

OILED WILDLIFE TREATMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AND SPAIN WORKSHOP NOTES - NWRC Conference July 2004

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Treasure Oil Spill, South Africa, June 2000

The “Treasure” spilled 1,100 tonnes of heavy bunker oil, 56 tonnes of marine diesel and 64 tonnes of lube oil. Affected were the Dassen and Robben Island populations of the endangered African Penguin, rare Bank cormorants and Crowned cormorants.

SANCCOB – The South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds and the IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) mobilised experts from around the world to help with the disaster. A wildlife facility at Tableview in Cape Town was used and a gigantic ex-railway warehouse in Salt River was used as the main treatment centre.

Spill statistics (largest wildlife operation in history):

African penguins handled (adults)	38,506
Oiled birds washed	19,000
Birds caught and relocated	19,500
Penguin chick hand reared	3,350
Oiled birds died	1,957
No of volunteers on daily basis	1,000
Tonnes of fish consumed each day	8 tonnes

Birds were tubed with Darrow solution (mixture of glucose and electrolytes) on arrival. They were assessed as to strength before washing and if not fit enough transferred to intensive care. Birds then held in pens (above ground swimming pools).

Washing process involved coating the birds with BDI solution – a unique solution created by a South African high school student. Consisted of recycled cooking oil and detergents which was highly effective in breaking down the thick bunker oil. Birds were washed with warm water and dish washing liquid and rinsed with a high pressure hose. Approx 400 -500 birds were being washed each day.

After washing birds were rehydrated and fed and placed in the drying room. They were given vitamin injections and vaccinated for Newcastle’s disease after the drying process.

The next day they were swum in large pools and monitored closely. If fit enough the birds were transferred outside. The outside area consisted of 17 large pens all with pools and 3 deep swim testing pools. There were approx 11,500 birds outside at any one time. Each bird was fed twice daily.

Each bird was blood tested before swimming and if they passed the swim test were flipper tagged and sprayed with pink dye. If they passed the medical they were released the next day. Birds were fed and graded under lights at night.

Hours worked at Salt River were 7.30 am to 10.00 pm with 2 half hour meal breaks. The shifts were 3 weeks without a day off. International contingent consisted of 40 people from USA, Alaska, Hawaii, England, France, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

Prestige Oil Spill, Northern Spain, 2002, 2003.

The tanker “Prestige” sank off the coast on Galicia, northern Spain on Nov 14, 2002 and the relief operation concluded in March 2003. The tanker was carrying 77,000 metric tonnes of heavy fuel oil when it sank after breaking apart. The ship was 250 kms from the Spanish coast and the slick was 9 km long. The ship continues to spill oil from the sea bed some 5 km down and the coastline of Spain, France and Portugal are affected.

The birds brought in for treatment numbered 1300 but many more died before they were found or admitted for care. The weather was very cold, windy, raining and snowing for most of the time. The birds affected were from 20 different species including Puffins, gannets, razorbills, guillemots, loons, scoters, kittiwakes, skuas and storm petrel. Several sea turtles were also treated for oiling.

Birds were first taken to a stabilisation centre near La Coruna and then transferred to a larger treatment centre in Pontevedra where the IFAW team had established a rehab facility. The centre consisted of a large tent for admission and 2 large indoor pools, a building for washing, drying and intensive care, and 2 areas of pools for rehabilitation and swimming. There was also a heated pool area. 3 containers were used for catering and post mortems.

Blood was taken from birds on admission for analyses of PCV, TP and BC. Birds were then housed in net bottom cages until stable enough for washing. Birds were given rehydration solution of “mash” (Mazuri flamingo mix) by tube at 2-3 hourly intervals. Fish was also offered but not force fed.

Once the bird’s blood parameters improved they were washed and rinsed. Gas hot water facilities were established on site and waste water was stored in large drums and pumped into larger storage containers on site. These drums were later taken away for disposal. Due to the nature of the heavy oil the birds were sprayed with Metho oleate (MSDS) before washing. Detergent used was Dawn.

A series of above ground pools were constructed on the soccer field outside the main building. The approx size was 5 metres circle pools and rectangular pools measuring approx 2.5 metres by 6 metres. Birds were housed outside until suitable for release.

Prior to release bloods were tested, birds were weighed and waterproofing was assessed. Most releases took place off the coast of Portugal and the nearest possible location not affected by oil.

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