



INFORMATION CONTACT:
Melissa Rausch, Events and Development Director
American Birding Association
4945 North 30th Street, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, CO 80919
719-578-9703 x237
mrausch@aba.org

For Immediate Release:

**GULF OF MEXICO OIL SPILL
*ASSESSMENT AND INITIAL CHECK DISTRIBUTION***

Colorado Springs, Colorado, May 11, 2010 – The American Birding Association continues its work to support imperiled birds and their habitats affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Over the weekend, ABA President and CEO Robert G. Robinson led a strategy session attended by ABA Life Members Donna Dittmann and Steven Cardiff, prominent ornithologists with the world-renowned Section of Ornithology at Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science.

Reporting from the Louisiana Gulf Coast, Robinson says he is appalled at what he is seeing firsthand yet encouraged that ABA members are coming together to make a difference. Mr. Robinson has been talking to local fishermen and birders who grew up in this area, whose very soul is connected to the wildlife that call this area home. “It’s as if they see a black storm slowly rising and surfacing to catastrophic levels.”

The slick is growing inexorably, despite all private sector attempts to stop, contain, and disperse it. In towns like Tidewater and Venice, Louisiana, people are waiting with a sense of dread and fatalism. “It is as if they are waiting for a hurricane to hit,” says Robinson.

Now that oil is coming ashore, ABA is most concerned with the tidal marshes and the birds that are most dependent on these fertile feeding grounds. At this point, there is no known way of extracting the oil from the marshes without tearing apart the fragile ecosystems. Much of our effort will be concentrated on these habitats and monitoring the birds that use them.

As the leak drags on, the long-term effects are evident. Long after the private companies and contractors stop suing each other, long after the politicians debate the environmental and life safety concerns of offshore oil resources, local bird and conservation clubs will be left with a massive cleanup.

Many of these regional bird clubs were the first on the scene and will be the last to leave. To help in their efforts, Robinson announced today that ABA will start issuing checks from the ABA Gulf Coast fund. Initial checks for \$1000 will be sent to the Barataria Terrebonne Estuary Program, the LSU Bird Resource Center, and Baton Rouge Audubon Society to aid in monitoring projects. More details of these organizations and projects will be made available at www.aba.org/gulf.

ABA members have a history of coming together, when there is a need to help birds. As of noon, May 11, 2010, the ABA has received \$9,727 in donations from members and friends to its Gulf Coast fund.

Contributions to the Gulf Coast fund can be made at www.aba.org/donate/gulf.php. If you live in the southern Louisiana area and would like to volunteer your time and skills as a bird monitor, please contact Elizabeth Wylie at 800-850-2473 x233 or ewylie@aba.org.

For additional information, contact: Melissa Rausch, American Birding Association, at 719-578-9703 x237 or mrausch@aba.org.

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