



The Resources Agency ♦ Department of Fish and Game
Office of Spill Prevention and Response
OSPR News Release



DATE: January 14, 2005

MEDIA CONTACTS — Rob Hughes (on-scene, cell phone): 916-214-3279

Dana Michaels (OSPR Sacramento): 916-327-9948

Responders expand oiled bird rescue in Ventura area

The California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) continues to search for and collect oiled seabirds in the coastal area between Ventura County and Venice Beach.

The source of oil affecting these birds is unknown, but presumed to be related to the recent storms, mudslides, and wash-outs. OSPR wardens are investigating, attempting to identify the source or sources. Oil samples have been taken from the birds' feathers and nearby waterways for analysis by OSPR's Petroleum Chemistry Lab, near Sacramento.

To date, approximately 300 birds have been captured and taken to the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care and Education Center in San Pedro for veterinary care and washing. Seven birds were dead on arrival and another five died while in care. The largest numbers were found in and around Ventura Harbor, the Pt. Mugu area, Santa Monica, and in the Santa Barbara region. Another 2,000 seabirds have been observed rafting offshore in the same area, and are considered at risk.

The Center is one of 12 primary care facilities located along California's coast, specifically designed for this purpose by California's Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN). The OWCN is a partnership program of DFG-OSPR and the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center.

OSPR has sent its veterinary van to Ventura Harbor, where it serves as a central collection point, and in which captured birds can be stabilized. Other initial stabilization and collection points have been established at Point Mugu Naval Air Station and in Santa Barbara.

The public is advised not to touch or even approach oiled or injured wildlife. Injured animals can be even more dangerous to humans than healthy ones. Grebes — the species most represented among these oiled seabirds — have very sharp beaks, and can injure a person's eyes, if approached.

Anyone seeing an animal in distress is asked to report it by calling 562-342-7222, and providing its exact location. Trained wildlife professionals will be dispatched with the proper equipment to capture and transport the animal without further injury.

The OWCN is seeking volunteers to work with wildlife personnel. Volunteers over age 18 may offer assistance by calling 800-228-4544.

###