



American White Pelican adults and young
Carroll County, 17 July 2009
Photo by Steve Patterson/Illini Images

First successful nesting of American White Pelican in Illinois

by *Russell Engelke and Steve Patterson*

On 17 June 2009, staff from Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge discovered nesting American White Pelicans on a small island in Carroll County, Illinois (just west of Thomson, Illinois, in Pool 13 of the Mississippi River). Since pelicans are notoriously timid during nesting, we did not attempt a count, but did document at least six pelican chicks had hatched.

Subsequent trips to the island found an estimated 25 young pelicans had fledged from this colony.

After checking with Illinois DNR biologists, other federal biologists and Richard Bjorklund, we believe this constitutes the first successful documented nesting of American White Pelicans in Illinois. Three years prior, pelicans were found nesting on the Iowa side of the Mississippi River within 1/2 mile of these nests. These were reported in "North American Birds" as the first nesting pelicans in that state. In 2009, the Iowa colony fledged roughly 400 young.

Editor's Note: More than 100 nests with young of American White Pelicans were found on Woodruff Island in Carroll County the summer of 2010.

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