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CONCERTED ACTION FOR THE PERUVIAN PELICAN (*Pelecanus thagus*) [1]

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 15th Meeting (Campo Grande, March 2026)

Proponents

Republic of Chile, Republic of Ecuador and Republic of Peru

Target species, lower taxon or population, or group of taxa with common needs

Kingdom: Animalia
Class: Aves
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Pelecanidae
Genus: Pelecanus
Species: *Pelecanus thagus*
Common name: Peruvian pelican, Humboldt pelican, Alcatraz, Huajache (Spanish)
Peruvian pelican (English), (Pélican thage (French)

Historically, the Peruvian or Humboldt pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*) has been considered a subspecies of the brown pelican *(Pelecanus occidentalis*), and is currently recognized as a separate species due to its morphological characteristics, and the absence of hybridization despite the considerable area of overlap between the spatial range of both species. (Jaramillo, 2007)

Geographic range

The Peruvian or Humboldt pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*) is a seabird endemic to the Humboldt Current ecosystem in South America, meaning its range is only that ecosystem. It inhabits the Pacific coast from southern Ecuador, Peru and Chile (BirdLife International 2016). In Peru it can be found mainly in the north from Foca Island, Piura (5°S) (Figueroa and Stucchi 2012) to the border with Chile, with its last breeding site in Punta Coles, Ilo (17°S) in Peru (Zavalaga 2011). And also as far as Mocha Island (38°S) in central Chile (Housse 1945, Vinueza-Hidalgo et al. 2015).

1 The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CMS Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

Its breeding range covers from Santa Clara Island (3°S) in southern Ecuador to Mocha Island (38°S) in south-central Chile (Vinueza-Hidalgo et al. 2015; Cursach et al, 2018), including Punta Coles in the province of Ilo in Peru (Zavalaga, 2011) and Carelmapu islets in the Los Lagos region, Chile.
https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?pid=S071819572024000100008&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en

Figure 1: Range of the Peruvian pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*)
(https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/perpel1/cur/introduction?lang=es

Summary of activities

Establish a trinational working group that coordinates management and conservation and protection actions for the species. The group must carry out the following activities

1) Standardize and establish protocols and methodologies for the monitoring and census of Peruvian pelican populations between Ecuador, Chile and Peru.
2) Identification of breeding sites and population size of the Peruvian pelican throughout the species' range, as well as significant feeding sites.
3) Propose and adopt conservation and protection measures throughout the species' range to preserve its island, continental and marine habitats in order to safeguard the species and its ecosystem.
4) Coordinate actions with communities and authorities belonging to each of the countries involved in order to reduce by-catch through good practices throughout the species' range.
5) Awareness-raising of actions through education campaigns and social networks of the organizations involved.

Associated benefits

Considering the impact of avian influenza (H5N1) on the species' population, this Concerted Action seeks to identify and enable the necessary actions to ensure the recovery of the species throughout its range. This tool will also make it possible to raise awareness of the species' problems both nationally and internationally, promoting the exchange of experiences for mitigating threats.

Associated advantages

The proposed activities will allow the Parties to collaborate and coordinate conservation and protection actions for the species, maintaining constant communication channels for the permanent adoption of measures based on updated information; the joint actions will also allow the direct participation of the Range States and the specialists involved in order to effectively mitigate threats to the species.

Relationship to other CMS actions

By including the *Pelecanus thagus* in Appendix I and II of the Convention, the Parties to CMS have already agreed that this species would benefit from Concerted Action and international cooperation.

This concerted action is complementary to another CMS initiative regarding Action Plans for certain migratory birds included in Appendices I and II (Resolution 05.09 (Rev.COP12)), while habitat conservation and threat mitigation for the Peruvian pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*) are also related to ACAP objectives.

Conservation priority

It has been observed currently that the population size of the Peruvian pelican has decreased by 99.2% compared to what was recorded in 1973 by Tovar (1985), who counted 340,000 individuals in contrast to the 2023 figures (2,412 individuals) (Peru-AGRORURAL 2023a).

Del Hoyo (1992) estimated the global population of the Peruvian pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*) to be between 100,000 and 1,000,000 individuals. However, the monitoring system currently for guano birds implemented in Peru made it possible to determine that between 2003 and 2010 the number of non-breeding individuals was between 50,000 and 200,000; however, by 2014, an estimated 61,858 individuals were found to be breeding and non-breeding for the whole of Peru (Zavalaga, 2015). There is no constant monitoring for the populations of Ecuador and Chile, however, it is estimated that Chile makes up 50% of the total species' range and for 2007 there were an estimated 1,400 breeding pairs (Thiel et al., 2007).

The estimated population for 2023 was calculated to be in the range of 2,862 to 8,315 individuals, considering both breeding and non-breeding specimens (Romero et al., 2023). The upper value of this range (8,315 individuals) is the difference between the total number of adults recorded before the decline associated with the H5N1 virus and the number of dead individuals reported by Peru-SENASA (2023), Peru-SERFOR (2023) in the coastal strip and by Peru-AGRORURAL (2023b) in the colonies. In contrast, the lower limit (2,862 individuals) is based on the count of adults present in colonies, recorded during the February 2023 census conducted by AGRORURAL.

In addition to the impact of infectious diseases such as the avian influenza (H5N1) outbreak, other factors threaten the conservation of this species, including overfishing and by-catch, illegal guano collecting, and climatic phenomena such as ENSO, among others.

Regarding the conservation status of the species, according to the IUCN, *Pelecanus thagus* is classified as Near Threatened (NT) globally. At a local level, in Peru it is classified as Endangered, in Ecuador it is classified as Least Concern, and in Chile it is classified as Near Threatened according to the RCE of the Ministry of the Environment and in B: Species listed as beneficial for forestry and agricultural activities, E: Species listed as beneficial for maintaining the balance of natural ecosystems, according to protection criteria under Article No. 4 of the Regulations of Law No. 19,473.

Pelecanus thagus have an unfavorable conservation status, according to the Convention definition, since they do not meet the conditions highlighted in subparagraph 1 C of the Convention text.

Comprehensive and coordinated management and conservation measures are urgently needed to prevent further declines in the population. Cooperation between the Range States is needed to mitigate obstacles to migration, conserve the species' habitat and protect it through international cooperation in order to regulate targeted hunting and by-catch.

Importance

The Peruvian pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*) mainly inhabits the area of influence of the Humboldt Current System (HCS) with its colonies present on islands and points along the coastline (Peru-Chile). During breeding, it is described that they can move within a radius of 41 km in search of food (Zavalaga et al., 2011). Therefore, this species tends to move close to the islands it inhabits under normal conditions.

Displacements during events such as El Niño and La Niña depend on the magnitude of the event itself. In events such as those in 1982-1983, almost the entire population in Peru was affected, disappearing from Peruvian territory due to displacement and deaths recorded on the beaches (Tovar and Cabrera, 1985). During El Niño 1997-1998, the pelican populations of Macabí Islands and Guañape Islands in Trujillo and Mazorca Island in Lima reduced, probably due to movement towards the south, since an increase in the number of pelicans was observed at Punta Coles in Moquegua.

Anchovy is an important resource in the development of bird populations as it constitutes the main food source for these birds. This is why the greater or lesser availability of anchovy influences fluctuations in the population levels of the Peruvian pelican (Tovar, 1988), which is affected by overfishing; by-catch has also been recorded in industrial and artisanal purse seine fishing (Ayala, 2012) and with curtain-type fishing nets, and injuries from hooks have been recorded too.

These threats need to be addressed nationally and internationally in order to ensure the viability of the population of *Pelecanus thagus* in its range.

Absence of better remedies

This Concerted Action directly addresses the need for coordination across the entire range and will enable strategic collaboration between the Parties to work together in the development and implementation of activities. Under the CMS framework with the collaboration of the researchers involved and NGOs, it will be possible to improve knowledge of the species and implement actions, once they have been adopted by governments. Although there is a commitment to conserve the species by each of the countries within the species' range, given the migratory nature of the Peruvian pelican, Concerted Action is necessary.

Readiness and feasibility

Chile, Ecuador and Peru have already led the proposal for inclusion of *Pelecanus thagus* in Appendices I and II of the CMS with the co-proposal of the Republic of Panama.

Likelihood of success

Organizational experience can be exploited to implement the proposed actions; countries within the range of *P. thagus* coordinate and carry out joint actions as part of binational agreements on a governmental level.

The main risk factor associated with Concerted Action is the redistribution of financial resources. However, it is expected that work plans will be established to allow applications for national and international funds to carry out the proposed actions.

Magnitude of likely impact

The implementation of this trinational management plan is expected to lead to the following:

- Improvements in the legal protection status of the Peruvian pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*).
- Establish a trinational database with census and breeding success data for the species.
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- Encourage indirect conservation actions for sympatric species such as the Humboldt penguin (*Spheniscus humboldti*), chungungo (*Lontra felina*), among many others.
- Raising awareness of the species' problems at national, regional and global levels, with the resulting increased commitment of the Range States and greater access to international funding.

Cost effectiveness

The necessary funding is highlighted in the table of activities above.

No funding is needed for activity 2 on creating a coordination group; however, activities 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 require funding, although the costs can be shared between the activities related to workshops and campaigns.

By encouraging cooperation between the Range States through this Concerted Action, any conservation successes can be replicated and good practices promoted through collaboration, which will be more cost-effective for Range States than working alone.

Consultations planned/undertaken:

Consultations and requests for input were made to countries within the species' range.

Activities and expected outcomes

Activity	Outputs/Outcomes	Timeframe	Responsibility	Funding
Establish a trinational working group	Coordination between key actors is strengthened for the effective implementation of the Action Plan.	In the short-term	CMS national technical focal points	No funding required
Standardize protocols and methodologies for the monitoring and census of Peruvian pelican populations between Ecuador, Chile, and Peru	– A trinational monitoring program and protocol is established for the pelican, applicable in both breeding and non-breeding seasons. – Criteria and a monitoring program for emerging diseases are established – Objectives, scope, monitoring frequency, data collection and analysis methods, and relevant health criteria are defined. – Information that is standardized and comparable between Chile, Ecuador and Peru is generated.	In the short-term	CMS national technical focal points. Competent bodies in each country Researchers	Funding is required
Identification of breeding sites of Peruvian pelican throughout the species' range	– Information is centralized and systematized in a continuously updated database, accessible through a web platform. – Preparation of an updated map to prioritize monitoring and conservation efforts.	In the mid-term	CMS national technical focal points. Competent bodies in each country Researchers	Funding required for monitoring equipment, analysis and web creation, design and implementation of workshops. Campaign reports and outcomes
Propose and adopt conservation measures throughout the species' range to preserve its island, continental and marine habitats in order to safeguard the species.	– Coordination mechanisms are established with local managers and authorities to enable the implementation of appropriate forms of protection locally – Management **and** conservation measures are implemented for the species.	In the long-term	CMS national technical focal points. Competent bodies in each country	Funding is required
Coordinate actions to reduce by-catch through good practices across the species' range	– Preparation of internal report on by-catch incidents in terms of location, season and years to quantify and zone them – Measures are proposed to mitigate negative interactions with fishing.	In the mid and long-term	CMS national technical focal points. Competent bodies in each country	Funding for studies and implementation of pilot measures

Activity	Outputs/Outcomes	Timeframe	Responsibility	Funding
	– Proposed measures are implemented. – Design and implementation of good practices for the fishing sector. – Evaluate and monitor food availability within a radius close to the most important active breeding colonies. – Awareness campaigns with the fishing sector. – Implement a mortality register (database).			
Prevent targeted catch through campaigns.	Preparation of digital campaigns shared through networks and websites of the institutions involved, in agreement with the communications department of each institution.	In the short and mid-term	CMS national technical focal points.	Funding required for campaigns
Coordinate actions to mitigate the effects of emerging diseases	– Active epidemiological monitoring system in key colonies, with periodic sampling protocols. – Contingency Plan and Trinational Rapid Response Protocol for outbreaks of zoonotic diseases or mass mortality events.	In the mid and long-term		
Create an education and communication strategy associated with species conservation.	Develop citizen science strategies for delivering information	Mid-term	CMS national technical focal points. Competent bodies in each country	Funding required for campaigns

Table 1: Activities, Outcomes, Timeframe, Responsibility and Funding

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