

# North American River Otter Predation on Brown Pelicans at Abbotts Lagoon

*Megan Isadore & Terence Carroll, River Otter Ecology Project*

After decades of absence from most of the SF Bay Area, river otters have made a slow but steady return, noticed first in Marin in 1989. However, the presence of North American river otters (*Lontra canadensis*) in the area poses potential threats to another recovered species, the brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). Since 2018, researchers have observed river otters hunting and successfully capturing pelicans at Abbotts Lagoon in Point Reyes National Seashore. To understand whether river otter predation at Abbotts Lagoon is having a substantial impact on pelican populations, Megan Isadore and Terence Carroll from the River Ecology Project (ROEP) are spearheading a project to estimate the number of predated pelicans in proportion to the total local abundance of pelicans. ROEP researchers will survey the lower lagoon perimeter for pelican carcasses every 10 days and use this information to create a baseline or river otter predation of brown pelicans in Point Reyes.

*“Understanding connections among wildlife; whether through their food webs or reactions to new phenomena like this predation behavior, contribute to a greater comprehension of our watersheds as a whole.”*

– Megan Isadore,  
Executive Director,  
River Otter Ecology  
Project



Principal Investigator Terence Carroll and Intern Amanda Lipari Maxson counting pelicans. © River Otter Ecology Project

North American river otter pulling brown pelican carcass.  
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