

# OIL SPILL FACTS

- This significant spill poses a serious threat to wildlife, affecting as many as 400 species along the coastal areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.
- The Gulf of Mexico coastline is called the Gulf Coast. This includes the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida as well as Cuba and five states of Mexico.
- The Gulf Coast contains 5 million acres of wetlands. That's the size of 4.5 million football fields! Coastal wetlands help reduce flooding during storms. They also act as nurseries by providing habitat (food, water and shelter) for young fish and other marine animals. Mangrove trees along Florida's coast provide habitat for an astounding 2,300 animals, including at least 42 threatened or endangered species.
- Bald eagle and brown pelican populations nearly became extinct along Louisiana's coast because of reproductive problems tied to pesticide exposure. Today, however, brown pelicans are re-established in their historic range, and the number of nest sites in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary are increased from 675 in 1990 to 6,500 in 2001.
- More than 150 rivers from around the United States flow into the Gulf! By cleaning your local rivers, you can keep pollution from entering the Gulf and other major waterways.
- Each year, the Gulf is a temporary home to millions of migratory birds, some coming from as far away as Brazil and Canada.
- The oil coming out of the ocean floor is a dark, thick, sticky liquid with a strong odor. It is floating to the surface and spreading, creating an oil "slick" that covers hundreds of square miles. It coats everything it touches in a layer of sticky oil. The oil also pollutes the water, and air above it, with fumes that are dangerous to breathe.
- Birds get the oil on their feathers when they dive into the water for food or when they land on the surface to rest. When they try to clean their feathers with their beaks, they can accidentally swallow some of the oil.
- The Gulf of Mexico Coast is one of the most productive natural areas in the entire world, with millions of acres of marsh, swamp, forests, and islands.