



STATE OF CALIFORNIA @ THE RESOURCES AGENCY

OSPR News Release



DFG OFFICE OF SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

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OSPR Public Affairs Officers — Dana Michaels: 916-327-9948 or Rob Hughes: 916-323-6286
US Coast Guard — Lt. Tim Callister (510-437-3073)

For immediate release

MYSTERY SPILL OILS MORE SEA BIRDS

The California Department of Fish and Game's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) and the U.S. Coast Guard continue to search for the oil that has contaminated over 150 sea birds since November 24th. The oiled birds have been washing ashore between Point Reyes and Monterey Bay, but both aerial and on-water searches have yet to identify the source(s) of the oil. As of this afternoon, 33 of the birds collected were dead on arrival. Another 16 died while receiving care.

Most of the birds are common murrelets, diving birds that look a little like small penguins. Other injured species include loons, grebes, and surf scoters. They have been rescued and collected in a wide area, from Point Reyes to the Farallon Islands to northern Monterey County. The majority had washed up on Ocean Beach (San Francisco) and the San Mateo County coastline, until today, when 15 more birds were collected from the Farallon Islands. Shoreline clean-up assessment teams are searching the area for additional oiled wildlife and evidence of the spilled oil. To date, oil has not been found on-shore.

The OSPR activated the State's Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) when the first birds were found. The OWCN is funded by OSPR and operated by the University of California Davis Wildlife Health Center. Oiled birds are taken to the group's San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care and Education Center in Cordelia, which is also home of the International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC), one of 24 OWCN member organizations. There, the birds are stabilized, fed, washed, rinsed, and rehabilitated for release back to the wild.

Samples of the oil have been taken from the birds to the OSPR Petroleum Chemistry Laboratory in Rancho Cordova (near Sacramento) for chemical analysis, which may provide clues to the oil's source.

Anyone observing injured wildlife should not approach or touch the animals for safety reasons. Please report the exact location and condition of the animal to the OWCN at 707-207-0380, extension 107. A trained wildlife handler will be dispatched with the proper capture equipment to rescue it, as soon as possible. Dead, oiled wildlife also must be collected by spill response personnel with the appropriate personal protective equipment.

WEBSITES

DFG-OSPR — <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/Ospr/index.html>

US Coast Guard — <http://www.uscg.mil/D11/index.htm>

Oiled Wildlife Care Network —

<http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/owcn/default.asp>

IBRRC — <http://www.ibrrc.org>

