

Big Mouth



Photo: Daniel Axelson via scribol.com

Pelicans are those tropical birds with the funny sack hanging from their beak. Why do they have that giant gaping mouth? What's going on in there? That big hanging pocket is called the gular sack, and pelicans use it to eat. They fly over lakes and oceans, scoop up fish in that sack, drain all the extra water, and then turn the fish around to swallow it head first. Never mind that swooping down into the water to catch fish is an amazing trick to begin with: pelicans can weigh up to **30 pounds!** Thankfully, their bones make up only 1/10 of their total body weight. That said, they have wings that span up to 10 feet to haul that big body into the air. They live in

warm weather, so they're on every continent except Antarctica. Fish everywhere need to watch out!

Wee ones: Of the 7 continents, pelicans live on all but one of them, Antarctica. How many continents have pelicans?

Little kids: There are 2 pelicans and a shy seagull in that photo. How many wings do they have altogether? *Bonus:* If you can fit 3 little fish in your mouth and your pet pelican can hold 11 more than that, how many can a pelican hold?

Big kids: If your pet pelican eats 5 big fish a day, how many do you need to feed him in a week? *Bonus:* If you weigh 54 pounds, how many pounds of fish does a 29-pound pelican need to chug down to weigh the same as you?