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Contact: Dr. Joe Trahan
(504) 736-2595
Debra Winbush
(504) 736-2597

## Oil and Gas Platforms Provide Haven for Migrating Birds

NEW ORLEANS - Every year millions of birds migrate across the Gulf of Mexico during the spring and fall seasons. During these migration seasons, these birds use oil and gas platforms as stopover sites. The Minerals Management Service has published a scientific study telling more about this phenomenon.

MMS, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, announces the release of that study report, *Interactions Between Migrating Birds and Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms in the Northern Gulf of Mexico: Final Report (*OCS Study MMS 2005-009) on compact disc.

The study, which began in 1998, was conducted on 13 platforms over a three-year period. The study asked the following questions:

- Which species are migrants?
- Are there specific migration routes?
- When do migrants use platforms for stopovers and how does the timing of platform use relate to seasonal and diel timing and weather?
- How many migrants use platforms as stopovers and how does that number relate to the total trans-Gulf migration traffic aloft?
- What is the condition of birds that use platforms and what determines how long they stay?
- Do migrants use platforms in predictable ways?
- How many migrants that stop on platforms depart successfully versus die, and why do some birds die?

The answers were not always the expected. The belief was that birds took the shortest possible route across the Gulf of Mexico, but the study found that migratory flight patterns are more complex and greatly influenced by weather, primarily prevailing winds. This accounts for subtle differences in migration routes. Doppler radar was employed to determine migration density and routes.

Birds use the platforms for recovery when they have become fatigued. Some do not survive because of their physiological condition by the time they reach the platform. But for those that do, platforms provide a habitat for rest, shelter, food, and water, allowing birds to continue their journey. At their destination, they will seek a mate, nest, raise their young and ultimately migrate back across the Gulf again in the fall.

This report was prepared under contract between the MMS and Louisiana State University and is available only in compact disc format. The report may be ordered through the MMS on-line ordering system at http://www.gomr.mms.gov/WebStore/front.asp.

MMS, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, oversees 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf, managing offshore energy and minerals while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments through advanced science and technology research. The OCS provides 30 percent of oil and 23 percent of natural gas produced domestically, and sand used for coastal restoration. MMS collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands, with Fiscal Year 2004 disbursements of approximately $8 billion and more than $143 billion since 1982. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which pays for cooperative conservation, grants to states, and Federal land acquisition, gets nearly $1 billion a year.

**MMS Main Website: www.mms.gov**
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