

# Louisiana Bucket Brigade's Blog

- [Front Page](#)
- [About](#)
- [Donate](#)



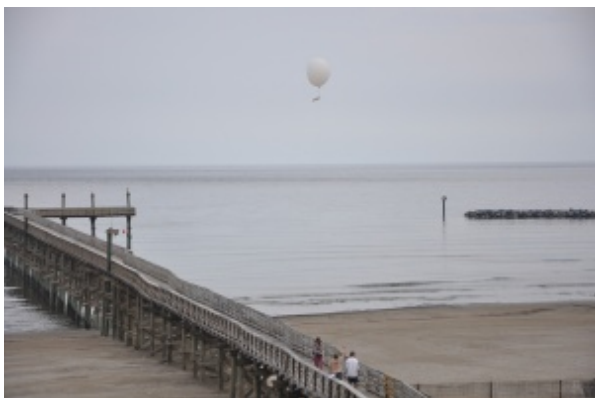
← [Louisiana Bucket Brigade's Multiple Locations](#) [Isle Grand Terre: oil pools and foul fumes](#) →

## Two Days on Grand Isle

May 27, 2010 · [3 Comments](#)

*Guest blog by Lauren Craig, Tulane International Development Graduate student and LABB volunteer. Lauren can be reached at [lacraig819@gmail.com](mailto:lacraig819@gmail.com).*

The national press first ran reports of oil on shore in Grand Isle, LA on Friday, May 21. Jefferson Parish authorities reacted by closing the island's public beaches. Reports of oiled birds, dead sea turtles and beach clean-up crews have been trickling in to the LABB crisis map over the past few days. On Tuesday, a group of community outreach volunteers for the LABB made our first trip to the island in preparation for what we hope (or fear?) will be a continuing LABB presence there. To date, the LABB crisis map team has successfully compiled nearly 500 citizen reports of odor, oil on shore, clean-up operations in progress and oiled wildlife throughout the areas of the gulf coast affected by the spill. But, we ultimately hope to establish a network of reliable reporting partners in the affected communities themselves—including Grand Isle. On Wednesday, I had the privilege of going to the island again—this time as part of an aerial mapping project with volunteers from [Grassroots Mapping](#), LABB and coastal systems researcher and fellow aerial mapmaker Adam Griffith from Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC.



Balloon Mappers. Photo by Adam Griffith of Western Carolina University, Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines

My strong initial impression of the current situation on Grand Isle is that the local population, Jefferson Parish and national authorities and other volunteers and observers are both extremely helpful and friendly and seriously concerned about the current situation. For the most part, they were also very receptive to our projects. We received permission to place “comment boxes” for local people to file reports for the crisis map at several locations, including the Town Hall and the Grand Isle Community Center. We hope that this convenient, low-tech approach, as well as general word-of-mouth about the crisis map project will encourage greater participation, and increase the flow of information from the area.

On Wednesday, we were able to gain access to neighboring Elmer’s Island, which has been closed to the public since oil reached its shores on May 20. A clean-up operation was underway there, with tractor-trailers coasting up and down the narrow road to the island, apparently delivering soil. When we arrived, the clean-up crews were taking a break due to lightning striking in the distance, but we were able to see oil-soaked absorbent booms gathered in plastic bags all along the length of the island. Our impression was that the scene represented a vast improvement to Richard Shephard’s aerial photographs of the area, which we had seen on his website that morning. However, we were only able to access a small section of the island before being escorted back to the exit.



Later, we were able to return to the fishing pier at Grand Isle State Park to take aerial photographs of the area using a simple weather balloon, a kite reel and an automatic camera. Clean-up crews had been working in the area the day before. Today, a fine oil sheen was visible on the water, and national guardsmen were deploying “water-berms”, barriers created by filling boom-like tubes with water and stacking them on top of each other. There was no odor in the air and you really had to look hard to see the oil sheen on the water. However, I worried about the many hermit crabs that had washed onto the shore and the dolphins we saw swimming in the distance.



Humvees, hermit crabs, oil sheen and lightning aside, the day was not complete until we met up with fan-powered paragliding aerial photographer Richard Shephard and his partner-in-crime, Drew Wheelan, a

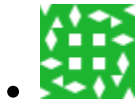
scientist-turned-blogger from the American Birding Association. The two have been working together on the island for about two weeks—sharing boat charters, interviews and an impromptu office in the dining room of one of the marinas. Together, they hold a wealth of information and knowledge about the spill, and have been able to beat the mainstream media and the clean-up crews to most of the areas where oil has hit land. Today, they chartered a boat east from Grand Isle to Isle Grande Terre, where they reported oil was washing up on the shore in waves. Shephard's pictures from the expedition are truly scary. In his blog, Wheelan reported, "there wasn't a section of beach on the Gulf side that wasn't oiled, and in places the oil was 15 yards or more wide and four inches thick!"

After only two days in Grand Isle, it is obvious to me that cleaning up the oil from BP's now infamous gusher as it makes landfall will require significant time, expertise, resources, and, most of all, dedication to make sure that the job is done efficiently and effectively. This disaster is not going away any time soon. "Cleaned" beaches may be covered in oil again next week, dead wildlife will continue to wash up on shore, and fishermen and shrimpers may be out of work for months, their businesses affected for years. Grand Isle, Elmer's Island and Isle Grande Terre are tiny and remote islands, but they represent one of the first lines of defense for this disaster and their significance must not be underestimated. Even though we can't all be paragliding aerial photographers, wildlife experts or boat captains, we still have a role to play in raising awareness about the effects of this disaster. The best thing that ordinary people can do for the community right now is stay informed, promote action and spread the word—this is the mission of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade in Grand Isle.

**Categories:** [BP Oil Spill](#)

**Tagged:** [Grassroots Mapping](#), [Grand Isle](#), [Elmer's Island](#)

**3 responses so far** ↓



[Adam Griffith](#) // [May 28, 2010 at 8:35 am](#) | [Reply](#)

Lauren – nice entry. Great to work with you. Isle Grand Terre is a mess. Went there with LABB volunteers Tara and Randy Thursday the 27th. Clean-up crews weren't yet there. Supposed to start getting cleaned up today.



[PAPA](#) // [June 1, 2010 at 1:24 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

fantastic. I,m very proud of you and what you are doing. you look great on CNN,better than the infogirls. love ya, papa



[lorelei ranney](#) // [June 14, 2010 at 10:44 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

please, please listen to this message..a simple spray of DR. BRONNERS LIQUID SOAP will take all oil off of these birds and wildlife. It dilutes about 50 times with water, one can brush ones teeth with it. I cleaned up a gallon of acrylic housepaint that spilled on my carpet in 20 minutes. wine

stains and spills completely disappear when using this product. PLEASE ASK SOMEONE TO TRY THIS..NO NEED TO TOUCH THE BIRDS AND SPEND HOURS TRYING TO SAVE THEM... JUST SPRAY THEM WITH THE SOAP, THEN RINSE...

## Leave a Comment

Name

E-mail

Website

☐ Notify me of follow-up comments via email.

☐ Send me site updates



## • We need your help to keep our work going!



## • Email Subscription

Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.



## • LABB photos





[More Photos](#)

- **[Louisiana Bucket Brigade Twitter](#)**

- Are you looking for a dynamic internship for fall that will get you involved in the oil crisis, refinery... <http://fb.me/wKwmnA7T> 9 hours ago
- Blog post by RJ Bowman, a member of Residents for Air Neutralization in Shreveport and an up and coming... <http://fb.me/xSmcYMtf> 5 days ago

- **LABB blog categories**



- **What were talking about...**

[Baton Rouge](#) [Benefits](#) [BP](#) [BP oil spill clean up](#) [BP worker health](#) [Calumet](#) [Chalmette](#) [Chandeleur Islands](#)  
[Communities Empowered for Change](#) [Community Meetings](#) [Concerned Citizens Around Murphy](#) [Dauphin Island](#) [dispersants](#) [Elmer's](#)  
[Island](#) [ExxonMobile](#) [Fishermen](#) [Fundraising](#) [Grand Isle](#) [Grassroots Mapping](#) [Gulf Aid](#) [Gulf Relief](#)  
[Foundation](#) [Hurricane season](#) [Isle Grand Terre](#) [Istrouma](#) [Lafitte](#) [Murphy Oil Refinery](#) [Murphy oil spill](#) [Oil](#)  
[Spill](#) [Oil Spill Crisis Map](#) [outreach](#) [Panama City](#) [Pensacola](#) [Plaquemines](#) [Port Sulphur](#) [public health](#) [Queen Bess](#)  
[Refinery accidents](#) [Residents for Air Neutralization](#) [Shreveport](#) [St. Bernard](#) [St. Bernard Citizens for Environmental](#)  
[Quality](#) [stories](#) [Technology](#) [Ushahidi](#) [Venice](#)

- **Past blog posts...**



## • Search the LABB blog

To search, type and hit ente

## • Blogroll

- [Communities Empowerment for Change](#)
- [Concerned Citizens Around Murphy](#)
- [Environmental Integrity Project](#)
- [Environmental Support Center](#)
- [Grassroots Mapping](#)
- [Louisiana Bucket Brigade Facebook Page](#)
- [Louisiana Bucket Brigade Flickr account](#)
- [Louisiana Bucket Brigade Twitter](#)
- [Louisiana Bucket Brigade Website](#)
- [Oil Spill Crisis Map](#)

[Blog at WordPress.com](#). Theme: [Cutline](#).