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Pesticides accused

Pesticides have been linked to the rapid 80% drop in Louisiana's brown pelican population, from 500 to 100 since May, says J. Burton Angelle, director of the state's Wildlife and Fisheries Commission.

Angelle asserts that lethal amounts of endrin, a chlorinated hydrocarbon, and traces of other pesticides were found in dead pelicans at Barataria Bay, near Grand Isle.

The commission's tissue analysis of the brains of the dead birds showed: 0.23-0.48 part per million of endrin, 0.42-1.08 ppm. of dieldrin, 2.7-6.6 ppm. of toxaphene and 0.73-1.72 ppm. of DDE, a breakdown product of DDT. There were also undisclosed amounts of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls), alpha-benzene hexachloride, and hexachlorobenzene.

The commission notes that the pesticides apparently came from states north of Louisiana, worked their way down through the Mississippi Valley and were carried by westerly currents to the coastal wetlands along the Gulf of Mexico, where the birds nested.

Shell Chemical's agricultural products division points out that it has not manufactured endrin for four years, but marketed some last year. It adds that dieldrin was suspended by the Environmental Protection Agency in October 1974.

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