

Abandoned Fishing Gear: Wildlife Killer

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INTRODUCTION

- Each year, lost or abandoned fishing gear entangled on coastal shorelines and estuaries poses a fatal hazard to wildlife, especially waterbirds, fish, turtles, and marine mammals.
- Derelict fishing gear is a significant cause of wildlife mortality in coastal areas and continues to snare wildlife for years.
- Entanglement in fishing gear is listed as the major cause of Brown Pelican mortality in Florida.
- Other wildlife species impacted include Kemp's Ridley and loggerhead sea turtles, manatees, dolphins, herons and egrets, spoonbills, ibis, gulls, terns, skimmers, and non-target fish.
- Gear and line thrown overboard washes up on shorelines, where it is often collected by birds mistaking it for soft material to line their nests.
- Snared or hooked birds are often cut loose, dangling long lengths of fishing line that becomes tangled in vegetation when they return to their nesting or roosting island.
- Line cast near island shorelines accidentally snares in vegetation, where it can catch birds, fish, and other wildlife for many years.

Promote Proper Handling of Fishing Gear

- Fishermen should dispose of fishing line, tackle, and nets carefully and appropriately.
- Put tangled line in fishing line tubes often located at piers and boat ramps or in trash.
- Everyone should be on the alert for fishing gear along shorelines or in the bay, collect it, and dispose of it properly.
- If you are fishing and catch a bird by accident, reel the bird in, secure its beak and wings, and remove the fishing line and hooks as gently as possible. Wear glasses or sunglasses to protect your eyes. Note: the bird will not know you are trying to help and will try to defend itself. Cover the bird's eyes with a piece of cloth to calm it. Hold the wings and legs firmly. Once the fishing gear is removed, release the bird with its head facing away from you.
- Participate in the Fall Fishing Gear Cleanup with Sarasota Bay Watch, 941/953-5333



< Abandoned fishing line collected from a bridge by Sarasota Bay Watch volunteers (left)

Lee Fox, Save Our Seabird, demonstrates how to restrain a gull to remove fishing line >
 Photos: Rusty Chinnis



Take injured birds to Save Our Seabirds
 1708 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, FL 34236
 941/388-3010 saveourseabirds.org

All Season Trash and Fishing Line Cleanups

- Sarasota Bay Watch will select estuary sites where birds do not nest to avoid harming nesting birds**
- Volunteers, boat captains and crew sign up for a cleanup event.
 - Sites and islands where birds do not nest are targeted for the cleanup.
 - Cleanup destinations assigned to captains and crew volunteers.
 - Trash and fishing gear collected and properly disposed of.
 - Results reported to Audubon Florida and Sarasota Bay Watch.
 - Celebrate a cleaner estuary, safer for birds and wildlife.

Cleanup and fishing line removal with Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's Bay Buddies, Sarasota Bay Watch, & Audubon volunteers at Bowlees Creek Bird Sanctuary, April 16, 2011



Sarasota Bay Watch volunteers remove trash and fishing gear debris from Sister Key



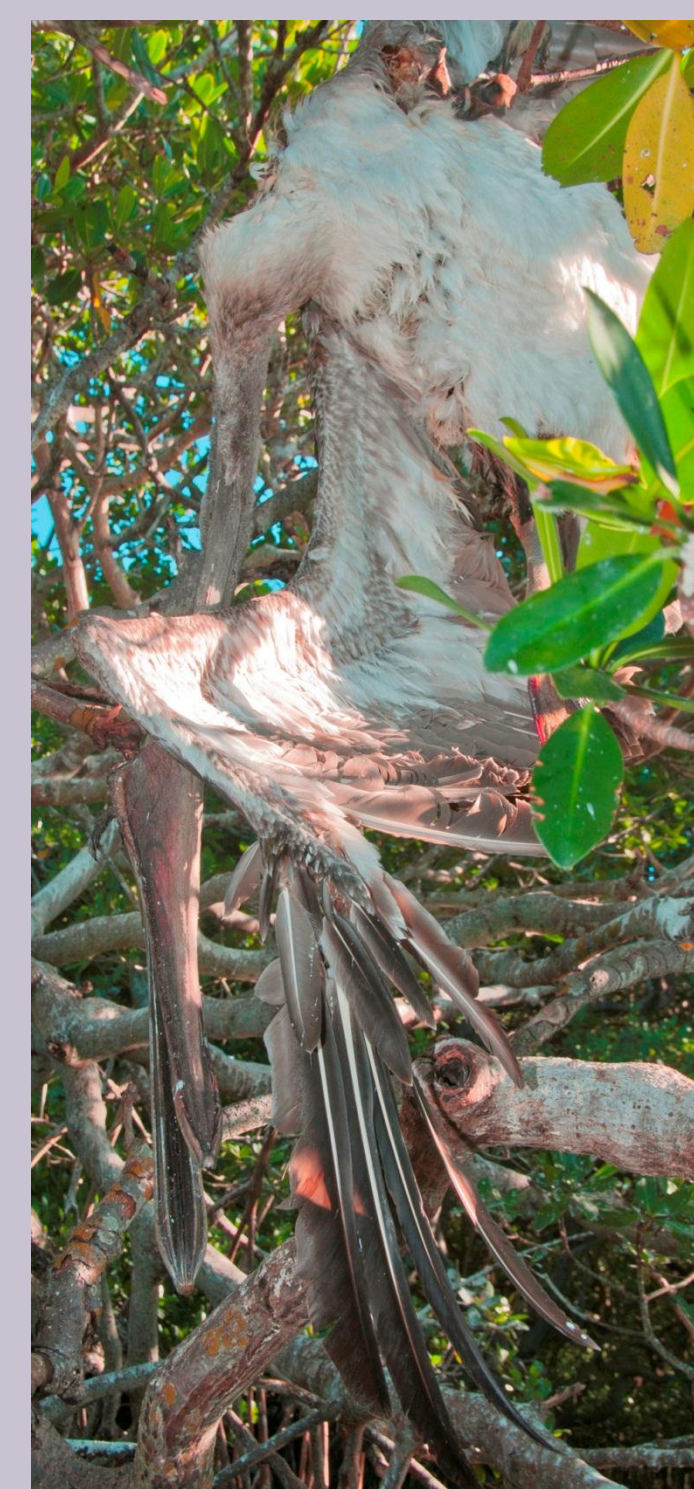
There are many ways to help, find the right one for you.

Get Involved

THE PROBLEM



< Dead Brown Pelicans killed by fishing line ^ >



Fishing line woven into Brown Pelican nests threatens young ^

Brown Pelican killed by fishing line >
 Photo: Rusty Chinnis

Brown Pelican killed by entrapment by fishing gear, Roberts Bay Bird Islands

"A most unfortunate source of non-natural mortality comes from sport fishing equipment. Both Brown and American White pelicans in Florida and elsewhere have been found with imbedded hooks, cuts, and amputation caused by monofilament line. Hooks and lures usually affect only individuals but monofilament may, over a period of time, kill many birds," Stephen A. Nesbitt. 1996. Eastern Brown Pelican, in Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida: Vol. V. Birds. Editors J. A. Rodgers, Jr., H. W. Kale, II, and H.T. Smith. University Press of Florida. Gainesville. Pp. 144-155.

Fishing line persists in habitats, killing birds and wildlife.

Fishing line killed nesting seabirds at Passage Key NWR



Fishing line killed adult Roseate Spoonbill, tangled in mangroves at nesting colony



Photos: Rusty Chinnis, Sarah Schweitzer, Ann Hodgson, Peter Clark, Rich Paul, Bonnie Samuelson, Libby Carnahan, Tampa Bay Estuary Program files, Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries files
 Aerial: Google Earth



Fishing gear killed a sea turtle and a shark



Nesting Islands: Fall Fishing Line Cleanup

- Coordinated by Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries and Sarasota Bay Watch
- An Autumn day is chosen to avoid impacting nesting birds (most waterbirds in Sarasota Bay nest in the winter, spring, and fall)
- Boat captains call to volunteer, assemble their crew
- Volunteers without boats are assigned to a boat captain
- Nesting colony islands and bird foraging habitats cleanup destinations are assigned to captains
- Brief demonstration on fishing gear location tips, handling of hooked birds
- Conduct fishing gear retrieval
- Collect and properly dispose of abandoned fishing gear
- Report results to Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries and Sarasota Bay Watch
- Celebrate a cleaner estuary, safer for birds and wildlife



Bird Nesting Islands in Sarasota Bay

**Cortez Key
 Bishop Bayou
 Sarasota Yacht Club-Plymouth Harbor
 City Island
 Ringling Park Pines
 Save Our Seabirds
 Roberts Bay Bird Islands
 Little Skier's Island
 Blackburn Bay (3 islands)
 Dona Bay**



< Fishing line, lures, and other potentially ensnaring debris collected from Sarasota Bay bird islands during the Fall Fishing Gear Cleanup, Sarasota Bay Watch, Sarasota Sailing Squadron and Audubon volunteers October 21, 2011, Photo: Rusty Chinnis