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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **CA Brown Pelican Youngsters Make Surprising Journey**

**Fairfield, CA (December 18, 2012)** — A banding study done by California non-profit [International Bird Rescue](#) (IBR) has revealed that unlike most birds, some California Brown Pelicans head north, not south for the winter. Far north, in fact — all the way to British Columbia.

Two first-year birds rehabilitated by IBR and released under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco on August 23 have been sighted multiple times by researchers and bird lovers on Vancouver Island, B.C.

“We knew that pelicans follow the fish, and that many feed along the coast of Oregon and Washington, but we are surprised that these young pelicans, who survived life-threatening, human-caused injuries, flew that far north so quickly after their release,” said Jay Holcomb, IBR’s director and head researcher of the [Blue-Banded Pelican Project](#).

The two pelicans — known as R36 and R41, the numbers on their bright blue bands — excited researchers at the Race Rocks Ecological Reserve on Vancouver Island when they arrived in mid-November. <http://ecoreserves.bc.ca/?p=14349>

After taking photos of the birds, the researchers were able to see the numbers on the bands, which they then reported to Holcomb.

“What excites everyone involved is knowing the history of the birds, which before this band study was difficult to impossible,” Holcomb said.

Corresponding with the researchers via e-mail, Holcomb was able to share the stories of these two pelicans. He reported back that this was the first sighting of R36, a first-year bird that had come into IBR’s San Francisco Bay Area center in Cordelia, Calif. on July 22 with fishing tackle injuries.

R41 was first reported November 22 by a member of the public who spotted the bird at Ogden Point in Victoria, B.C. R41 had come into the care of IBR on July 20, cold and weak from fish oil contamination from a public fish-cleaning station. R41 was later seen with R36 at Race Rocks.

“This is the positive of our work, the payoff. These birds have made incredible journeys. They first flew about 400 miles from the Channel Islands, where they most likely hatched and fledged. They then flew from San Francisco to Victoria Island, most likely following adults, a distance of around 800 miles,” Holcomb said.

This should give people a whole different perspective on pelicans who are typically associated with warmer climates and are prevalent in southern regions such as the Southeastern Seaboard, the Gulf of Mexico, Southern California and Mexico.

It turns out pelicans are much heartier than they look.

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***About the Blue-Banded Pelican Research Program:*** Over the past 20 years, International Bird Rescue has banded more than 5,000 rehabilitated Brown Pelicans as part of the [North American Bird Banding Program](#). In November 2009, when Brown Pelicans were taken off the Endangered Species list, large blue plastic leg bands were added to make released pelicans easier to spot by researchers and the public. This is an ongoing post-release evaluation of Brown Pelicans by IBR to better understand the travels and survival of rehabilitated birds. Over 1,000 pelicans have been blue banded and 220 individuals have been reported (as of 12/20/2012) from Mexico to British Columbia.

***About us:*** International Bird Rescue (IBR) has been helping seabirds and other aquatic birds around the world since 1971. Our team of specialists operates two year-round aquatic bird rehabilitation centers in California, which care for more than 5,000 birds every year. IBR's Oil Spill Response Team has led oiled wildlife rescue efforts in more than 200 oil spills in a dozen countries around the world.