

📖 Topic Page: [pelican](#)

Definition: **pelican** from *Collins English Dictionary*

n

1 any aquatic bird of the tropical and warm water family *Pelecanidae*, such as *P. onocrotalus* (**white pelican**): order *Pelecaniformes*. They have a long straight flattened bill, with a distensible pouch for engulfing fish

[Old English *pellican*, from Late Latin *pelicānus*, from Greek *pelekān*; perhaps related to Greek *pelekus* axe, perhaps from the shape of the bird's bill; compare Greek *pelekas* woodpecker]



Image from:
[Louisiana in Philip's Encyclopedia](#)

Summary Article: **pelican**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Large water bird of family *Pelecanidae*, order *Pelecaniformes*, remarkable for the pouch beneath the bill, which is used as a fishing net and temporary store for catches of fish. Some species grow up to 1.8 m/6 ft and have wingspans of 3 m/10 ft.

The legs are short and the feet large, with four webbed toes; the tail is short and rounded, and the neck long. The wings are long and expansive, and the birds are capable of rapid flight. The species are widely distributed, frequenting the seashore and margins of lakes, and feeding almost exclusively on fish, which are deposited in the pouch for subsequent digestion.

A nasal salt-secreting gland is present, which enables the animal to make use of sea water and the fluids of its food as a source of water, by excreting the excess salt content.

Species They include the American brown pelican *Pelicanus occidentalis*, which is marine, and the only diving pelican; the North American rough-billed pelican *P. erythrorhynchus*; the common pelican *P. onocrotalus* of Europe, Asia, and Africa; and the Australian black-backed pelican *P. conspicillatus*.

The **common pelican** has white plumage, tinged with red. It usually nests on the ground and lays two or three white eggs. The young are at first brown, and the mother feeds them by pushing their beaks into her pouch. The appearance of a red tip of the bill pressed against her breast probably gave origin to the fable that she feeds her young on her own blood.

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Pelican. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/pelican>



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