

Pelicans most at risk from fishing tackle injuries

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South Australia's recreational fishermen are more likely to snag pelicans than any other marine birds, who are often the victim of fishing line and hook entanglements, according to new research.

Fishermen are being warned to be more aware of the risks to [seabirds](#) and to report any injuries as soon as possible.

A study of 113 seabirds treated over a six-year period for 132 fishing-related injuries has been conducted by researchers from the University of Adelaide's School of Medical Sciences and the Australian Marine Wildlife Research and Rescue Organisation (AMWRRO).

They've found that, contrary to public belief, "live" tackle being used by [fishermen](#) is resulting in the bird injuries, not tackle that's been thrown away.

The results of the study are now published in the *International Journal of Veterinary Health Science & Research*.

"Discarded fishing lines have often been attributed as the cause of injury to wild birds living along coastal and river regions, but until now there's been nothing to show how widespread the problem is or why it's happening," says the University's Professor Roger Byard AO, from the School of Medical Sciences.

"Regular removal of discarded fishing gear along the coast has seen no

reduction in the number of entangled or hooked seabirds, so we believe that these injuries are occurring because the birds are getting too close to active [recreational fishing](#)."

Pelicans were involved in more than 59% of cases, with gulls, plovers and banded stilts among the other most commonly affected seabirds.

Entanglement and/or embedded hooks were the cause of injury in 97% of pelican cases, with only 3% involving ingestion of hooks.

AMWRRO President Aaron Machado says: "By raising awareness of this issue, we're hoping to educate fishermen about the risks to wildlife, so they can become more aware of those risks, to mitigate them, and to report them as soon as cases arise.

"The sooner we know about a bird that's been tangled, the sooner we can provide help. This isn't about pointing the finger and blaming fishermen, it's about helping them to have an incident-free fishing experience and to protect the natural marine bird life."

More information: The study is available online:
scidoc.org/IJVHSR-2332-2748-02-301.php

Provided by University of Adelaide

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