



National Wildlife Federation to Coordinate Wildlife Surveillance in the Gulf

Reston, VA. (June 21) - Monitoring the impact of the BP oil spill on local wildlife is critical to assessing what rescue and restoration tactics need to be employed, now and in the future. In cooperation with other organizations, the National Wildlife Federation, and its Gulf state affiliates (Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Mississippi Wildlife Federation, Alabama Wildlife Federation, and Florida Wildlife Federation) are coordinating a **Volunteer Wildlife Surveillance Network** to track and report effects of the oil spill on wildlife and the natural eco-systems in the region.

To date, 2,400 birders, hunters, and anglers have signed up to join the surveillance team, 800 of whom live in the Gulf region. Five training sessions have been held, with seven more scheduled by the end of June. Ten teams are forming along the Louisiana coastline, and 15 teams in Florida will be focused on coastline from Pensacola to the Florida Keys. Four more teams are making preparations on the Atlantic coast side, should the currents send oil that way.

“We are the search in search and rescue,” said Kevin Coyle, VP of Education and Training for the National Wildlife Federation. “Our teams of volunteers are providing the eyes and ears we need on the ground to ring the alarm, hopefully before it’s too late.”

Along with volunteers from the National Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited and the National Wildlife Refuge Association wildlife watchers will be deployed in 22 areas around the Gulf. NWF and its affiliates have over 150,000 members in the Gulf region states, many of whom have skills in wildlife observation and tracking. Many of the volunteers joining the **Gulf Coast Surveillance Teams** are also knowledgeable of the Gulf coast and its waters, including the species (water birds, turtles, marine mammals and others) that are at risk from the oil.

Some of the team’s specific tasks will be:

- Identify critical wildlife and ecological zones along the Gulf coast from Louisiana into Florida. Special emphasis will be given to national and state wildlife refuges, critical nesting areas, and ecologically sensitive areas.
- Establish a wildlife and shoreline surveillance team for each zone
- Conduct regular (daily) inspections of their zones, on land and by boat
- Report injured wildlife for rescue, or if properly trained conduct the rescue themselves and deliver animals to rescue and recovery stations
- Record summaries of their findings on a website so that their data can be made available to federal and state wildlife agencies

Persons interested in serving on a surveillance team must be: skilled in wildlife observation and tracking (bird-watchers, naturalists or sportsmen); knowledgeable about the Gulf Coast and its waters; know the species in the region; live near one of the surveillance locations. Those interested in volunteering can do so at www.nwf.org/oilspillvolunteer

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National Wildlife Federation's mission is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future. Visit www.nwf.org.

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