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Audubon Announces Comprehensive Gulf Restoration Plan

Birmingham Audubon prioritizes important coastal bird habitat along Alabama's Gulf Coast

February 12, 2019 (BIRMINGHAM, Ala.) – “The challenges are huge, but we have an enormous opportunity to save much of the Gulf Coast for both birds and people. We can't afford to blow this,” said **David Yarnold, president and CEO of National Audubon Society** ([@david_yarnold](https://twitter.com/david_yarnold)) after the release of an extensive report, [Audubon's Vision: Restoring the Gulf of Mexico for Birds and People](#). The report highlights projects and programs critical to help the region and its wildlife recover from devastating hurricanes, oil spills and other environmental and man-made disasters. At the center of the largest ecosystem restoration effort ever attempted, Audubon recommends an investment of more than \$1.7 billion in restoration and conservation efforts.

Birmingham Audubon, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society, identified critical priorities in Alabama to confront challenges facing birds and their habitats. “Alabama's coasts provide critically important habitat for many species of shorebirds and seabirds,” according to **Dr. Ansel Payne, executive director of Birmingham Audubon**. “Unfortunately, our staff are finding that stronger hurricanes, more erosion, and increased disturbance from predators and humans are making it harder for these birds to maintain their breeding success here in Alabama. We believe it's imperative that Gulf states continue to invest in coastal restoration as part of a sustainable future, both for birds and people.”

Birmingham Audubon's Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship Program plays a key role in monitoring and protecting Alabama's sensitive beach-nesting birds, with a focus on 11 species of concern, including Least Terns, American Oystercatchers, and Black Skimmers.

The BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010, which resulted in a global settlement of \$20.8 billion in claims and cleanup efforts, has left a devastating mark on the Gulf Coast. Audubon recommends 16 state-based, 10 region-wide and four open ocean projects, which together total more than 136,000 acres of restored or protected habitat for bird and human communities from south Texas to the Florida Keys.

Birmingham Audubon scientists report that the state's beach-nesting birds are struggling in the face of modern obstacles, including human disturbance and increased rates of predation. Through continued monitoring and stewardship, the organization hopes to make a sustainable difference for sensitive Gulf Coast bird populations.

“Never before has this amount of funding been dedicated to ecosystem restoration, therefore, we have an unprecedented opportunity to help the Gulf recover,” said **director of Gulf Coast restoration at National Audubon Society, Kara Lankford**. “Wildlife and people living along the coast are dependent on millions of acres of habitat that is at extreme risk unless we act boldly.”

[Audubon's Vision: Restoring the Gulf of Mexico for Birds and People](#) identifies 8.1 million acres of highly suitable habitat across the Gulf for Audubon's flagship species. The report highlights

30 projects that will collectively address the recovery and population health of these birds as Audubon continues to determine how sea level rise will affect the Gulf and identify ways to better support these species.

With deep roots and a sustained presence on the Gulf, Audubon is committed to working to secure a brighter future for the bird and human communities of this vital region. Implementing priority projects and programs focusing on restoration, conservation, research and stewardship, the National Audubon Society addresses the recovery and population health of the 11 flagship species. For a full project list and details or to learn more and get involved, visit Audubon.org/gulf.

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About Audubon: *The National Audubon Society protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon is a nonprofit conservation organization. Learn more how to help at www.audubon.org and follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @audubonsociety.*

About Birmingham Audubon: *Founded in 1946, [Birmingham Audubon](http://BirminghamAudubon) is Alabama's leading non-profit organization promoting conservation and a greater knowledge of birds, their habitats, and the natural world. Birmingham Audubon is a membership organization, offering field trips, conservation programs, adult classes, workshops, guided nature walks, community-science projects, and more. Learn more at birminghamaudubon.org. Follow us on Facebook at @BirminghamAudubon, on Instagram at @BhamAudubon, and on Twitter at @BhamAudubon.*