



Gulf Oil Spill Response

Frequently Asked Questions and How You Can Help

Who will lead the emergency response?

When a catastrophic oil spill happens, the company responsible for the release must lead the emergency response, in coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard and other federal agencies.

Audubon is working with state and federal agencies, other non-profit organizations and the BP response team.

How can I volunteer?

Audubon is working with various partners within a larger framework of the Deepwater Horizon Joint Response to help recruit and organize volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, visit www.Audubon.org to register.

The first tier of responders will be those with the most training. This will include people with hazardous materials training, and the gear to protect themselves. No one without proper training should be involved with cleanup efforts — this includes helping wildlife. Resist the urge to drive to the coast to help. The material washing up on land is hazardous material, highly toxic and must be handled properly.

Do not make a terrible situation worse by exposing yourself to danger.

Do I need to be an expert to help?

Volunteers can play a critical role with varying levels of training and expertise. Wildlife scouting and monitoring groups are being formed in some areas. Audubon will refer volunteers from our database to appropriately managed efforts. There is also a critical need for help with other essential tasks such as answering phones, compiling data or providing support



The Brown Pelican recently was delisted under the Endangered Species Act and is one of the vulnerable species along the Gulf coast. Photo: Bill Stripling

services to professional responders. You can also support Audubon's Gulf Coast Recovery efforts by donating at www.audubon.org.

I live in the Gulf Coast Region. Should I help clean up areas likely to be oiled?

The type of volunteer help that will be beneficial varies from site to site. **Do not assume that it will be helpful to clean beaches of litter and debris in anticipation of oil reaching them.** In fact, doing so may inadvertently disturb and even destroy important wildlife habitat, including sea turtle nests and beach bird nests. Disruption of breeding colonies of herons, egrets, plovers, gulls and oystercatchers may cause more harm than the potential effects of oil.

Engage in advance clean-up efforts only when part of a fully-coordinated local response and conducted under the supervision of an expert in birds and their breeding habitat. If you are uncertain about whether bird and habitat concerns are being addressed, don't participate.

Any properly managed clean-up effort will include the following important guidelines:

- Use approved access points and avoid walking or hiking through marshes or seagrass beds, and stay below the tidal line.
- Leave natural debris in place because it provides nesting benefits to shorebirds and other wildlife.
- Only remove man-made litter as part of a coordinated effort.
- Do not place litter in the dunes or above the high water line.
- Don't use equipment such as rakes, shovels or tractors.
- Keep dogs off the beach, and do not take an off-road vehicle on the beach to look for the spill.

The oil is getting close. What should I know?

The leaking oil and chemicals used in dispersal efforts are hazardous.

Steer clear if you detect any signs of oil on beaches. A sulphurous smell may be your first clue. Other sure signs the oil spill has arrived include a sheen on the water, oiled wildlife and debris caught up in oil.

What should I do to help oiled birds or wildlife?

However urgent and distressing an oil-soaked animal's situation appears, resist the urge to rescue oiled wildlife yourself. Call the hotline 1-800-557-1401 and leave a message. The hotline is monitored and trained professionals will respond.

Other Resources

Audubon's Louisiana Coastal Initiative
<http://louisianacoast.audubon.org>

Audubon of Florida
www.audubonoffloridanews.org

Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative
<http://mri.audubon.org>

Pascagoula River Audubon Center
<http://pascagoulariver.audubon.org>

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