

Progress Report to Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Contract # 098

Report Period: 1 August – 31 August, 2025

We wrapped up our summer breeding surveys and began to schedule our non-breeding surveys.

GCBO staff monitored five breeding pairs in East Matagorda Bay, 26 pairs in the Galveston Bay area, and one pair on Sargent Beach, all of which have had 40 nesting attempts that we currently know of. To date (this year), we have observed twenty-four chicks fledge, and have banded seventeen chicks and two adults. Volunteers and partners monitored several nests throughout the region, ranging from Dickinson/Trinity Bays down through the south end of Matagorda Bay (on top of the nests previously reported). We have been receiving reports from partners and volunteers of fledged chicks in numerous bays, and we found two fledged chicks (hatched this year) on a nearby beach.

Our partners wrapped up their monitoring efforts, but talks about next year continue. Volunteers spent over 225 hours on our boat monitoring with us, in addition to the numerous hours volunteers in other areas have spent monitoring oystercatchers this season. We completed our conversation with the transmitter company, PathTrack; they worked to modify their cellular transmitters to fit our needs. Coastal environments create issues for transmitters, but they have experience working with oystercatcher tags and understand our requirements. The transmitters will be purchased next month, with an arrival date of the end of the year or early January (in time for the next breeding season).

We began using eBird data to determine what sites to survey for the non-breeding oystercatchers. Our coastal biologist and intern compiled a list of sites and range of birds reported at that site, to create a list of locations to survey and their priority level. We designed data collection protocols to determine not only the site and if birds are present or not, but how they are using the location (foraging, roosting, antagonistic behaviors, etc.). This information will begin to tell us where the oystercatchers are spending their time during the non-breeding season, to identify hotspots. Our team will begin exploratory surveys to determine other sites with roosting/foraging oystercatchers during the non-breeding season.