

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security
**United States
Coast Guard**



Joint News Release

U.S. COAST GUARD MARINE SAFETY OFFICE SAN FRANCISCO DFG OFFICE OF SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

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Fewer seabirds affected by Luckenbach oil

The big storm that passed through central California the last week of February had more impact than usual on wildlife, but it would have been much worse, if the U.S. Coast Guard and California Dept. of Fish and Game hadn't removed 100,000 gallons of oil from a sunken ship in 2002.

The State's Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) collected 11 live and two dead, oiled seabirds (mostly common murrelets) that were stranded on the Farallon Islands and the coast, between Stinson Beach (Marin County) and Monterey Bay. Oil samples taken from the feathers of these birds have been analyzed by the DFG Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), whose chemists have concluded that most of it came from the *S.S. Jacob Luckenbach*, a cargo ship that sank 17 miles southwest of the Golden Gate Bridge, in 1953. Previous winter storms, which were less severe than this one, caused hundreds of birds to become oiled each year. Biologists estimate that only ten percent of oiled birds are ever found.

In September of 2002, the Coast Guard's Marine Safety Office San Francisco Bay, OSPR and Titan Maritime LLC, completed a large-scale oil removal project in which over 100,000 gallons of fuel oil was removed from the wreck. Despite the most skilled team and best available technology, small amounts of oil were inaccessible to divers and could not be removed from some parts of the ship. The Coast Guard and OSPR anticipated that the strong underwater currents that accompany winter storms might flush some of this oil from the wreck, creating a hazard to wildlife. The Coast Guard, OSPR and the OWCN will continue to monitor this situation, and attempt to rescue any wildlife that it may affect.

Anyone observing dead or injured wildlife should not approach or touch the animal, 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 must also be collected by spill response personnel with the appropriate personal protective equipment.

