



Sea Alarm has been attending an oiled wildlife incident in Estonia, where an illegal spill caused thousands of birds getting oiled, of which 500 were captured alive on the Estonian beaches. Sea Alarm liaised with the International Fund for Animal Welfare's Emergency Relief Team (IFAW ER, US) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals (RSPCA, UK) and the three organisation set up a joint international effort to provide support to the Estonian response, which was lead by the Ministry of Environment and supported by the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF).

Oiled wildlife incident Estonia

Thursday February 2, 2006, Sea Alarm was notified about an oiled wildlife incident that was currently happening in Estonia. Thousands of birds were oiled following an illegal discharge of oil in the Gulf of Finland. Local responders had called for assistance, and the message reached Sea Alarm by e-mail via Sweden and the UK.

Sea Alarm liaised with the International Fund for Animal Welfare's Emergency Relief Team (IFAW ER, US) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals (RSPCA, UK) and the three organisation set up a joint international effort to provide support to the Estonian response, which was lead by the Ministry of Environment and supported by the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF).

Within 24 hours, Sea Alarm (Hugo Nijkamp) and IFAW (Ian Robinson) were on site, advising and assisting

the authorities and local responders, while experts from Europe and other parts in the world were mobilised. Under the Sea Alarm umbrella, Bird Protection Flandres (B), Project Blue Sea (D), Oil Spill Response Ltd (UK) and Royal Nioz (NL) sent experts to Estonia. IFAW mobilised its Emergency Response Team and RSPCA sent 3 experts.

The first experts who arrived were sent to the four remote bird holding centres to assist with animal care. Meanwhile, a temporary wildlife hospital was built in Keila, near Tallinn, using IFAW's Southampton based equipment which was put on transport by Oil Spill Response Ltd. As soon as this hospital was operational (February 8), all birds were transported there to bring them under one roof.

From the ca 500 birds that had been captured, ca 156 made it to the wildlife hospital, of which ca 100 were considered fit enough to be treated (Feb 9). At the end of the response (March 4), a total of

61 birds had been released.

As part of the response, a wildlife impact assessment was carried out, lead by Royal NIOZ, in order to collect data for a wildlife impact analysis.

The involvement of foreign experts was used to set up a training programme for ministry staff, scientists and a group of dedicated volunteers, forming a local response force in case of a future incident in Estonia. Also a preliminary response plan was drafted.



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