

Introduction

Costa Rica is bordered to the north by Nicaragua, to the east by the Caribbean Sea, to the south by Panama, and to the west by the Pacific Ocean.

The coastline includes sandy beaches, mangrove swamps, lagoons, sea grass beds, coral reefs, tidal marshes and estuarine rivers with muddy sediment which occur largely on the Caribbean coast.

There are a number of national parks, protected areas, and Ramsar sites on both coasts such as the Humedal Caribe Noreste and the Gandoca-Manzanilla Wildlife Refuge on the Caribbean Sea and the Guancaste National Park, Cocos Island National Park which is also a World Heritage site, and Corcovado National Park on the Pacific Ocean.

At Risk Wildlife

In this profile some individual wildlife species are mentioned followed by a letter in parentheses. These are species included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species within the top three categories of risk - Vulnerable to extinction (V), Endangered (E) or Critically Endangered (CR).

Avian Species – a number of wading and shore birds (herons, egrets, sandpipers, plovers, etc), seabirds (gulls, terns, frigatebirds, etc) and birds of prey (piscivorous and coastal scavenger) are found in the region, some resident, some migratory. Species of particular concern include the Galapagos petrel (CR) found only on the Pacific, Leach's storm-petrel (V), Black-capped petrel (E), black petrel (V), Pink-footed shearwater (V) and the Agami heron (V). All these species are in Costa Rica on migration except for the Agami heron which is present in the country year round.

Marine mammals – approximately 25 species of whale and dolphin are found in Costa Rican waters. Those of special concern include the West Indian manatee (V), which is found only in the Caribbean, and a variety of dolphins, many listed as Data Deficient and thus potentially at risk. Of these the only nearshore species is the Guiana dolphin, which is found in the Caribbean Sea and its estuaries.

Other mammal species of potential concern include the crab-eating raccoon, the neotropical otter and some local species of capuchin monkey, all of which are known to forage in coastal and estuarine waters.

Marine Reptiles – four species of sea turtle are found in Costa Rican waters. Loggerhead (V), green (E), leatherback (V) and hawksbill (CR) all nest on Costa Rica's beaches and three of those species regularly forage offshore. The waters of Golfo Dulce on the Pacific coast are considered important feeding grounds for migratory juvenile turtles.

American crocodiles (V) and several species of caiman are also present in Costa Rica.

Regional Seas

Caribbean Sea (Wider Caribbean LME)

North East Pacific Regional Sea (Pacific Central-American Coastal LME)

Past experience

There have been no major oil spills in Costa Rican coastal waters. A diesel fuel spill made its way into the Tarcoles River in 2000. There were no reports of wildlife casualties.

Response: the role of the authorities

Under the National Contingency Plan, the Ministerio de Obras Públicas Y Transportes (MOPT), División Marítima-Portuaria (Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, Maritime-Ports Division), is the primary agency for spill notification and the competent national authority for oil spills. The competent national authority for HNS incidents is the Ministerio de Salud, Dpt. Gestion Riesgo (Ministry of Health, Department of Risk Management). The Guardia Civil would likely be involved in response and various local administrations on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts would also be potentially involved.

The Sistema Nacional de Áreas de Conservación (National System of Conservation Areas or SINAC), an agency of the Ministerio de Ambiente, Energía y Telecomunicaciones (Ministry of the Environment, Energy

and Telecommunications or MINAET), would likely be charged with overseeing any oiled wildlife response.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

There are no formal guidelines for oiled wildlife response.

Response objectives and strategy

N/A

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

It is likely that rehabilitation would be allowed with euthanasia considered based on welfare concerns.

Impact assessment

MINAET-SINAC would be involved in impact assessment, in cooperation with universities involved in marine research.

Notification and early response

There is no system in place for notification regarding oiled wildlife and no early response process.

Wildlife responders

There are a number of small wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facilities in the country, several of which have some experience with turtles and marine birds, but there are no experienced oiled wildlife responders.

Cooperation between stakeholders

There is limited interaction between the various wildlife rehabilitation organisations but most cooperate with SINAC, as do several universities with marine research projects.

Costa Rica is a signatory to the Cartagena Convention (Wider Caribbean region) Oil Spills Protocol but has not ratified the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPA). Costa Rica is also a signatory to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean or the Antigua/Guatemala Convention) with Columbia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama) which addresses pollution issues.

Permanent facilities

There are no permanent facilities for oiled wildlife response. There are, however, a number of wildlife rehabilitation centres on both coasts which may be able to accommodate a small number of oiled birds and land mammals.

Latin American Sea Turtles (LAST), a member of the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Network (WIDECAS) manages rehabilitation facilities for sea turtles, one on the Golfo Dulce on the Pacific coast and one on the Caribbean coast, with support and assistance from several US aquaria and turtle rehabilitation facilities.

Current processes

There are no current processes in place regarding oiled wildlife response.

Documentation and references

General references

General References

IOPF Country Profile

BirdLife International Country Profile

RAC-REMPIETC Country Profile

Sea Turtle Nesting Atlas, WIDECAS Technical Report # 6 (2007)

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COSTA RICA

Country Wildlife Response Profiles
A Summary of oiled wildlife response
arrangements and resources worldwide

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