

Migrating White Pelicans Over Hattiesburg

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White Pelicans (Pelecanus erythrorhynchos) have been reported from various inland localities in Mississippi, but most of those records have been for flocks of fewer than 12 birds. Some of the largest groups have come from the Hattiesburg area. Larry Gates (Weber and Jackson 1977) reported 150 from the Hattiesburg sewage lagoons on 18 April 1977. They were gone the following day. Gates and Terrie Fairley listed 39 for 22 and 23 October 1980 (Jackson and Schardien 1980). Irby observed 18 on 6 March 1982 at Lake Serene, about 6 km west of Hattiesburg. A western front had brought stormy conditions the previous night. The White Pelicans were gone the following morning.

A flock conservatively estimated to include 250 White Pelicans was observed by Moore and Rodriguez near Hattiesburg on 2 May 1982 at 1600. The weather was clear and the birds were observed for some distance through a 22 X telescope as they flew northwest along the Leaf River flood plain. Their reversed V formation included three chevrons equidistant from each other as in the insignia for a sergeant's rank. The rear chevron had shifting (1 to 3) lines extending straight back. A continual exchange of birds occurred among the various echelons and the lines. This flock, when east of Hattiesburg, turned west, passing over the Hattiesburg sewage lagoons and continuing beyond telescope range.

The number of White Pelicans sighted by various observers near Hattiesburg and the Leaf River flood plain provides some evidence that this area is within a flyway used in their migration.

Literature Cited

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