



Wetland Birds Are Sitting Ducks As Oil Slick Approaches Fragile Coast - Video

Title

The exploded British Petroleum oil well pumping daily an estimated 210,000 gallons of crude into the Gulf of Mexico is still hemorrhaging today as wildlife officials, politicians, and oil industry executives are clambering to triage and treat the crisis. Calling the calamity a “potentially unprecedented environmental disaster,” President Obama flew to Louisiana yesterday afternoon to see firsthand the emergency response efforts. He found rain, high winds, and seven- to ten-foot sea swells hindering aerial attempts to treat oil with chemical dispersants and hampering marine efforts to corral the colossal oil slick with miles-long strings of vinyl containment booms. With the slick swiftly drifting toward the coast and a chain of fragile barrier islands that were pummeled by recent hurricanes, including Katrina in 2005, wetland birds nesting and feeding in these seafood-rich waters are literally sitting ducks, oystercatchers, black skimmers, egrets, pelicans, and plovers. Even airborne migratory songbirds flying through the area at night in transit to northern breeding grounds could be affected by the spill if they encounter heavy smoke from fires that may be deployed to burn surface oil during the next few days. Environmental groups with personnel in the area, including the National Audubon Society (BirdLife Partner in the US) are being inundated with calls from concerned citizens wanting to help. Audubon Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi staff and chapters are working to prepare for impacts to birds, wildlife and important habitat by coordinating volunteer efforts as the spill makes its way toward land. **What You Can Do To Help** From cleaning oiled birds, which requires proper training, to counting birds to picking up trash on beaches, there are many things that you can do to help. If you are interested in volunteering, sign up [here](#). Wildlife experts are stressing that while every hand is needed and welcome, it is vital that volunteers offer their help through coordinated efforts so that the greatest good can be focused where it is needed the most. They are asking the public to avoid going to affected areas or handling wildlife until they are part of coordinated responses because even well-intentioned people can inadvertently interfere with important recovery efforts. Audubon is also calling for concerned citizens to help avoid future spills by [submitting comments on the Interior Department's plan to expand offshore oil and gas drilling](#). To read the latest news about the Gulf Oil Spill, visit [Audubon's website](#) or see the latest within the [BirdLife Community](#). Credit: Rene Ebersole / Audubonmagazine.org