

**BROWN PELICAN AT OKATIBBEE LAKE,
LAUDERDALE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**

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An adult Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) in summer plumage appeared at Okatibbee Lake, Lauderdale County, Mississippi, on 30 June 1994, two days prior to a hurricane warning being given for an area from Gulfport, Mississippi to Cedar Key, Florida.

At the time of the pelican's arrival, I was following the various weather reports concerning tropical storm Alberto. According to Rob Erhardt, Jr., a meteorologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Mobile, Alabama, Alberto formed off the western tip of Cuba on 30 June and appeared to start moving in a northwesterly direction. It was forecast to be near hurricane strength when it made landfall in North America. It arrived near Ft. Walton Beach, Florida, on 3 July with 65 mph winds. After landfall, the storm travelled north through the Florida panhandle, into Alabama, and then Georgia, dumping rain along the way.

Our visiting pelican seemed to be a "harbor" bird. During the ten or so days that I observed it, the pelican made its temporary home perch on top of a channel marker post just out from the west bank launching ramp. It showed little fear of me as I approached it with one of our patrol boats. It would merely watch me as I approached its perch to within about 20 feet and would then fly to a second channel marker post. Another incident that occurred that made me think of the pelican as a harbor bird was its behavior in accepting a free meal from a local fisherman. The fisherman told me that he observed the pelican perched atop the channel marker and decided to see if it would accept a handout. He cruised within about 50 feet of the bird and tossed a couple of

crappie into the water. The pelican flew from the post, made a slight circular flight, and plunged head first into the water for the fish.

The Brown Pelican was present atop the channel marker posts on the west side of the dam until about 10 July. This was truly a rare visit for one of Mississippi's endangered species.