

---

January 1986

## Repaired Bill Injury in the Brown Pelican

Florida Field Naturalist

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

---

### Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1986) "Repaired Bill Injury in the Brown Pelican," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 14 : Iss. 2 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol14/iss2/3>

This Note is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usf.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usf.edu).

## NOTES

**Repaired bill injury in the Brown Pelican.**—The degree of bone injuries which birds may sustain and survive is well known for many species (Tiemeier 1941, *Auk* 58: 350-359), especially waterfowl (Kirby et al. 1981, *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 9: 150-153; Mendall et al. 1984, *Wilson Bull.* 96: 305-306). The only data available for the family Pelecanidae indicate that 13.3% (N=13) of the museum specimens examined possessed repaired bone injuries, but neither the species nor the skeletal elements were identified (Tiemeier 1941). This paper reports on a repaired bill injury in the Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*).

On 14 November 1985, I found the partially decomposed body of an adult Brown Pelican on Pelican Island, Indian River County, Florida. The bird exhibited a healed injury to the upper mandible (Fig. 1). Close examination revealed the fractured bone elements had fused themselves such that the upper mandible was rigid and still functional. The lower mandible sustained no damage.

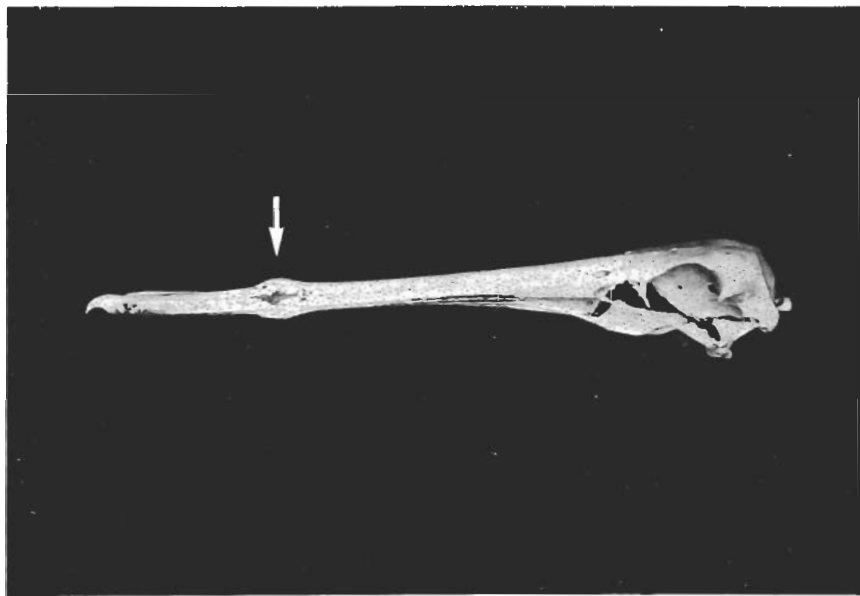


Figure 1. Right side view of Brown Pelican skull showing the location of the repaired injury to the bill.

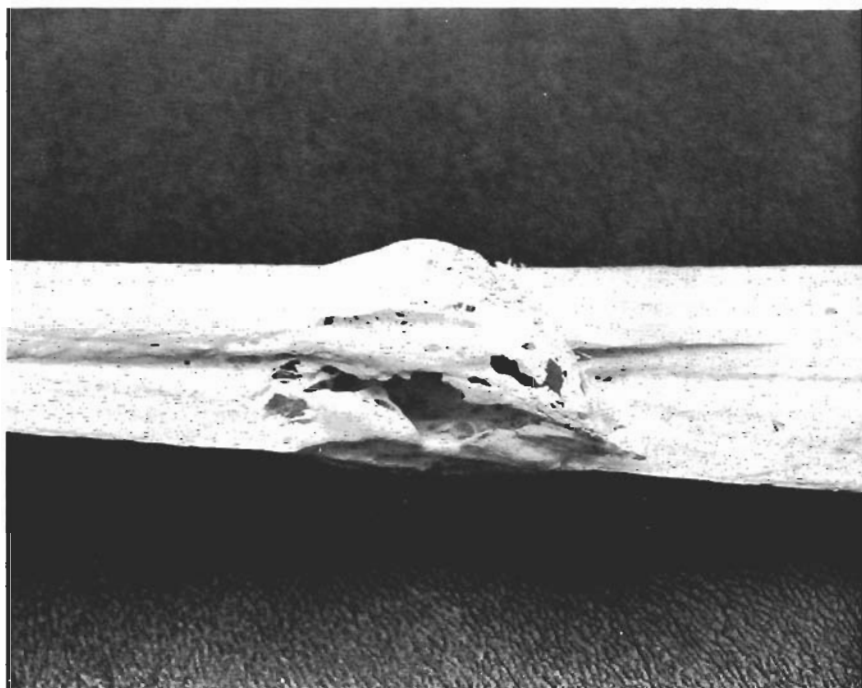


Figure 2. Close-up oblique view of the right side of Brown Pelican upper mandible indicating fusion of bone elements after injury.

While I can not be entirely certain as to the source of the injury, the size and straight path suggests a small caliber gun shot wound. The bullet apparently entered the left lateral side of the upper mandible causing minor external damage. However, there was major damage to the dorsal surface and right side due to exploding bone elements and the exiting projectile (Fig. 2). The right half of the palate also showed minor damage. It appears the distal portion of the upper mandible was maintained in place mostly by the intact left half of the bill until the damaged skeletal elements fused. Despite this rather major injury to its primary food gathering structure, the Brown Pelican lived long enough for the damage to repair itself.—James A. Rodgers, Jr., Wildlife Research Laboratory, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 4005 S. Main St., Gainesville, Florida 32601.

Florida Field Naturalist 14: 46-47, 1986.