

Rare Animals of Louisiana



American Oystercatcher

Haematopus palliatus

Rarity Rank: S1/G5

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



Photo by Dan Lane

Identification:

- Approximately 30.5 cm tall
- Black head and back, white belly and patches on wings and tail
- Long, laterally compressed red bill; long flesh colored legs
- Shows bold, white wing stripe in flight

Taxonomic comments:

- Several races exist worldwide, two in North America
- Individuals that reside in Louisiana belong to the eastern nominate race

Habitat:

- Sand beaches, coastal salt marshes and tidal flats, particularly along the Atlantic
- Prefer remote and uninhabited beaches

Food habits:

Saltwater mollusks, crab, marine worms

Range:

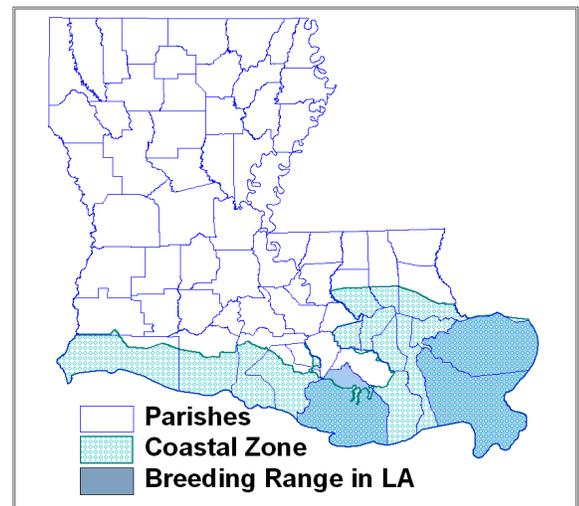
- Atlantic coast from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Yucatan, Mexico; also in the Caribbean, Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands and Brazil to Argentina
- Pacific coast from Gulf of California to Panama, also Peru and Chile

Reproduction:

- Individuals are sexually mature at 3 to 4 years of age
- Nest consists of a small depression scratched away in the ground and are sometimes decorated with shells

Threats:

- Habitat loss as a result of human disturbance along coastal areas and preferred nesting habitats
- Other shorebirds may compete for nest sites
- This species is shy and is disturbed as a result of slight human activity
- Eggs are under direct predation pressure from humans and other predators such as domestic and feral cats and dogs as well as other shorebirds
- Coastal land loss



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Beneficial Management Practices:

- Creation of new habitat in the form of dredge-material islands
- Posting of buffer zones surrounding wading and nesting colonies
- Increased interest and education in wetlands protection programs

LA River Basins:

Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Barataria, Terrebonne

References:

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