

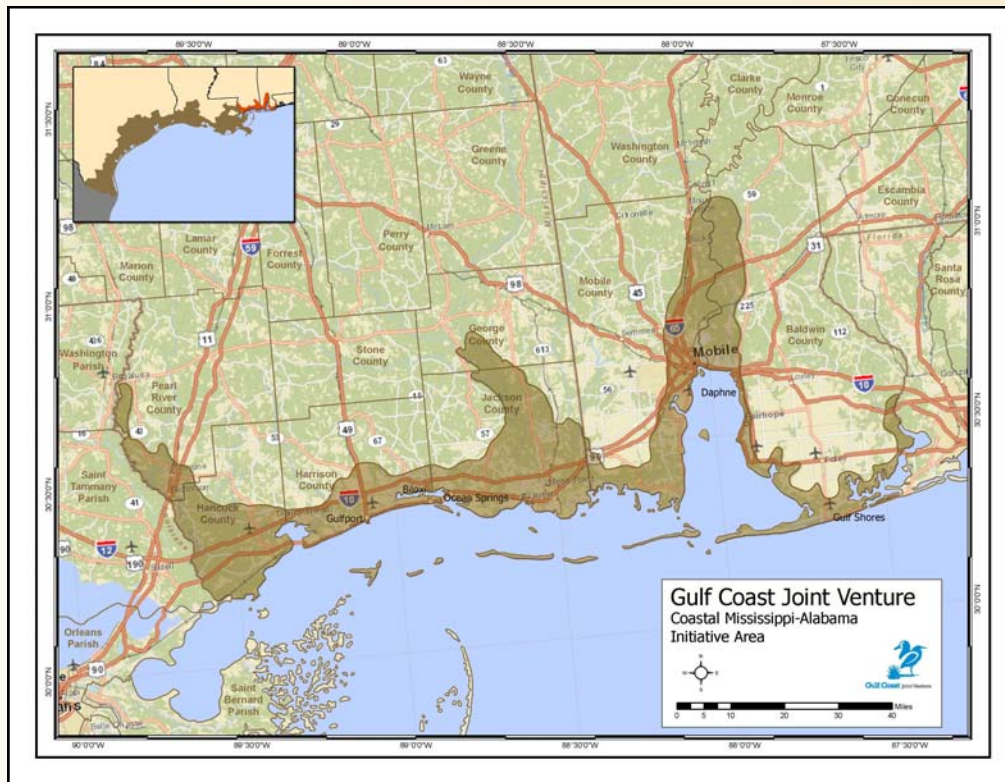
# Gulf Coast Joint Venture

## Coastal Mississippi – Alabama Initiative Area

### Introduction

The **Gulf Coast Joint Venture** (GCJV) is a bird habitat conservation partnership that spans the coastal portions of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. The GCJV mission is to advance conservation of important bird habitats through biological planning, implementation of habitat conservation activities, and evaluating the planning and implementation process through monitoring and research. GCJV conservation activities focus on waterfowl, landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds. The GCJV promotes habitat delivery, research, and monitoring activities that address the priorities identified by the partnership.

For conservationists seeking to address GCJV priorities for the Coastal Mississippi – Alabama Initiative Area, this document summarizes priority bird conservation actions for the area. Detailed descriptions and derivations are available at [www.gcjv.org/documents.php](http://www.gcjv.org/documents.php).



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Updated 8/23/16

# Waterfowl

## Migrating and Wintering Waterfowl

Species addressed in GCJV planning: Mallard, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Mottled Duck, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, and Greater & Lesser Scaup

Population Objectives: 40,805 ducks; refer to Table 1 in the **Coastal Mississippi and Mobile Bay Initiative Area Plan** for objectives by species

Habitat Objectives: Table 1. Habitat objectives for migrating and wintering waterfowl in the Coastal Mississippi – Alabama IA.

Habitat Type	Flooded Acres
Forested Wetlands	137,706
Coastal Marsh	NA <sup>1</sup>
Submerged Aquatic Vegetation/Seagrass	NA <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Not yet available.

Biological Foundation: Bio-energetic models yield acreage of foraging habitats necessary to meet dietary demands of population objectives

### Conservation Activities:

- Minimize saltwater intrusion and enhance productivity of coastal marsh through hydrologic restoration
- Create and promote expansion of coastal marsh through beneficial use of dredge material
- Promote management activities to protect and restore seagrass beds
- Maintain, enhance, or restore resource values of forested wetlands through application of silvicultural practices and hydrologic restoration

### Research Priorities:

- Estimate waterfowl foraging values of coastal marsh types
- Quantify movements, habitat use, and foraging ecology of scaup wintering in offshore and inshore waters

## Breeding Waterfowl

Priority Species: **Mottled Duck**

Population Objective: Western Gulf Coast (i.e., GCJV-wide) population index of 105,816 individuals, including at least 35,322 in Texas and 70,132 in Louisiana, as measured from Mid-winter Surveys in coastal areas of these states

Habitat Objective: Not yet available

Biological Foundation: Factors limiting recruitment are primary constraints to population growth

### Conservation Activities:

- Create and restore large blocks of nesting habitat in or adjacent to coastal marsh
- Use hydrologic restoration to maintain low salinity (<6–8 ppt) and enhance the quality of brood-rearing habitats in coastal marsh
- Remove predators in targeted locations

### Research Priorities:

- Measure the effectiveness of habitat conservation actions to benefit Mottled Duck breeding productivity, including breeding propensity, nest success, and brood survival





# Landbirds



Priority Landbird Species: **BCR 37; BCR 25, 26, 27**

## *Northern Bobwhite*

Population Objective: BCR 37 - 240 birds; 20 coveys in MS portion of BCR 37. BCR 27, in Initiative Area - 1,233 birds; 28 coveys in AL and 74 coveys in MS

Habitat Objective: BCR 37 - Improve 240 acres in MS portion; BCR 27 - Initiative Area - 4,711 acres [Improve 2,675 acres in MS (9 acres cropland; 244 acres pasture/hay; 676 acres rangelands; 1,743 acres pine forest; and 3 acres mixed pine-hardwood forest); Improve 2,036 acres in AL (21 acres cropland; 34 acres pasture/hay; 514 acres rangelands; 1,340 acres pine forest; and 127 acres mixed pine-hardwood forest)]

Biological Foundation: Acreage of improved cropland, pasture/hay, rangeland, or forest required to produce a covey

Conservation Activities: Thin and burn pine stands to create ground cover; convert exotic grass to native grass

## *Loggerhead Shrike*

Population Objective: Population Objective: 9,638 birds; 6,868 birds during winter (3,536 Resident, 3,332 Migratory) in MS portion of Initiative Area; 2770 birds during winter (1,700 Resident, 1,070 Migratory) in AL portion of Initiative Area.

Habitat Objective: 60,530 acres (38,180 acres in MS portion of Initiative Area; 22,350 acres in AL portion of Initiative Area)

Biological Foundation: Territory size(s) dictates acreage needed to support population objectives

Conservation Activities: Preserve native prairie areas; maintain low, thick shrubs in fields (3–10 shrubs or small trees per acre)

## *Le Conte's Sparrow*

Population Objective: 2,964 birds during winter; (2,748 birds in MS portion of Initiative Area; 216 birds in AL portion of Initiative Area)

Habitat Objective: 2,964 acres; (2,748 acres in MS portion of Initiative Area ; 216 acres in AL portion of Initiative Area)

Biological Foundation: Winter density estimates dictate acreage needed to support population objectives

Conservation Activities: Manage ≥500 acre blocks of native grassland with burned and unburned areas; prescribed burns should occur on a 3-year rotation

## *Seaside Sparrow*

Population Objective: 65,000 birds in U.S. BCR 37 and GCJV portion of BCR 26; 9,000 birds in Initiative Area

Habitat Objective: 650,000 acres in U.S. BCR 37 and GCJV portion of BCR 26; 90,000 acres in Initiative Area

Biological Foundation: Breeding territory size dictates acreage needed to support population objectives

Conservation Activities:

- Create and/or restore marsh habitat, in blocks ≥10,000 acres, containing areas of medium height smooth cordgrass, interspersed with ponds, tidal creeks, and bare ground areas
- Plug selected ditches in marshes that have been ditched
- Create marsh-elevation islands, with shallow water bodies and scattered woody shrubs, using dredged material

## *Cerulean Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, and Swainson's Warbler (migratory suite)*

Population Objectives: Not yet available

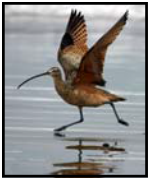
Habitat Priorities: Large forest patches (≥10,000 acres) close to the Gulf of Mexico

Biological Foundation: Theoretical bio-energetic foraging needs of migrating warblers

Conservation Activities: Maintain, restore, or create large forest patches (≥10,000 acres) along the MS and AL coasts

Landbird Research Priorities:

- Test assumptions and refine parameter estimates used in population-habitat models
- Determine suitable grassland patch size, species composition, structure, and landscape habitat matrix needed to support wintering Le Conte's Sparrows
- Identify habitat components of ideal migration stopover habitat
- Assess effectiveness of GCJV priority landbird species planning and management in addressing the needs of other bird species of conservation concern



# Shorebirds and Waterbirds



## Shorebirds

Population Objectives: Table 2. Fall (Jul 15–Nov 5) migrating shorebird objectives for inland-managed habitat in the Coastal Miss.–Ala. Wetlands IA.

Priority Species	Population Objective	Shallowly Flooded and/or Mudflat Acres
Long-billed Curlew	23	217
Western Sandpiper	4,116	279
Stilt Sandpiper	2,572	289
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	149	249
Short-billed Dowitcher	419	182
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,279</b>	<b>1,216</b>

Biological Foundation: Bio-energetic models yield acreage of foraging habitats necessary to meet the demand of population objective.

Other Shorebirds of Concern: Snowy Plover, Wilson’s Plover, Hudsonian Godwit

Population Objective: Not yet available

Inland/Managed Habitat Objective: Not yet available

Biological Foundation: Not yet available

Conservation Activities: Provide habitat ranging from shallow, flooded fields to mudflats

Research Priorities:

- Evaluate assumptions used to derive inland/managed habitat objectives in GCJV shorebird plan
- Improve accuracy and precision of population estimates

## Waterbirds

Priority Species: Reddish Egret, Little Blue Heron, Wood Stork, King Rail, Black Rail, Gull-billed Tern, and Black Skimmer

Population Objectives:

- Reddish Egret: 100 breeding pairs in LA, MS, and AL portion of the GCJV
- Little Blue Heron: 96 breeding pairs in Coastal Mississippi - Alabama IA
- Wood Stork, King Rail, Black Rail, Gull-billed Tern, and Black Skimmer: Not yet available

Biological Foundation:

- Reddish Egret: Estimation of breeding population impacts of specific management treatments applied to specific colonies
- Little Blue Heron: Population is limited by availability of suitable foraging habitat proximal to suitable nesting habitat

Habitat Objectives

- Little Blue Heron: See Little Blue Heron Conservation Plan ([http://www.gcjv.org/docs/GCJV\\_LBHE\\_Conservation\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.gcjv.org/docs/GCJV_LBHE_Conservation_Plan.pdf))
- Not yet available for Reddish Egret, Wood Stork, King Rail, Black Rail, Gull-billed Tern, or Black Skimmer

Conservation Activities:

Reddish Egret

- Apply colony-specific management actions
- Create/improve alternate colony sites
- Improve foraging habitat within 10 km of existing colonies

Little Blue Heron

- Apply specific management actions to colonies, or clusters of colonies, and associated foraging habitat

Research Priorities:

- Reddish Egret: Test breeding population response assumptions for each management action
- Little Blue Heron: (1) Test breeding population response to management actions, (2) Develop standard, repeatable methodology, incorporating detection probabilities, to assess population status and distribution