FROM LOUISIANA

Pelicans Vanishing

By MARY GATES
Advertiser Staff Reporter

(Second in a series of three articles about the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge at Grand Chenier, today's subject is based on research conducted by Ted Joaen, research leader, and Howard H. Dupue, biologist of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. Joaen, a member of the Commission since 1963, is a native of Louisiana, a graduate of Southeastern Louisiana College and LSU. Dupue, a member of the Commission since 1953, is a native of Louisiana and a graduate of USL.)

Unless present trends are reversed, the day may not be too far off when the only brown pelicans found in Louisiana will be those illustrated on the Pelican State's official seal. Native colonies of the state bird have become about as rare as paraskeets in Labrador.

Records indicate that the last nesting attempt by brown pelicans in Louisiana occurred in 1961 when observers reported some 200 adult birds and 100 nestlings on North Island, part of the Chalmette chain. In 1962 only a few adult birds were seen and no nesting was reported.

What caused the brown pelican to disappear from Louisiana's shores when 18 years ago it thrived in multitudes? Reviewing the situation, wildlife specialists discussed possible causes that included insecticides which are found in heavy amounts in the Atchafalaya and Mississippi basins, the result of local farm drainage as well as an accumulation descending from the northern states. Oilfish, a delicacy to pelicans, are susceptible to the absorption of insecticides, especially DDT which has been banned by many states, but not Louisiana.

Conference

In 1968 representatives of state game departments, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the Audubon Society, and a number of private organizations met at the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge to determine population trends and to investigate the possibility of

(Continued on Page 40)