



Audubon | FLORIDA

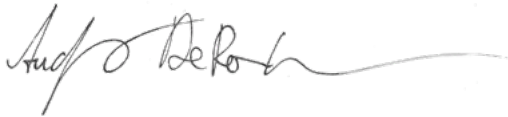
Coastal Report

2021 ANNUAL SUMMARY

Friends and Supporters,

I am excited to join Audubon's Coastal Team and will continue to build on its strong foundation of stewardship, monitoring, and science-based conservation and protection for coastal birds. In the last year, we reduced disturbance to beach-nesting birds by sharing information with beachgoers and posting the boundaries of breeding colonies. We improved regulatory coordination at rooftop sites, which ensured that American Oystercatchers fledged chicks on buildings in Southwest Florida; removed invasive vegetation to restore nesting habitat on a mangrove island; and conducted ongoing monitoring that provided the backbone for developing statewide abundance estimates that will allow us to monitor population trends and recovery progress over time.

It is both humbling and inspiring to join this legacy of protecting vulnerable coastal species. In my work, the community of people dedicated to the birds has always motivated me. Looking to the challenges we face with sea level rise, a changing climate, and continuing development and human population growth, it's an honor to join Audubon staff, partners, and volunteers to push for solutions that include birds and the places they need. I look forward to working with our team to make the conservation community more equitable, inclusive, and diverse to better meet growing conservation challenges and realize our commitment to increasing protections for vulnerable coastal birds. Just like the birds are more successful when there is room for them to nest together, we are more resilient and resourceful, and our voices are stronger, when more of us can participate.



Audrey DeRose-Wilson,
Director of Bird Conservation



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Cover Photo:
American Oystercatcher.
Photo: Nicholas Wetzel/Audubon
Photography Awards.

Snowy Plover on Lido Key.
Photo: Kylie Wilson/Audubon Florida





Alafia volunteer planting work days. In total, volunteers and staff placed 1,200 native plants to improve habitat for birds. Photo: Sandy Townsend

Alafia Re-Treat and Refresh Improves Habitat for Nesting Birds

Ten acres at the Richard T. Paul Alafia Bank Bird Sanctuary Critical Wildlife Area, which is leased from and managed in collaboration with the Mosaic Company and Port Tampa Bay, were re-treated for invasive vegetation control through the careful cutting and application of herbicide by Audubon's contractor, Stantec. Volunteers planted native shrubs and trees, removed entangling debris and trash, and pulled weeds that threatened to outcompete the newly planted natives. In total, they placed 1,200 native plants to begin recolonizing these areas with desirable native species that colonial waterbirds need for nesting. This work has been supported by the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County's Pollution Recovery Fund, Restore America's Estuaries Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund grants, the Founders Garden Circle, and individual donors.

Habitat restoration continues on the upland portion of the island, where an invasive monoculture of Brazilian pepper was removed in previous years. Since the initial vegetation removal, Audubon and dedicated volunteers have worked to keep non-native plants at bay, giving native shrubs and trees like sea grape, buttonwood, and mangroves a chance to establish and provide nesting habitat for the birds. Wading birds are utilizing this site during the 2022 nesting season.

Banded Birds: See a Band, Lend a Hand

Bird banding is a game of chance. Imagine a scientist putting a note in a bottle and tossing it back into the sea of migration — the note can only give back information if someone else observes and reports it when the bottle arrives on another shore. Thanks to the many birders out there who understand the importance of banding, we can learn more about the movements, populations, and breeding success of our banded species.

If you see a banded bird:

- Note date, time, & location — with GPS if possible
- Note the species
- Note which leg and legs have bands
- Note the color and order of bands — upper or lower and left or right leg. If the band or flag has an alphanumeric code, try to note the code
- Take a picture! Digital cameras work great through scopes and sometimes even binoculars

For information on how to report banded birds of all different species visit:
[Fl.Audubon.org/banded-birds](https://www.flaudubon.org/banded-birds)



2021 Summer Breeding Season Brings Success Amidst Storm and Human Disturbance: Highlights

As we reflect on the 2021 breeding season, we can be thankful that most of Florida's nesting beaches escaped the worst impacts from the two tropical systems that hit our state: Elsa and Fred. Despite some overwash by Elsa, illness, and red tide, colonies in Southwest Florida still produced more than 400 Black Skimmer chicks. One of the most successful nesting beaches, Caxambas Pass Critical Wildlife Area near Marco Island, fledged 150 Least Tern chicks.

Up the coast, Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries staff documented over 24,000 breeding pairs of wading and shorebirds of 26 species in the greater Tampa Bay area.

We celebrated seven new American Oystercatcher nests on rooftops in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties this past season, with a total of 13 rooftop nests in the area for this species, a season high. This was actually the first time that oystercatchers nested on any roof in Hillsborough County since the Florida Shorebird Database started keeping track in 2005.

Farther north, our Coastal team estimated 200 Least Tern chicks fledged from Destin-area beaches, while a great variety of other species also had some success.

In Northeast Florida, consistent stewarding and additional site management produced successful Least Tern nesting at Amelia Island State Park as well as successful nesting of Least Terns and Wilson's Plovers at the Talbot Island State Parks and Ft. Matanzas.



COASTAL PROGRAM



FLORIDA COASTAL ISLAND SANCTUARIES



COLONY MONITORING



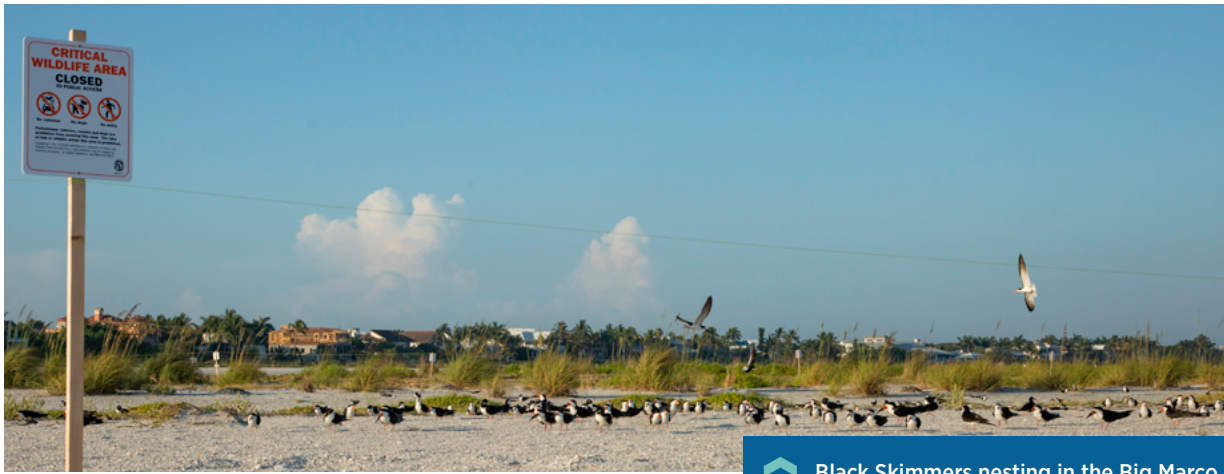
ISLAND MAINTENANCE AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT



MONOFILAMENT CLEANUP



WE ALL OWE OUR THANKS TO THIS INCREDIBLE TEAM!



You Used Your Voice to Help Change FWC Guidelines

Florida's beach-nesting bird species face a suite of threats as they attempt to nest and raise their chicks on the sand. Sea level rise, intense storms, and ongoing development all make life difficult for sea and shorebirds, but new guidelines from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will help protect and restore their habitat.

The new Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines provide information on rule requirements for permitting when harassment or habitat destruction occurs for four state-Threatened species: Least Terns, Black Skimmers, American Oystercatchers, and Snowy Plovers. The Guidelines also outline a structure for mitigation if harassment or habitat loss occurs.

At Audubon, we applaud the FWC for getting a real valuation of impacts of coastal land use on these declining species. We asked you to raise your voice in support of birds and you delivered! More than 1,300 of you wrote to the FWC to say that you supported consequences for habitat impacts, and that the FWC will need additional staff to implement this program — consulting with landowners, reviewing permits, and implementing mitigation.

Black Skimmers nesting in the Big Marco Pass Critical Wildlife Area in Collier County. New FWC Guidelines increase requirements that need to be met if habitat destruction occurs on beaches used by state-Threatened species. Photo: Jean Hall

Florida Panhandle Stewardship Coordinator Ricky Cassell with volunteer Iris Hamilton. Navarre, FL



In April, Audubon was recognized with the Florida Chapter of the Wildlife Society's 2022 Conservation Nonprofit of the Year Award, for our contributions to coastal conservation. The Wildlife Society noted: "Audubon Florida has long been the first line of defense for beach-nesting birds, and their efforts have been instrumental in halting the declines of some of Florida's most imperiled avian species. The value of their advocacy, outreach, monitoring, and science-based management cannot be overstated; many of Florida's beach-nesting bird populations are still extant because of Audubon Florida."

Help coastal birds and their habitats. Your support is essential to their future.

VOLUNTEER

Steward coastal birds in your area: FLConservation@Audubon.org

DONATE

Audubon's efforts depend on you. Learn more about giving by contacting Alison Niescier at alison.niescier@audubon.org

LEARN

Explore coastal conservation and our efforts: FL.Audubon.org/Coasts

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS.

Frank E. Duckwall Foundation

Gulf Power Foundation

The Batchelor Foundation

Mosaic Company Foundation

Pinellas County Community Foundation

– Tonne Fund and Bushnell Fund

Rayonier

River Branch Foundation

Robert F. Schumann Foundation

The Spurlino Foundation

TECO Energy

Thank you for supporting our coastal work!



 **Audubon** | FLORIDA

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