

in flight

Save Our Seabirds, Inc.
Sarasota Project
Newsletter

Fostering An Attitude Of Respect For Wildlife & Our Environment

Volume 4, Issue 2 • Summer 2010

Oil Spill Impact On Birds

Gail Condrick

This spring, as predators or human error have caused bird nests to be abandoned, a major Save Our Seabirds (SOS) activity has

migratory and nesting season, the spill has created dramatic danger to birds along the Gulf Coast and to the entire ecosystem. The Louisiana wetlands are home to many migrating and nesting birds as well as over 400 other species. As part of an intricate food chain, what affects one, impacts the whole.

"The terrible loss of 11 workers may be just the beginning of this tragedy as the oil slick spreads toward sensitive, coastal areas vital to birds and marine life and

to all the communities that depend on them," said Melanie Driscoll, director of bird conservation for the Louisiana Coastal Initiative. "For birds, the timing could not be worse; they are breeding, nesting and especially vulnerable in many of the places where the oil could come ashore," she said. "The efforts to stop the oil before it reaches shore are heroic, but may not be enough. We have to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst, including a true catastrophe for birds."

The International Bird Rescue Research Center states that a dime-size glob of oil can kill a bird. As birds are coated with oil, or ingest plankton or other ocean life that have oil in their bodies, the danger continues as baby birds are also fed the poison.

Birds familiar to Gulf Coast natives and visitors are at risk.

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The Oil Spill And Role Of SOS

As we all know, the disastrous oil spill in Louisiana is still leaking and, in President Obama's words after visiting there on May 2nd, this is a "potentially unprecedented environmental disaster." CNN reported that "oil spills are particularly dangerous to birds and sea based mammals... a thick coat of oil damages the feathers and blubber that give these animals insulation. The animals might also ingest the oil, which can poison or suffocate them."

Our executive director, Lee Fox, has made responding to Oiled Wildlife one of the major goals of SOS and, in recent months, has conducted an extensive training program for volunteers. Lee is the FIRST RESPONDER in Florida for rescuing oiled birds. She has been notified by BP Oil and the U.S. Coast Guard to be on standby, with 24 hours notice to be deployed.

SOS is now on 1000 websites online and, in just the past few days, the office staff has received over a thousand calls/e-mails from volunteers throughout the county who want to help in the rescue effort. Once Lee is notified, our

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Rescue, Rehabilitate, Release, Educate,
Oiled Wildlife Response & Training

1708 Ken Thompson Parkway
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▲ SOS Oiled Wildlife Response Mobile Unit

been caring for rescued baby birds. It is a full time operation, as these babies need 24/7 care in order to survive. This is a normal and busy spring activity which takes many SOS resources, a challenge as many volunteers have left for the summer.

But this is not an ordinary May. SOS Executive Director Lee Fox, who authored an internationally utilized manual on caring for oiled wildlife, is on-call to assist the Breakwater Horizon oil spill protection effort. Staff and volunteers are collecting supplies and donations and fielding media calls, in addition to daily duties. SOS will also lead the response along the Gulf Coast. The disaster, while tragic, shows the importance of the role of organizations like SOS in assisting with environmental changes and disasters.

Coming at the height of the



Oil Spill Impact *continued:*

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) says that gulls, pelicans and other water birds can experience hypothermia when oil destroys the insulating quality of their feathers. The birds eat more to stay warm, but their ability to forage changes as they sink lower and lower into the water, their buoyancy decreased by oil. The birds desperately groom their feathers with their bills, consuming oil, which may lead to illness and death.

Less obvious long-term impacts can occur. The entire food chain, from plankton to fish-eating birds, may be disrupted by the presence of oil. Toxic chemicals may accumulate in birds' bodies, weakening them and making them more prone to disease and predation. If oiled birds don't die from exposure, there is evidence that their reproduction is lowered by exposure to even small quantities of residual oil, according to NWF.

Lower birth rates are a concern as many of the seabirds seen on our beaches are already at risk. Brown pelicans, the state bird of Louisiana, nest on barrier islands and feed near shore. Late spring is breeding season and many pairs are already incubating eggs. The species was taken off the federal endangered species list last year, but their relatively low reproductive rate means any disruption to their breeding cycle could have serious effects on the population.

Least Terns, whose low numbers are also a concern in Florida, are in danger. Alison Sharpe, director of the Louisiana Wildlife Care and Rescue Center, Inc., says, "The spill has the great potential of wiping out the entire population of Least Terns along our coast area."

Least Terns were once plentiful on the shores of Mississippi. At one

time, 12,000 of the species lived there, but now only 2,000 terns remain. According to CBS News wildlife expert Jeff Corwin, "It only takes about 20 days for the eggs of the Least Terns to hatch and another 20 days for the chicks to leave the nest, which means right now is the most critical period in the life cycle of these birds, when they're most vulnerable."

Other species of beach nesting birds common to the coast, such as gulls, shorebirds, large wading birds, marsh birds and ocean-dwelling birds are also at risk, along with migratory shorebirds and songbirds. Compounding the problem is the number of migratory birds seeking shelter in early May, some 500 million estimated in a 1998 study by Louisiana State University.

"The journey across 500 miles of open water strains their endurance to its limits," the Initiative said. "They depend on clear skies and healthy habitats on both sides of the Gulf in order to survive the journey."

Tidal currents, wind, and fate will determine if the oil comes ashore on the Gulf coast or is carried by currents into the Everglades or Atlantic Ocean. No one knows the entire impact of the Breakwater Horizon oil spill, but one fact is certain: SOS will play a role in protecting and rescuing wildlife and will continue to need assistance, both volunteer and financial, to assist in the effort.

Information in this article was compiled from various local and national news reports, including Save Our Seabirds, Sarasota Herald Tribune, CNN, CBS News, L. A. Times, and reports from wildlife organizations. For the latest information, or to contribute or volunteer with SOS, contact: www.saveourseabirds.org.

Double-crested Cormorant



Director's Corner

As I write it is early June and the full impact of

the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on the environment and SOS services are unknown. I do want to assure you that SOS will fulfill our mission of rescuing and rehabilitating endangered sea birds whatever the outcome. I, and the staff, are so grateful for your offers of assistance, volunteering, and donations every day, and especially in the face of this disaster occurring during baby bird nesting season. The impact of the oil spill on Gulf coast birds for generations to come can not be overstated.

I am pleased to tell you that 35 volunteers have completed a specialized SOS 40-hour training course in hazardous materials and a course in handling oiled wildlife that will enable us to respond to clean oil from affected birds.

I know that many of you want to help the birds, the environment, and SOS and feel particularly needed now. The best way to do that is through donations and volunteering at the Sarasota location as employees will be pulled from daily work at the center because they will be needed at the affected bird site. Our operations need this assistance every day, but in an emergency activation we will need people to assist even more to allow the staff and volunteers to do their jobs. We will need help with clerical work, inventory, cleaning cages, and general assistance and anyone over 18 can participate. Donations allow us to purchase what we need as it occurs and are another tax deductible way to help the birds.

For the latest information on our needs and SOS participation in rescue operations, check our website:

www.saveourseabirds.org.

Thank you for your continued support. We can not do this without your help in this crisis and it will make a huge difference in the final outcome for the oiled birds

Lee Fox, Executive Director, Founder

Save Our Seabirds Board Of Directors:

Lee Fox, Executive Director, Founder
Ann B. Anderson, Co-Founder, Benefactor
Mary Lou Johnson, Chair
Lorraine Rubis-Franckle, Secretary

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Heidi Lovett
Lynn Zablo





The Bird's Nest Gift Shop

Pat McGowan

It has been an interesting exciting journey for the Bird's Nest Gift Shop. It's amazing that we have come so far...from the first meeting last spring, our Grand Opening of the gift shop in the fall and now just finishing our first full "snow bird" season! This all happened with the wonderful help of dedicated volunteers.

Be sure to stop by The Bird's Nest Gift Shop. We continue to bring in unique items and all profits go to back to SOS to help us protect our wildlife.

If you would like to join us and work in the gift shop, look for the volunteer page on the website and the training times.



Pat McGowan



Jody Ulrich, Nancy McEemel in both photos and a young helper above.

Lilly Pulitzer SOS Fund Raiser

Ten percent of the day's sales was donated to SOS and a good time was had by all at the April 28th "Shop and Share" all-day shopping event at Lilly Pulitzer in St. Armands Circle. Cocktails and sweets were served from 6 to 8 in the evening. Sponsoring an event such as this is a great way to show you care and give your support. For more information call 941-388-3010.



Oil Spill Role continued:

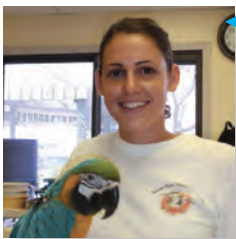
dedicated office staff will contact volunteers as to where they need to go to assist in this massive undertaking. A brief synopsis of the process for Lee and her volunteers is:

- Rescue the oiled birds
- Wash them in Dawn soap, which penetrates their feathers
- Use heating pads for warmth
- Give them fluids and nourishment
- Assess their status for flight

These items are still needed and can be dropped off at SOS:

- Dawn Liquid Detergent
- Towels/blankets
- Heating Pads
- Extension Cords
- Financial donations, made on-line through Paypal. Thank you for caring!

Focus On SOS Volunteers And Staff



Sarah Olivero Staff- bird rehabilitator and caretaker. She came to us from Palm Desert, CA, after answering an

ad. Sarah loves all animals although she never thought she would be working with birds. She loves the working atmosphere at SOS and the learning experience of all she is exposed to here.



John McCabe Staff- building maintenance. A retired plasterer from Brooklyn, John remembers watching the pigeons from

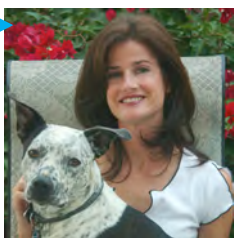
atop his Brooklyn apartment and thinking about being in a sunny warm place with interesting birds all around. John and his wife decided on Sarasota after searching around Florida and then he discovered SOS.



Nancy Curtis Volunteer- in charge of greeters and docents. She first volunteered at Pelican Man's Bird Sanctuary.

Nancy was involved in dog rescue in New Jersey, where she and her husband lived before relocating to Longboat Key. She enjoys welcoming visitors and telling them about our interesting bird residents.

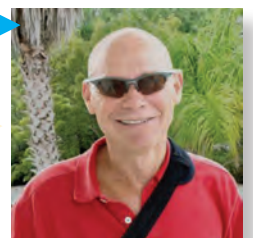
Cindi Soderholm Staff- bird rehabilitator and caretaker. She came to Florida from Orange County, CA, for schooling in diagnostic medical sonography. She discovered SOS when she came to Mote Marine to inquire about volunteering. Cindi loves Florida, especially the beaches and all wildlife, and enjoys helping the birds at SOS.



Mike Harmon Volunteer- building maintenance projects. Originally from Harrisburg, PA, he came to Florida to work for the federal government and is now retired. After finding an injured bird and having a positive experience with SOS, he decided to become a volunteer. Mike has been involved in a number of rescues and says he especially likes participating in releases.



Tom Hegranes Volunteer- building maintenance projects and is also very active in bird rescue. Tom is a retired school administrator for the City of Minneapolis, in charge of special education. He likes working for a non-profit that he knows is doing good work.



- Open to the public 7 days a week 10 AM - 4:30 PM
- Guided tours on Friday, Saturday & Sunday at 2 PM
- Visit SOS online: www.saveourseabirds.org to see our **WISH LIST & Donate Page** & to check for the latest news and events



Save Our Seabirds

1708 Ken Thompson Parkway
Sarasota, FL 34236



Members, Donors & Volunteers Keep Us In Business

Become An SOS Supporter Today!

Help us continue our work to protect our wildlife and our environment. Over 95% of your donations support our operations.

Save Our Seabirds Memberships, sponsorships & major donor levels:

Annual Memberships:

Individual	\$ 35
Senior	\$ 25
Family	\$ 50
Sustaining	\$ 250

- Mailings or e-mail of In Flight newsletter.
- 10% discount on all SOS merchandise.
- The pleasure of supporting an organization dedicated to protecting our wildlife.

Memorial Bricks \$ 100

Annual Sponsorships:

Bird Sponsor	\$ 100
Habitat Sponsor . . .	\$ 250-\$1,000

- Entitled to basic membership benefits plus plaque attached to bird habitat.
- Entitled to basic membership benefits plus plaque engraved as you wish & attached to chosen habitat.

Major Donors:

Patron	\$ 1,000+
Partner	\$ 5,000+
Benefactor	\$ 10,000+

- Major Donors receive annual recognition on our Donor Board prominently displayed in our Courtyard unless anonymity is requested.

Habitat Sponsors at the \$500 level and above and Major Donors are entitled to additional benefits. See our website for details.

**Sign up today online at SaveOurSeabirds.org
or call us between 9 AM and 4:30 PM at 941-388-3010.**

Planned Giving

A gift from your estate is an easy way to donate to Save Our Seabirds. You retain control of the asset during your lifetime and also the ability to modify your gift. Gifts can be made through your will, revocable trust agreements, retirement plans or life insurance. You can also make Save Our Seabirds the beneficiary of your bank account, (via POD-payable on death), any stocks you own or real estate transfer (via TOD-transfer on death).

Save our Seabirds is supported by your donations. This makes you a very important part of our organization. We can honor your donations with an engraved brick in our wall of fame, or a habitat with your name on a plaque.

Memberships are available for single or family membership.



Great Blue Heron

Graphic Design: Rita Powell



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