Oil reaches Important Bird Areas

Title
Reports of oil reaching the Chandeleur Islands mark the initial assault of the massive Gulf Oil Spill on the first of 25 recognised *Important Bird Areas (IBAs)* that line the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to south Florida. Designated by Audubon (BirdLife Partner) in conjunction with BirdLife International, the sites provide essential habitats to hundreds of species.

South of Gulfport, Mississippi, the Chandeleurs are breeding habitat for Sandwich and Royal Terns, plus Brown Pelicans—only recently removed from the U.S. Endangered Species list and just beginning to bounce back.

Statement of Audubon President Dr. Frank Gill "This is another sad milestone in a disaster unfolding in slow motion. This massive oil slick is churning around in the Gulf and emulsifying into a thick, deadly 'mousse' that will extinguish life and destroy habitats. "Seabirds like the Northern Gannet and an array of marine life have already been hit and now, many more victims are now likely to succumb. We may never know the full extent of the damage to the creatures that spend their lives beneath the waves or suspended between sea and sky. Millions of birds migrate across the Gulf at this time of year, returning from their winter homes in South America".

"Audubon is taking action in the face of this crisis. We are strengthening partnerships with state and federal agencies and forging new alliances to ensure that when more birds and habitats are affected, the Audubon grassroots network of concerned Americans can spring into action and do what needs to be done. But the recovery will be slow and difficult for people and wildlife alike. We already are launching new efforts that go beyond the emergency response. Thousands of citizen-science volunteers will help to confirm the location and status of birds now and to monitor the impact after the deadly oil arrives."

"Birds may be the most visible indicator of how this disaster is affecting the ecosystems that sustain human and wild communities across the region. By protecting birds, preserving and restoring habitats, and investing in communities along the Gulf Coast, Audubon has been helping wildlife and people for decades. And we will not stop now. We will be here as this disaster unfolds, doing everything we can to mitigate harm and support cleanup and recovery efforts. And we will be here long after the headlines fade, doing our job for the sake of birds, other wildlife, and the human communities that call the Gulf Coast home." Audubon experts are available to assist journalists in assessing the threat of the spill to birds and habitat and the needs of short and long-term recovery.

- For updates on Audubon initiatives and what people can do to help www.audubon.org
- See our Press Room for resources including Photos and Maps
  www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/gos
- Audubon's Louisiana Coastal Initiative http://louisianacoast.audubon.org/
- Maps of Audubon Important Bird Areas in the region
  www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/gos/iba.html
- Brown pelicans recently delisted from being an Endangered species
  http://web1.audubon.org/news/pressRelease.php?id=1940&month=11-09

Audubon Important Bird Areas at Risk from the Gulf Oil Spill

Many Gulf of Mexico Important Bird Areas designated by Audubon and its partners for their essential habitat value to bird species lie within potentially affected areas. They include National Seashore sites, National Wildlife Refuges and Wildlife Management Areas. Explore the map below to learn more about these special places, and the birds that depend on them. Important Bird Areas are shown in red; the current extent of the oil spill is shown in tan. Visit Important Bird Areas Program to learn how Audubon is helping to protect and restore critical bird habitat throughout the United States. To browse the Google Map of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the area of the oil spill go to -http://www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/gos/iba.html . If you click on the IBAs you can get access to IBA database driven reports and additional information.