

Audubon Mobilizes in Response to Galveston Oil Spill

HOUSTON, TX –MARCH 24, 2014 – This last weekend’s tragic collision between two vessels in Galveston Bay has placed critical coastal habitat and wildlife under serious threat. With authorities working to contain and mitigate the damage created by up to 168,000 gallons of fuel oil spilling into the bay, environmental experts are quick to point out the terrible timing of these events as we are approaching the peak of spring bird migration.

Brian Trusty, Executive Director of Audubon Texas and a Vice President of National Audubon Society commented, “Galveston Bay is not only one of the world’s busiest seaports, but it also home to some of the most bio-diverse and ecologically sensitive areas on the Gulf coast. With the height of spring migration fast approaching, hundreds of thousands of birds are arriving in these waters and the surrounding environs to nest and breed. Managing healthy habitats in such close proximity to major commercial hubs and shipping traffic is incredibly challenging and requires constant vigilance.”

Audubon is responding at all levels to the oil spill catastrophe in the Galveston ship channel, with local efforts being led by the Houston Audubon Society chapter. Richard Gibbons, Houston Audubon's Conservation Director has been a strong voice of the environmental community on the devastating effects this tragedy can have on critical shorebird and colonial waterbird habitat in the immediate area of the spill. Audubon Texas, the state office of National Audubon Society, has been working closely with Houston Audubon and other local partners to maintain emergency response coordination, and to organize volunteer efforts for habitat clean-up and addressing oiled wildlife. Additionally, Audubon is remaining a consistent voice with regulatory agencies regarding expectations for clean-up and overall response effectiveness.

Today, Audubon Texas has evaluated many of the barrier islands we manage within Galveston Bay to assess damage to these active rookery sites. So far damage appears to be contained within the immediate vicinity of the accident with several oiled birds washing up on nearby shores. Houston Audubon efforts are being coordinated with local emergency response officials to address these issues on the sanctuaries they manage being hit hardest by the tragedy. More information on these local efforts can be found at www.houstonaudubon.org.

About Audubon

The National Audubon Society saves birds and their habitats throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon Texas is the state program of the National Audubon Society, dedicated for 100 years to protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. With chapters and partners we protect and manage colonial waterbird populations in every major bay system on the Texas Gulf Coast, identify and conserve the most important sites for birds statewide, and are working to reach 50,000 students annually through conservation education and stewardship action at three urban Audubon Centers. <http://tx.audubon.org>

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