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Rookery Island Recovery Off to a Great Start!

by Kathryn Tunnell



It's been 8 months since Hurricane Harvey made landfall in the Coastal Bend turning everything in its path upside down, if not washing it away. Although our bays and estuaries are resilient, initial reports on the status of our rookery islands were grim. High winds and tidal surge washed away protective signs and nesting platforms, killed native vegetation, heavily eroded the islands, and brought in large amounts of debris, setting back nearly 15 years of management progress on the islands.

As devastating as the setbacks were, it was no time for pause. In February colonial nesting waterbirds would begin looking for nesting sites, all of which had been impacted. So CBBEP's Coastal Bird Program quickly developed a recovery plan to address damage at each site, and ensure the birds had the space, nesting structure, and protection they needed for hopefully, a successful nesting season.

But it takes a village, so we asked for help, and you answered. The Coastal Bird Program used a combination of donations and grants to help fund the rookery island hurricane recovery work including those from [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#), [Ed Rachal Foundation](#), [Cheniere Energy](#), [Port of Corpus Christi Authority](#), [The Trull Foundation](#), [Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi](#), [American Bird Conservancy](#), [Barnaget Bay Partnership](#), [Aransas Bird and Nature Club](#), as well as 24 private donations. And it didn't stop there, community members volunteered for the hard work too, contributing hundreds of hours in the field assisting with construction projects, debris removal, and plantings. What an amazing show of support!

Workday on Second Chain in Aransas Bay, installing nesting platforms and signage, and planting native vegetation.

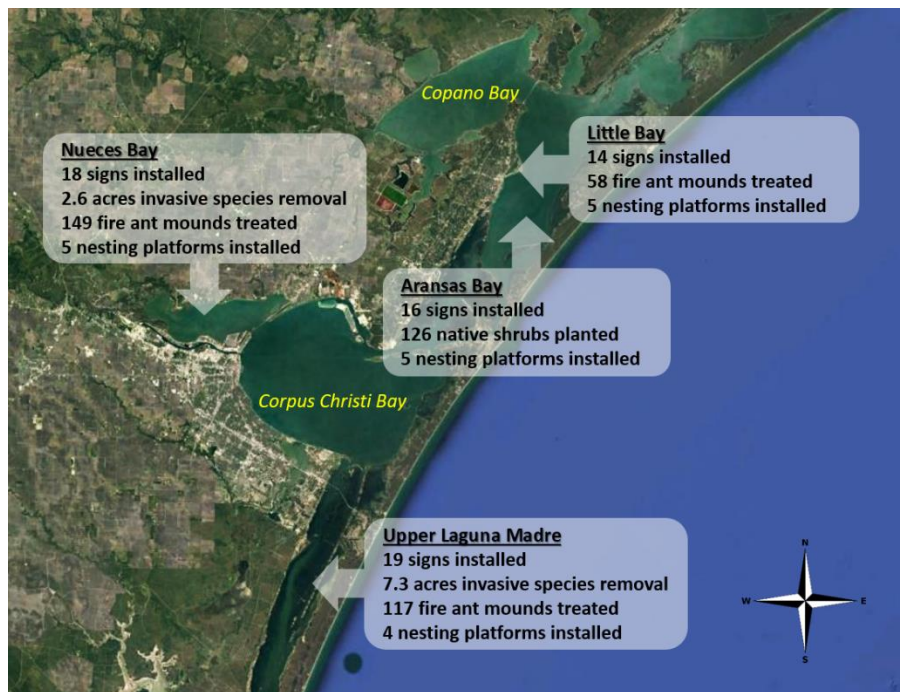


Together with partners and volunteers, CBBEP's Coastal Bird Program was able to restore rookery islands in Aransas Bay, Little Bay, Nueces Bay, and the Upper Laguna Madre. This included replacement or repair of 73 signs warning people of nesting birds on rookery islands, construction and installation of 18 artificial heron nesting platforms, and planting 126 native shrubs. In addition, over 12 acres of exotic vegetation was removed and hundreds of fire ant mounds were treated. For a more detailed look at where the restoration efforts occurred check out the map below.

The great news is that thanks to your support, we got it done! And though our rookery islands and coastal bird populations undoubtedly suffered some losses when Harvey came through, the rookery islands are looking really good. "We are off to a good start." said David Newstead, Coastal Bird Program Director, "If conditions prevail and the birds are given a chance to nest without harassment, we should see a strong nesting season with lots of fledgings added to the population."

The Coastal Bird Program will continue to monitor the activity of nesting birds throughout the nesting season, and address concerns if they arise, in hopes of giving these young families every advantage. Nesting season runs from February 1 - July 30, so please make sure to [Fish, Swim, and Play, from 50 yards away!](#)

The rookery islands of the Coastal Bend provide critical habitat for nesting colonial waterbirds, such as Great Blue Herons, Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets, and Black Skimmers. These birds fill an important role in our bays and estuaries, and CBBEP's Coastal Bird Program has worked diligently on managing these crucial islands for decades to give our colonial nesting waterbirds the best chance at success. If you would like to know more about the efforts of the Coastal Bird Program or donate to help their ongoing work, visit www.cbbep.org.



The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring bays and estuaries in the 12-county region of the Texas Coastal Bend. For more information about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, contact Kathryn Tunnell at (361)336-0304, or ktunnell@cbbep.org.