

# Species Fact Sheets

**Order:** Pelecaniformes  
**Scientific Name:** *Pelecanus crispus*

**Family:** Pelecanidae  
**Common Name:** Dalmatian Pelican

**AZA Management:**  Green  Yellow  Red  None

**Photo (Male):**



**Photo (Female):**



**NATURAL HISTORY:**

**Geographic Range:** Europe  Asia  North America  Neotropical   
 Africa  Australia  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Habitat:** Forest  Desert  Grassland  Coastal   
 Riverine  Montane  Other [Rivers, lakes, deltas, estuaries](#)

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**Circadian Cycle:** Diurnal  Crepuscular  Nocturnal  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Cold Tolerance:** To 70° F  To 60° F  To 50° F  To 40° F   
 To 30° F  To 20° F  Other  Provide opportunity for indoor housing below 30 degrees

**Heat Tolerance:** To 30° F  To 50° F  To 70° F  To 90° F   
 To 110° F  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Diet:** Frugivore  Carnivore  Piscivore  Insectivore   
 Nectivore  Omnivore  Folivore  Other (Add Below)

**Captive Dietary Needs:**

Thawed, frozen fish which are supplemented with vitamin E/thiamin. It is recommended to feed more than one species of fish. Trout, smelt, capelin, sardine, mackerel and herring are commonly fed. Birds are hand-fed the fish in a catch pen, usually twice per day. When chicks are present, the parents are feed extra small trout which increases in size as the chick(s) grow, also the number of feedings per day increases to 3 or 4. If possible, give access to a natural pond containing live fish to encourage natural foraging behavior.

**Life Expectancy in the Wild:** Males: unknown Females: unknown

**Life Expectancy in Captivity:** Males: ~50 years Females: ~50 years

**BREEDING INFORMATION:**

**Age at Sexual Maturity:** Males: Typically 3-4 years but can be as early as 2 years Females: Typically 3-4 years but can be as early as 2 years

**Courtship Displays:** Male will perform a bowing display with wings drooping but wingtips elevated and tail spread, while vibrating both the wing and tail feathers. The bill is snapped shut, the gular pouch expands and hissing and spitting sounds are made.

**Nest Site Description:** The nest is located on the ground on an island or floating vegetation. It is quite large with the base composed of large sticks and lined with softer material such as papyrus tops or grasses.

**Clutch Size, Egg Description:** Average clutch is 2 eggs, but can be from 1-6. Eggs are laid every 2-3 days. Egg is white with a chalky exterior.

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**Incubation Period:** 30-34 days

**Fledgling Period:** 60-85 days, but chick may “fledge” to water at 30-45 days and continue to return to the nest daily until fully fledging

**Parental Care:** Both parents incubate the eggs and care for the chicks. While the chick is very young, one parent will always be at the nest, but as the chick ages, the parents will begin to leave it alone at the nest for increasingly longer periods of time.

**Chick Development:** Chicks are altricial and born naked with eyes shut. They will eventually be covered in white down. If more than one chick hatches in a nest, siblicide may occur.

## CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

**Social Structure in the Wild:** Gregarious

**Social Structure in Captivity:** Gregarious

**Minimum Group Size:** 3.3 for breeding, for non-breeding at least 3-4 birds

**Maximum Group Size:** As many as exhibit can hold comfortably, try to keep sex ratio even for breeding

**Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits:** Yes

**Comments:**

Can be housed with other species of pelicans such as Great White Pelicans or Pink-backed Pelicans. Can also be housed in large exhibits with a variety of mammals, but require a place such as an island where they can escape. Horned mammals may gore pelicans.

**Optimal Habitat Size:** Large pond with island or floating barge or raft for nesting. Catch pen for feeding birds is helpful.

**Management Challenges:** Siblicide-Can cross-foster additional eggs/chicks or hand-raise to prevent siblicide.  
Hospitalization-Birds do not do well under anesthesia.  
Feet-Bumblefoot can occur; also if thorny acacia trees are present, thorns can impale webbing on feet.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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Dalmatian Pelicans in captivity are very tractable. They easily train to come into a catch pen to eat and some can be hand-grabbed for a medical procedure or move. During nesting, many of the birds will sit tight while the keeper procures the egg for candling or the chick for processing. In this case, proceed with caution and wear safety goggles as the bird may snap at you. Note that in the photos, both birds are shown in breeding plumage. The sexes are similar except that the female is smaller. In non-breeding plumage, the pouch and the skin around the eye is a dull yellow color and the feathers on the top of the head are very short.

## REFERENCES:

Del Hoyo, J., Elliot, A. & Sargatal, J. eds. (1994). Handbook of the Birds of the World – Vol 1. Ostrich to Ducks. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Paul A. Johnsgard, (1993), Cormorants, Darters, and Pelicans of the World, The Smithsonian Institution

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