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Re: June Progress Report

Contract #098 – Managing for Gulf American Oystercatchers: Monitoring the Gulf Coast Populations and Investigating Wintering and Foraging Behaviors

We continue to retrieve transmitter data as expected. The graduate student working on this project with us is processing and analyzing the breeding season data, and is preparing for the December symposium. We are also in preparation for discussing this research at The Waterbird Society meeting in Cape May, New Jersey in November and at the American Oystercatcher Working Group meeting in Seabrook, South Carolina in December.

We continued our annual monitoring surveys in multiple bay systems. Currently, we have documented 36 nests, fourteen of which successfully hatched chicks. We have two additional nests where we suspect they have young chicks, but we have not observed them yet; our suspicion is based on adult behavior. We have been able to band fourteen chicks and have seen two chicks that we were not able to band; the remaining did not survive to banding age or are currently too young to band. Volunteers continue to assist with the monitoring, and have documented at least nine additional nests and one surviving chick. The vast majority of nests this year in all monitoring locations have failed, in many cases due to weather; heavy rains have flooded several nests, and as the tide came up considerably during June's tropical storm, other nests overwashed. We are also still waiting on results from the necropsies, which we hope will provide some answers for the unusually small chick size and young mortality we observed.



Two adult American Oystercatchers with their recently banded chick in Matagorda Bay. Photo by Brigid Berger. All birds captured, handled, and banded under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the USGS and a Scientific Research Permit issued by TPWD.

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