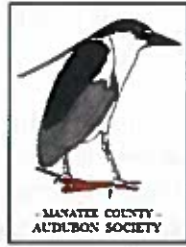




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## PRESS RELEASE

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## Audubon Releases Guide to Helping Hooked Pelicans

*Hooked waterbirds often die of entanglement or starvation.*

Tampa, FL – It is an all too common sight on Tampa Bay and the surrounding area – pelicans with fishing hooks and line caught in their throats or tangled around wings, legs, or bodies. Hooked birds are at severe risk of entanglement as they roost, causing slow, painful deaths. When adult birds die they leave chicks orphaned in nests, to succumb to predation and starvation. But there are steps that fisherman and others can take to save hooked birds instead of just “cutting the line.”

Tampa Audubon, Manatee County Audubon Society, and Audubon Florida have produced a new informational brochure to give citizens the information they need to help. “*What to Do If You Hook a Pelican*” is a user-friendly guide that is a must-read for all Tampa Bay’s fisherman and anyone else who enjoys time on or near the water.

“Anyone can use this set of instructions to save the life of a pelican,” states Sandy Reed, Tampa Audubon Society Vice President. Using simple tips and photographs, the brochure demonstrates easy-to-follow steps for fishermen and members of the public to safely handle and release a hooked bird without causing further injury.

The brochure also provides guidelines that fishermen can follow to reduce the probability that they will hook birds in the first place. “Feeding pelicans or herons increases the chance that the birds will become entangled,” says Mark Rachal, Audubon Sanctuary Manager.

“The Wildlife Commission staff report that the major killer of Brown Pelicans in Florida is entanglement in fishing gear,” explains Ann Paul, Audubon’s Tampa Bay Regional Coordinator. “We encourage fishermen to learn how to release a hooked bird. Fishermen who deal with sharks or saltwater catfish will find it relatively easy to unhook or untangle a bird that they have accidentally caught.”

“Pelicans are synonymous with fishing on Florida’s coasts,” says Lori Roberts, Manatee County Audubon Society Board Member, “and the goal of fishermen is to catch fish. By providing sport fishermen with a handy guide on how to safely rescue pelicans in distress, rather than simply cutting their fishing line and leaving a bird painfully hooked or entangled

to die, Audubon hopes to protect these iconic birds. No one deliberately intends to injure a pelican. This brochure will prepare fishermen to help each other and the bird when someone accidentally hooks or entangles a pelican.”

Brochures can be obtained by calling Audubon’s Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries’ office at 813-623-6826 or emailing Audubon staffers Ann Paul or Mark Rachal, Tampa Audubon Society’s Vice President Sandy Reed, or Manatee County Audubon Board Member Lori Roberts. The brochure can also be downloaded from Manatee County Audubon’s, Tampa Audubon’s, the Tampa Bay Water Atlas ([wateratlas.org](http://wateratlas.org)), and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program’s ([tbep.org](http://tbep.org)) websites.

The guide was developed by Audubon chapters and staff in collaboration with the Florida Park Service and the Sunshine Skyway Fishing Piers. It was partially funded by the Frank E. Duckwall Foundation.

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