An award of approximately $250,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has been granted to Audubon Louisiana to partner with Bertucci Contracting Corp. (Bertucci) on a marsh restoration project in southwest Louisiana. Audubon and Bertucci will provide matching funds to the NFWF’s Gulf Coast Conservation Grants Program through cash and in-kind donations to support the project.

“This partnership will benefit birds and other wildlife,” said Dr. Doug Meffert, Executive Director of Audubon Louisiana and Vice President of the National Audubon Society, “while also serving as a demonstration project to increase landowner participation and investment in coastal restoration.”

Building upon prior work, Audubon’s Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary in Vermilion Parish is benefiting from a new state-of-the-art small commercial dredge—the Amphibex 400 recently acquired by Bertucci. Over a four-week period starting in October 2015, the dredge filled 15-acres to rebuild the marsh platform, and over the next two years the site will be planted with and naturally colonized by marsh vegetation. This restoration project is an important step in reversing the damage caused by Hurricane Rita in 2005 and Hurricane Ike in 2008, and will bring wide-ranging habitat and wildlife benefits for over 200 acres of marsh surrounding the project area.

This demonstration project will serve as an important model for landowners across coastal Louisiana in need of new small-scale marsh creation techniques that may offer affordable solutions to land loss problems plaguing Louisiana’s coast. Audubon has been a Louisiana landowner since 1924, and through this new partnership with Bertucci, the opportunity will be presented to many Louisiana landowners to better understand available dredge technology. More than 85 percent of Louisiana’s 10-million-acre coastal zone is privately owned.

NFWF’s Gulf Coast Conservation Grants Program is a new competitive grants program that supports priority conservation needs of the Gulf that are not otherwise expected to be funded under Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund or other funding opportunities associated with the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The program will support a wide range of conservation efforts, including the enhancement of 8,600 acres of waterfowl habitat in Louisiana and many projects throughout the Gulf states.
As we look forward to what 2016 will bring, we must first look back at several significant events and anniversaries that occurred in 2015. Our lands and communities continue to recover 10 years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and five years after the Gulf oil disaster. Our state has made significant progress in developing and beginning to implement its Coastal Master Plan—a comprehensive restoration and protection strategy for Louisiana that extends over the next half century. We must now work together to further advance this plan for the long-term benefit of birds, wildlife and our communities. With a settlement finalized between BP and the Department of Justice, we must also remain vigilant, ensuring that funds dedicated to restoration and repair are applied to the best projects that will most greatly benefit our region and its bounty. Audubon Louisiana, through its participation in the Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition, has been at the forefront of this fight and will continue to be in the years ahead.

Significant restoration is crucial to the survival of hundreds of species of birds that depend on our precious ecosystems. Thousands of birds are lost every year due to coastal wetland and bottomland hardwood loss, and Audubon Louisiana has been dedicated to addressing this crisis. Our work at the Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary and throughout Louisiana benefits hundreds of species of birds, including the rare Whooping Crane and endangered Piping Plovers.

In addition to being an important wildlife sanctuary, Rainey has also become a true living laboratory of restoration, protection and land management techniques. To that end, we were recently awarded a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to leverage dredge technology to rebuild land lost from Rita and Ike at Rainey. This land-building dredge project benefits more than 200 acres of wetland habitat and demonstrates the potential that exists for other landowners across the coast to do the same. Given that Louisiana’s coastal zone is over 85 percent privately owned, our work at Rainey and through the Rainey Conservation Alliance provides a model for landowners across the coast seeking accessible and affordable solutions to address land loss on their own properties.

Looking ahead, the National Audubon Society will release an updated strategic plan in early 2016. Within this strategic plan, Audubon Louisiana is positioned as a critical node of conservation for birds that depend on the water resources of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, our bottomland hardwood forests and our Mississippi River Delta wetlands.

Although still a relatively new state office, I am proud to say that in 2015 Audubon Louisiana flexed our collective muscles in advocacy, education, science and across many other arenas to positively impact birds and humans. I am grateful for your support and commitment to our work throughout Louisiana, and I look forward to sharing with you more examples of the impact you enable here in Louisiana as an Audubon Louisiana supporter.

Wishing you and your family a happy, healthy and prosperous 2016!
Our Work

Louisiana Birds of Conservation Concern

Audubon scientists have identified bird species in need of conservation efforts in Louisiana.

The current list of Audubon Louisiana’s priority species includes the following:

- Mottled Duck
- Brown Pelican
- Little Blue Heron
- Reddish Egret
- Green Heron
- Swallow-tailed Kite
- Yellow Rail
- Clapper Rail
- Snowy Plover
- Wilson’s Plover
- Piping Plover
- American Oystercatcher
- Ruddy Turnstone
- Red Knot
- Sanderling
- Western Sandpiper
- Short-billed Dowitcher
- Least Tern
- Black Skimmer
- Prothonotary Warbler
- Swainson’s Warbler
- Cerulean Warbler
- Seaside Sparrow

As we continue to track Prothonotary Warbler migration, we are excited to announce the first migration map was published in the July issue of the Journal of Field Ornithology by Dr. Jared Wolfe, and Audubon Louisiana’s Dr. Erik Johnson. The first Prothonotary Warbler to ever have its annual migration tracked, called GeoDad, returned to Bluebonnet Swamp in Baton Rouge in spring 2014. He had faithfully returned to the swamp for several years, but this time, he brought back a 0.55-g device called a geolocator, which stored data to map his migratory route.

Amazingly, GeoDad traveled at least 5,000 miles, stopping in at least seven countries during this journey. He wintered somewhere near the Colombia-Panama border, but took about three and a half months to get there, spending prolonged periods of stopover in Central America and the Greater Antilles. His spring return in March took only three weeks and he made a b-line right up Central America and over the Gulf of Mexico to return to Bluebonnet Swamp.

With this achievement, Audubon Louisiana deployed 20 more geocoders in 2014 with the help of Louisiana Bird Observatory volunteers and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. We recovered nine of those units this past summer, and we are already learning about the amazing journeys these birds are making each year. For example, we learned that two more of these birds spent winter in Colombia after traveling for months to get there, and we’re still working to process the data from the other seven geocoders.

- By the Numbers -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Geocoders deployed in 2014</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Geocoders retrieved 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Birds color-banded in 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Color-banded birds re-sighted in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Active Boxes at Palmetto Island State Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Successful nests at Bluebonnet Swamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Total number of chicks fledged from 15 monitored nest boxes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To learn about how you can help with this project upon the Prothonotary Warblers’ return in 2016, please contact Director of Bird Conservation, Dr. Erik Johnson.

Creating Bird-Friendly Communities

Many people live in urban areas and play a critical role in supporting wildlife populations and communities. As the leading voice for birds, Audubon can inspire people to make daily choices that add up to make a real conservation impact.
Green Heron research presented at annual meeting for The Waterbird Society

In August of 2015, we completed a third consecutive year of Green Heron nest monitoring at Audubon’s Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary. To date, we have monitored over 600 nests and banded just over 500 nestlings to understand factors that allow for successful nesting. This research provides novel insights into the declines of Green Herons within the region. Preliminary results were presented at the Waterbird Society’s annual meeting in August, where it was noted that no one had given a Green Heron presentation in the history of the organization. Molly Folkerts, a recent graduate from LSU Shreveport who was integral during the first two years of the study, also presented results at the Southeastern Partners in Flight conference, which was held in Lafayette, LA this November.

WINGS Interns gain experience during summer with Audubon scientists

Virginia Spencer and Alyna Clark completed a WINGS Internship with Audubon LA this past summer, earning college credit at Louisiana State University’s School of Renewable Natural Resources.

Ms. Clark was primarily tasked with assisting the various aspects of our Prothonotary Warbler research. She learned to resight color-banded birds and target mist net individuals, not to mention recover geolocators! Ms. Clark also assisted our summer technician, Sarah Bolinger, with several educational outreach programs and BREC summer camps.

Ms. Spencer was assigned to our Green Heron research project. She traveled to the Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary with our Avian Biologist, Katie Percy, and Coastal Scientist, Karen Westphal, on a biweekly basis to search for and monitor nests. Ms. Spencer gained an intimate knowledge of Green Heron behavior and nesting preferences. She assisted with measuring and banding nestlings, as well as measuring a suite of habitat variables associated with each nest.

We can’t thank our interns enough for their dedicated and greatly valued assistance with our programs this summer!

SHARING OUR SEAS & SHORES

Coastal areas have unique importance for many birds, offering breeding sites as well as rich sources of food for migratory stopovers. Oceans support a large number of seafaring birds that depend on healthy waters for feeding and safe islands for nesting.
BP Settlement to Bring Major Habitat Improvements for Millions of Louisiana Birds

On July 2, 2015, BP Exploration and Production (BPXP) reached agreements in principle with the U.S. Department of Justice and five Gulf Coast states to settle all federal and state claims arising from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon event, resulting in the largest environmental settlement in U.S. history. That same day, state of Louisiana officials and members of the Louisiana congressional delegation participated in a press conference led by Attorney General Buddy Caldwell to make the long-awaited announcement and discuss specific implications for our state.

Under the agreement, Louisiana will receive more than a third of the total $18.7 billion settlement, $6.8 billion, of which $5.8 billion is specifically targeted to restoration. Louisiana has committed, and even statutorily or constitutionally dedicated, nearly all of the related funding to its Coastal Master Plan and to address natural resource damages from the disaster. Audubon Louisiana—as a state office and through its involvement in the Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition—will remain vigilant and engaged, advocating that these dollars go toward funding projects with the greatest potential to restore and repair our precious ecosystems.

Though it comes five years after the disaster, the agreement allows for settlement dollars to begin funding restoration efforts in our fragile coastal areas sooner rather than later, and likely prevented years—if not decades—of further litigation.

Below is a state-by-state breakdown of the largest environmental settlement in U.S. history:

**Clean Water Act (CWA) $5.5 billion**
- Louisiana: $787 million*
- Texas: $430 million
- Mississippi: $582 million
- Alabama: $599 million
- Florida: $572 million

*Includes $92 million for Louisiana coastal parishes and $22 million for Louisiana’s designated Center of Excellence

**Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) $7.1 billion**
- Louisiana: $5 billion
- Texas: $238 million
- Mississippi: $295 million
- Alabama: $295 million
- Florida: $680 million
- Gulf Regionwide Projects: $350 million
- Open Ocean Projects: $1.24 billion

*Includes $1 billion previously allotted for early restoration, of which $368 million was allocated to Louisiana.

*Additional payments of $350 million in NRD assessment costs, plus $250 million in response costs, claims related to the False Claims Act, and royalties owed for the Macando well.

*Additional $232 million set aside for unknown costs, and interest in NRD funds will come in a final payment of Year 16.

**Economic claims: $4.9 billion**
- Louisiana: $1 billion
- Texas: $150 million
- Mississippi: $750 million
- Alabama: $1 billion
- Florida: $2 billion

*Additional $1 billion allocated for local government entities.

**SAVING IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS**
Knowing which places are most important for birds is the first step toward conserving them. State, continental, and global IBAs are an important network for protecting, restoring, and advocating for certain landscapes and the birds that depend on them.
News and Media Coverage

Below is a selected portion of recent media coverage. For regular updates and news stories, please join us on social media or visit La.Audubon.org.

Fifth Anniversary of the Gulf Oil Disaster
• Gulf Oil Spill Completely Destroyed This Island, Stephen Luntz, IFLScience, May 7, 2015
• The Birds of British Petroleum, Audubon magazine, David Gessner, Aug, 2015

Prothonotary Warbler Research
• Jewel of the Swamp, Bird Watching Magazine, Mac Stone, June 24, 2015
• Rare Warbler migration discovered using geolocated birds, Red Orbit, Eric Hopton, Sept. 1, 2015
• Geolocators used to link breeding and wintering populations of Prothonotary Warblers, Phys.org, Jared Wolfe, Sept. 22, 2015

Tenth Anniversary of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
• What Hurricane Katrina Taught Us about Fixing the Gulf, Huffington Post, David Yarnold, Aug. 20, 2015
• 10 Years after Katrina, Louisiana is Becoming a Model for Climate Resilience, Huffington Post, Kate Sheppard, Aug. 24, 2015
• Will New Orleans Survive the Next Katrina?, Mother Jones, Tim McDonnell, Aug. 26, 2015
• The Wetlands and Hurricane Katrina, The Weather Channel, Wake up with Al, Aug. 26, 2015
• A Model for Coastal Restoration: Louisiana Landowners Join Forces, National Wetlands Newsletter, Environmental Law Institute, David Yarnold, Sept./Oct. 2015
• Audubon innovative in fight to rebuild bird sanctuary after Hurricanes Rita and Ike, The Acadiana Advocate, Richard Burgess, Sept. 20, 2015
• Hurricane Rita knew no boundaries, neither should coastal restoration, American Press, Douglas Meffert Sept. 21, 2015
• Bracing for the Storms, Huffington Post Blog, David Yarnold, Sept. 22, 2015
• Tour of Coastal Projects at Rainey Sanctuary, WBRZ, Weekends with Whitney, Whitney Vann, Oct. 4, 2015

Other
• Campaign aides to governor hopefuls get a tutorial on Louisiana’s coastal projects, The Advocate, Amy Wold, July 1, 2015
• Our Views: Louisiana needs to save the beauty that changed how Audubon saw nature, The Advocate, Editorial, Sept. 24, 2015
• State coastal board proposes sending money left over from coastal projects to La. 1 elevation work, The Advocate, Amy Wold, Oct. 4, 2015

Shorebird ID Workshop
During the last weekend of September, Audubon LA conducted a shorebird ID workshop in Cameron Parish, LA. Lodging was provided by the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge, which also served as an indoor classroom for multiple power point presentations. The nitty-gritty details of shorebird, tern and gull identification were elucidated in an unintimidating and interactive manner. Classroom presentations were interspersed with field trips around the Refuge’s impoundments and nearby beaches. By our count, we saw 9 species of terns/gulls and 24 species of sandpipers/plovers. With bated breath, the endangered Piping Plover finally made an appearance during our last stop of the workshop at the stretch of beach in front of Baton Rouge Audubon’s Peveto Woods Sanctuary.

If circumstances prevented you from making this workshop, have no fear! We plan to host this and similar events on an annual basis.

The event was made possible by charitable donations from the Louisiana Ornithological Society, The Mosaic Foundation, The Walton Family Foundation, and Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation.

Creating Bird-Friendly Communities
Many people live in urban areas and play a critical role in supporting wildlife populations and communities. As the leading voice for birds, Audubon can inspire people to make daily choices that add up to make a real conservation impact.
The Feathered Fête

A big thank you to everyone who made our first fundraiser a success. As you’ve read in this newsletter, we work on a wide range of projects, all of which are essential to sustaining the birds and habitats of Louisiana.

A very special thank you to our guests of honor, David Yarnold, Christy Brown, and Chef John Besh

David Yarnold, President & CEO, National Audubon Society
Christy Brown, Audubon Louisiana Board Chair
Chef John Besh, Audubon Louisiana Board Member

Beth Courtney, President & CEO, Louisiana Public Broadcasting
Doug Meffert, Executive Director, Audubon Louisiana
Mignon Faget, Artist & Jewelry Designer, Mignon Faget, LTD
Ann Wilkinson, Chief Development Officer, Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation

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You are what hope looks like to a bird. Your Audubon Louisiana donation is a wise investment in a healthy future for birds, their habitats, and the web of life upon which we all depend.

Donate today: La.Audubon.org

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