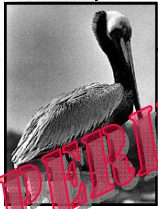


The Brown Pelican



IMPERILED

The Newsletter of the Coastal Bend Audubon Society

On the Web at <http://www.coastalbendaudubon.org>

Oil, Wind and the Plight of Pelicans

by David Newstead, CBAS president

Pelicans are back in the news. Only a few months ago, the brown pelican was removed from the Endangered Species list. Recovery of the species in the Gulf began in local waters with protection and advocacy by some dedicated conservationists. In the last newsletter, I mentioned that we must continue to protect these birds and their habitat.

Almost two months have passed since the tragic explosion of the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform, which killed eleven people. That date marks a tragic end to the lives of those workers, and the painful beginnings of the environmental tragedy that continues to unfold in slow-motion. We are all familiar with the horrific sight of the chapter's emblem bird, oil-soaked and struggling to lift themselves out of the oily mess.

The Gulf of Mexico oil spill is already being called the greatest environmental disaster in the nation's history, and it continues to leak. Oiled birds and other wildlife are beginning to perish as their habitats are slowly poisoned with oil. The legacy of this spill is going to be affecting the Gulf states for a long time. It appears that the Texas coast will be spared the worst of the direct impacts of the spill (though a tropical disturbance could rapidly change that), but this could easily have happened on our own doorstep. *Cont'd. on p. 6*



Oil-coated pelicans await cleaning by International Bird Rescue Research Center in Louisiana. Photo: IBRRC.

CBAS Meetings

Annual Membership Meeting:

Tuesday, July 13, 6:00 p.m.

Topic: Election of officers

Location: B&J's Pizza, 6335 SPID

CBAS does not hold program meetings in the summer.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, Sept. 7, 7 p.m., at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History. See Sept./Oct. newsletter for topic and speaker.

All members and the public are invited!

IN THIS ISSUE:

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Project Updates:

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Purple Martins

Birding 101 for Kids

White Pelicans at Risk



Earth Share
OF TEXAS

One environment.
One simple way
to care for it.

White Pelicans at Risk

by David Newstead, CBAS president

On June 9, while monitoring in the Land Cut area of the Laguna Madre, I watched a flock of 15 American white pelicans slowly kettling up from a shallow flat on the Kenedy Ranch. Once they hit approximately 150', they turned and moved north in a line. A colleague and I watched as the pelicans moved between us and one of the Kenedy County wind farms. It was difficult to judge their proximity to the spinning turbines, until the flock approached the easternmost turbine in the string. While most of the flock edged past the plane of the spinning blades, the last pelican in the string was struck on the down stroke of the blade. The size of the turbines belies just how fast the blade tips are moving. The blade tip on a modern turbine is the width of a bus and moving at around 180 mph. The much-touted radar system that supposedly temporarily curtails turbines when birds are approaching evidently did not detect a flock of some of North America's largest birds.

American white pelicans generally winter in our area but breed in the north. The exception is a small population of birds (~350 pairs) that have nested on one small island near the mouth of Baffin Bay in the Laguna Madre for most of the last century. It is the only known population that breeds in a saltwater environment.

In Harm's Way

The appropriateness of siting wind energy projects in the coastal zone of Texas — in the midst of the busiest migratory corridor in North America, amidst wetlands where bird life is abundant and diverse year-round — has been questioned by a wide range of conservation organizations including Audubon Texas, the American Bird Conservancy, Texas Ornithological Society, and CBAS. However, three companies carried their projects to completion despite the warnings. Three wind farms, totaling more than 100,000 acres, are operational, and many more are planned throughout the Texas coast.



To my knowledge, none of these companies has shared publicly any data on wildlife impacts. If in a brief 10-minute observation, I wit-

WHAT'S UP AROUND TEXAS

WETLANDS EDUCATION CENTER TOURS

Every Tuesday and Thursday. 10 a.m. Free
University of Texas Marine Science Institute,
Port Aransas.

Guided tours in which visitors learn about the ecological and economic importance of coastal wetlands and how plants and animals adapt to life in the salt marsh and sand dune environments. **Phone:** 361-749-6805

Website: www.utmsi.utexas.edu/outreach/wetlands-education-center.html

BEGINNERS' BIRD WALK Free

Second Saturday of each month 7:30 a.m. in summer
Judson Nature Trails in Olmos Park (San Antonio area)
An approximately two-hour introduction to the local birds for beginners and newcomers. Binoculars available.

Phone: 210-308-6788

Website: www.saaudubon.org/field.html

BIRD BANDING AT THE SANCTUARY

Third Saturday of each month 8 a.m.–noon Free
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson
See and photograph your favorite birds. Join the outing for monthly bird banding sessions.

Phone: 979-480-0999 **Website:** www.gcbo.org

CBAS Big Day Registration

BIG DAY is CBAS's annual fundraising event that incorporates a celebration of birding fun and enjoyment of the great outdoors. Participants form teams of three to five people and count bird species. Birding teams can go anywhere within the Coastal Bend and bird for a couple of hours or all day. Novices are welcome. The event wraps up in the evening with a banquet dinner and silent auction held at the Harte Research Institute at 5 p.m. Proceeds from this event allow us to continue our monthly speaker program, newsletters and educational programs. Registration is \$25 per person or \$15 for children 12 years and under. The fee includes a T-shirt and dinner. See registration form inside and at www.coastalbendaudubon.org.

nessed a collision with one of the few birds large enough to be observable from such a considerable distance, then what is the real toll? Are these projects as bad, or worse, than we feared? If there are valid monitoring data that show these farms are not having significant impacts, I will gladly publish those results on the CBAS website.

COASTAL BEND AUDUBON SOCIETY BIG DAY – OCT. 23, 2010

Big Day Registration Form

Registration Fee: \$25 per person; \$15 for children 12 and under
Registration Fee includes a T-shirt and dinner at the Harte Research Institute

Teams – Please send all registration information together – Teams can consist of 3-5 individuals

Check here if you need to be placed on a team

Check here if there is room for more on your team

Team Name: _____

Team Member Name	Address	Phone	Email
1.	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____

Indicate the number of each size of T-shirt needed

Child Small Medium Large XLarge XXL Large

Indicate the number of vegetarian meals required

Please mail form and payment to:

CBAS Big Day
P.O. Box 3604
Corpus Christi, TX 78463

For more information, please contact Rosalie Rossi at rosalierr@gmail.com. This form can also be printed from the CBAS website: www.coastalbendaudubon.org

*Invite a non-birding friend or family member to join a team.
Show them what fun the great outdoors and counting birds can be!*

\$500 FOR RESEARCH

The Coastal Bend Audubon Society will award a \$500 research grant to a qualified applicant for original research relevant to the conservation of birds and/or bird habitats in the Coastal Bend area. The purpose is to promote the development of professionals in wildlife conservation. Applicants must be students enrolled at either TAMU-Corpus Christi or TAMU-Kingsville. The award recipient will be required to produce a short non-technical report for publication in the *Brown Pelican* and on the CBAS website. Specific details are at www.coastalbendaudubon.org. Donations to the endowment are needed to build this award for the future. Send checks to CBAS or contact David Newstead.

BIG SIT: A SUNDAY OF LAZY BIRDING

by Scott Large

For the past three years the Corpus Christi Conventions and Visitors Bureau has sponsored the CBAS for the "Big Sit" portion of the Great Texas Birding Classic. In this event, a team of 10 tries to identify all the birds they can see or hear from within a 17-foot diameter circle.

This year, the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center provided the use of their palapa, which overlooks two wetlands and mesquite scrub. From this vantage point the team identified more than 80 species from sun-up until mid-afternoon. Notable birds seen during the event on April 25 were: olive-sided flycatcher, least bittern, yellow-throated warbler, Mississippi kites, and broad-winged hawks. Many thanks to the volunteers and sponsors.



yellow-throated warbler

Photo by Scott Large

SWAMP THINGS TRIP

On May 2, David Newstead led a group of seven kayakers on a paddle trip through the wetlands on the Womack Ranch, located at the confluence of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers. The group saw the immense water bird rookery that was beginning to form in the swamp, which included anhingas, neotropical cormorants, great blue herons, great egrets, snowy egrets, tricolored herons, roseate spoonbills and white ibis. Breeding non-colonially in the marsh were numerous green herons and yellow-crowned night herons. We also saw several large floating logs that turned out to be alligators, and several large alligators that turned out to be floating logs!



CITRUS DONATIONS

The South Texas Botanical Gardens is in the running to win a fruit orchard from the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation. The foundation will be donating some of the fruit to CBAS for migrant bird feeding if they get the orchard. Anyone can vote for the Botanical Gardens orchard every day until Aug. 30. The winning location will be announced in September. To vote for the orchard, see <http://stxbot.org/specialannouncement1.htm>.

CBAS NEEDS YOU

Volunteer

The Coastal Bend Audubon Society is busier than ever – active in conservation, education, advocacy, and research. Membership dues and donations allow us to expand our efforts. Please consider taking the extra step of volunteering some of your time and valuable skills to your chapter. Contact Chapter President David Newstead or any board member to discuss how you can contribute to strengthening the chapter's voice and benefit coastal wildlife.

Membership Meeting, Election of Officers

CBAS Members are invited to participate in the Annual Membership Meeting on Tuesday, July 13 at 6:00 pm, at B&J's Pizza, 6335 South Padre Island Dr. [Take the Airline Rd. exit, stay on frontage road & look for Habeeb's Jewelers]. We will be electing officers for next year. If you would like to be considered for an officer position, please contact Linda Fuiman, chair of the Nominating Committee, at 361-728-4635. The meeting is a great opportunity to get to know the board and other members of our chapter.

CAPE MAY BIRDING ADVENTURERS

by Jamie Ritter



This May, Mary Yurkovich and I rented a cottage in Cape May Point, New Jersey. We were one block from the Cape May Bird Observatory and less than a mile from the Cape May Point State Park in one direction and from the Meadows Wetlands in another. Every Monday morning, renowned birder Pete Dunne lead bird walks at the Meadows. Our house was close to some ideal waterfront birding locations, and during the month of May, we saw over 135 species of birds. At Reed's Beach, we saw red knots. Last year we saw thousands there; this year we saw hundreds.

red knots at Reed's Beach, New Jersey

Several bird-watching friends came to visit. Surprisingly, we all decided that the best birding spot was our own small 60'x80' yard. In addition to flyovers, the following birds actually landed in the yard: Cooper's hawk, mourning dove, ruby-throated hummingbird, red-bellied woodpecker, red-headed woodpecker, great crested flycatcher, red-eyed vireo, blue jay, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, house wren, blue-gray gnatcatcher, American robin, gray catbird, yellow warbler, Swainson's warbler, Northern parula, magnolia warbler, black-throated green warbler, blackburnian warbler, bay-breasted warbler, blackpoll warbler, black-and-white warbler, prothonotary warbler, common yellowthroat, scarlet tanager, Northern cardinal, common grackle, brown-headed cowbird, house finch, American goldfinch, and house sparrow. I came away with five "lifers" including the red-throated loon, purple sandpiper, American black duck and prairie warbler. We were thrilled and impressed with the birding at Cape May, New Jersey.

RED KNOT PROJECT

In April, Dr. Larry Niles returned to the Texas coast and worked with Chapter President David Newstead on a project aimed at capturing, flagging, and re-sighting red knots—one of the most critically imperiled shorebird species in the hemisphere.

A team of volunteers, including several CBAS members, captured 120 birds on Padre Island National Seashore. The birds were mostly in breeding plumage, and were approaching the critical weight necessary to make the next major flight on their journey north.

Researchers gleaned new insight into ways red knots use the Coastal Bend beaches during migration. They have learned that high winds/tides and other factors can make the habitat unavailable to the birds for days at a time. It appears that areas of concentration for knots on Gulf beaches are coupled with nearby wind-tidal flat habitats on the Laguna Madre side of the barrier island. This project is likely to continue next fall and winter. Volunteer Omar Becerra produced a video about the project, available at: www.cb bep.org.



Photo: University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

GULF DISASTER — WAYS TO HELP

National Audubon Society:

http://www.audubonaction.org/site/PageServer?pagename=aa_HowtoHelp

Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

<https://secure3.birds.cornell.edu/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1860&srctid=1&erid=3612378>

Plight of pelicans

Cont'd from page 1

The oil spill in the Gulf will, no doubt, result in an increased push for alternative energy projects that significantly cut or eliminate carbon emissions and do not lead to pelicans dying on our shores. That is a goal we should all be working toward. But it is critical that we remember the BP spill and its terrible aftermath was a preventable disaster.

The wind energy industry has worked hard to convince the public that it's clean and green, while doing considerably little to live up to those ideals. Although many conscientious wind energy companies have passed on developing projects in what may be one of the hemisphere's most diverse and densely occupied bird areas and migratory corridors, several have developed in these areas despite the warning signs. Refusal to be honest and open about their impacts to natural resources further discredits the "greenness" of their intentions. The white pelican I saw swatted from the sky in mid-June was not convinced either (see story p. 2). Let's not trade one environmental disaster for another. If it's not done with adequate environmental safeguards, then they're all killing pelicans.

BIRDING 101 FOR KIDS



Students viewing roseate spoonbills

The first *Birding 101 for Kids* summer class was held on June 11 at Hans Suter Park, where 12 students learned the basic principles of bird identification. Other activities included sketching a bird, like the famous ornithologist James Audubon, making a pinecone birdfeeder, and pretending to be birds feeding, using improvised beaks and testing survival skills in certain habitats. *Birding 101 for Kids* is sponsored by the Coastal Bend Audubon Society and The University of Texas Marine Science Institute.

PURPLE MARTIN PROJECT

Last year CBAS partnered with the Purple Martin Conservation Association on a project to track the migration of purple martins from two colonies in Corpus Christi, using small devices, called geolocators, that measure day length. This year, nine of the 20 devices were recovered from birds that returned to the same colonies. The migratory track of the first bird was published in the May/June 2010 newsletter. The other geolocators have been downloaded and are being analyzed.



purple martin with geolocator
photo by Juan Bahamon

This year we continued the effort by placing eleven more geolocators on martins from John Barrow's colony.



Several CBAS members assisted in the effort.

The project was funded by a grant from National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program. The data will be used to hone in on specific areas of importance to migrating insectivores like martins. We hope to advance the science of using these small devices to unlock the mysteries of song-bird migration and wintering areas.

Ruben Villareal of Kingsville (above) preparing to release a purple martin with a new geolocator



Birding 101 kids using chopsticks for beaks.

TREASURER'S REPORT

by Leatrice Koch

April 1, 2010 — May 31, 2010

Beginning balance.....	\$20,285.14
Income.....	\$ 6,421.97
Expenses.....	<u>1,063.78</u>
Net	<u>\$5,358.19</u>
Ending balance.....	\$25,643.33
Less grants, donations & reserved fund.	<u>10,589.52</u>
Operating fund.....	\$15,053.81

Thanks for the Donations

The CBAS board thanks those who included a monetary donation upon joining or renewing their membership during the fiscal year: John Barrow and Louise Chambers, Mike and Maria Biddle, Betty Clark, Nancy Devlin and Margaret DiClemente, Dr. Jose Duran, Jacqueline Flynn, Chad Huckabee, Bob Jackson, and an anonymous donor. Your thoughtfulness and generosity are appreciated.

The society also received a donation from Thomas H. Hill of Austin, Texas. The donation was given in memory of his cousin, Charles B. Swanner, an avid birdwatcher in Rockport who passed away on May 3.

Grant Awarded

CBAS was awarded a \$925 grant from the Audubon Foundation of Texas for our viewing blind and educational signage at the sanctuary. Sanctuary Manager John Keller put together the proposal, and has been researching designs and materials.



NEW OR RENEWING MEMBERSHIP

<input type="checkbox"/> New Member		<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal		Chapter: C9ZW130Z	
Name:		Address:			
City		State		ZIP	
Phone (optional)		Email (optional)			
Indicate Membership Preference: I would like to become a					
<input type="checkbox"/>	member of National Audubon Society and Coastal Bend Audubon Society . Your membership includes the National Audubon Magazine, chapter membership and other benefits. Your chapter receives part of your dues. Dues: One year \$20 Make checks payable to National Audubon Society				
<input type="checkbox"/>	member of Coastal Bend Audubon Society ONLY . No NAS membership and no National Audubon magazine. Your chapter only membership includes all other Audubon membership benefits. Your chapter receives all of your dues. Dues: One year \$15 Make checks payable to Coastal Bend Audubon Society				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional Tax Deductible Contribution Please consider making a tax deductible contribution to the local chapter, Coastal Bend Audubon Society. You may designate the category you would like your contribution applied to. Designate category of support.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tern	One year	\$50		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Osprey	One year	\$100		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pelican	One year	\$500		
Designate specific area of support (Optional).					
General Fund <input type="checkbox"/>		Education Program <input type="checkbox"/>		Sanctuary Maintenance <input type="checkbox"/>	
				New letter Fund <input type="checkbox"/>	
AMOUNT Enclosed: _____ Date: _____					
MAIL TO: COASTAL BEND AUDUBON SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 3604, Corpus Christi, TX 78463					
10/09					

The Newsletter of the Coastal Bend Audubon Society

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<http://www.coastalbendaudubon.org>

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Permit No. 1080
Corpus Christi, TX

Regular CBAS meetings:

First Tuesday of the month, September through May, 7 p.m. at the CC Museum of Science and History



The Brown Pelican

Coastal Bend Audubon Society Board of Directors

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davnewst@yahoo.com

VICE PRESIDENT

vacant

SECRETARY

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Leatrice Koch
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The Coastal Bend Audubon Society is a non-profit 501c(3) organization dedicated to the conservation of birds and bird habitat, and to conservation education in the Coastal Bend.

The organization is supported by contributions from local memberships and from the National Audubon Society.

Your CHAPTER needs you! You can help steer the course of growth and change in our community by working together. Please contact us at 361-885-6203 about getting involved!

DIRECTORS

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This newsletter is compiled, written and published every other month. News is gathered from volunteers, contributing authors and other sources. Please send comments, articles and photos to:

Editor **Ellissa Cuevas**, at ebrewster25@yahoo.com
or Board Member **Sally Bickley**.



LOOK FOR COLOR, WEB-LINKED VERSION OF NEWSLETTER ON THE WEB AT
www.coastalbendaudubon.org