

Bird droppings to help restore sea grass

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Dauphin Island Sea Lab scientists in Alabama are hoping to restore Robinson Island grass beds by utilizing seabird droppings.

The researchers at the sea lab -- Alabama's marine education and research center, located about 30 miles from Mobile -- say bird droppings are a rich source of phosphorus, which is a natural fertilizer for grass beds that have been destroyed by boat propellers.

Sea Lab scientists Ken Heck and John Dindo are establishing bird stakes in an effort to revive scarred grass beds that have been scarred by boats at the popular recreational spot.

The researchers say they will plant bird stakes in the damaged grass beds during the next two months, hoping to attract seabirds to use the stakes as a resting area, thereby fertilizing the shoal grass beneath them.

"Bird stakes have proven successful in the Florida Keys," said Heck. "We're placing signs in marinas and along the grass bed borders warning boaters against using their motors in the sea grasses. We'll also monitor the effects the bird droppings are having in the propeller scars in the shoal grass beds.

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