

Progress Report to Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Contract # 098

Report Period: 1 July – 31 July, 2025

We continued to monitor our previously monitored nesting American Oystercatchers and continued discussions with volunteers for next year's breeding season. The season is coming to an end, and we are preparing to switch to the fall and winter surveys.

GCBO staff are currently monitoring 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-three chicks fledge, and have banded seventeen chicks and two adults. Volunteers and partners found and 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 a fledged chick (banded in 2022) roosting on a newly created island. We hope it will nest there next year.

Our partners are continuing to monitor and scout for breeding American Oystercatchers, in preparation for next year's trapping. Volunteers have spent over 200 hours on our boat monitoring with us, in addition to the numerous hours volunteers in other areas have spent monitoring oystercatchers this season. We have continued to collect feather and blood samples for the incoming graduate student's project. We are in the final stage of discussions with the company that makes the transmitters we will be purchasing this fall; transmitters are battery based with solar panels, and operate on the 4G cellular system.

Beach surveys for oystercatchers, the other portion of this project, will begin in late August/early September. We will have internal planning meetings soon to discuss survey locations, one of which will be Matagorda Peninsula, a site we have surveyed for multiple years. We will also be reaching out to our partners throughout the coast to ask for recommendations, and will use eBird records to find other spots of interest. Our team will begin exploratory surveys to determine other sites with roosting/foraging oystercatchers during the non-breeding season.