass die-off. In [2006](#) the die-off was attributed to an over sized population and subsequent starvation. Usually the younger birds suffer more from starvation, but some [reports](#) say mature adult pelicans are dying this winter.

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The species is the only [diving pelican](#). They feed on sardines, mackerel and anchovies. The California Brown Pelican was decimated by DDT back in the 1970s. Declared [endangered](#), efforts to save the bird were successful, and the California Brown Pelican was removed from the endangered species list last year.

[Toxic runoff](#) in California comes from farms, industry and municipal runoff, as well as soil erosion. Pollutants range from pieces of garbage to chemical pollutants and pathogens. [Toxic runoff](#) in California has been an issue of concern for years.

After living rescued pelicans have been cleaned and fed and have been restored to health, they are [released](#) back into the wild.



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Anaheim - A 20-year-old man waiting in line for the The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror ride at Disney's California Adventure Park fell almost thirty feet Wednesday night. The man fell after leaning over a railing as he waited in line for the ride.

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Sherman Oaks - The LAPD hopes to find the good Samaritans who were captured on amateur video as they rescued a 69-year-old man from a burning car after a collision Sunday in California. The search for the men began Monday after the video from the scene was released.

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Bodies went flying at California race crash Saturday

Shortly after the start of a race in California an off-road truck hurled into a crowd sending bodies everywhere during a sanctioned race. In the aftermath eight were dead and a dozen people were injured.

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Prop 8 stay lifted, gay marriages to resume Aug. 18 in California

Federal judge Vaughn Walker lifted the temporary hold on his Aug. 4 ruling that Prop. 8 is unconstitutional. Same-sex couples can begin to legally wed next week.

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Californians must choose to save a fish or save their wallet

The Santa Ana Sucker suffers from changes to its habitat that make it difficult for the fish to survive. The Seven Oaks Dam, which is the problem, is also the solution and protection for the human inhabitants of Los Angeles and the Inland Empire.

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