

Introduction

Italy is a long peninsula bordered by the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west, the Ligurian Sea to the northwest, the Adriatic Sea to the east, and the Ionian Sea to the south. To the north, Italy shares borders with France, Monaco, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia. The Italian territory also includes several islands; the largest of which are Sicily and Sardinia. Including all islands, Italy's coastline extends 7,600 km, much of it steep cliffs, sandy beaches, and estuaries such as the Po Delta.

At Risk Wildlife

Avian Species - Italy is an important stopover point for many migratory species, such as shorebirds, egrets, herons, ducks, swans and geese. Species of conservation Yelkouan shearwater, velvet scoter, long-tailed duck, marbled teal, ferruginous duck, slender-billed and Eurasian curlew, black-tailed godwit, and European shag. The Po Delta and other estuaries are also important nesting areas for many aquatic species.

Marine Reptiles - Loggerhead turtles are the most common sea turtle species found in Italian waters and possibly the only one nesting on Italian beaches, largely on the Paelagian archipelago, comprised of Lampedusa, Linosa and Lampione. The critically endangered Leatherback turtle has been observed occasionally in Italian waters and as recorded by-catch by the fishing industry but is considered a rare visitor to the Mediterranean.

Marine Mammals - numerous species of cetaceans have been sighted in the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Seas, including striped, bottlenose, common, and Risso's dolphin; and pilot, beaked, sperm and fin whale. In the northern Adriatic Sea, bottlenose dolphins and short-beaked common dolphins are abundant. Since 2009 there have been occasional sightings of the critically endangered Mediterranean monk seal in Italian waters, particularly around Sardinia and western Sicily, but breeding and pupping in Italy have not been recorded in recent years.

Regional Seas

Mediterranean Sea, which includes the following seas:

- Ligurian Sea
- Tyrrhenian Sea
- Adriatic Sea
- Ionian Sea

Past experience

Italy has experienced one major oil spill. In 1991, the Haven caught fire off the coast of Genoa, exploded and broke into three parts, losing its cargo of 144,000 tonnes of crude oil. Although most of it burnt out and sunk, over 10,000 tonnes affected the coasts. There are no official records, however it is believed that about one hundred birds were oiled as a result. The Centro di Riabilitazione Uccelli Marini e Acquatici (CRUMA), which is the only centre in Italy specialized in recovery of marine and other aquatic bird species, treated some of these birds.

In 2010, a spill, likely the result of intentional sabotage at a refinery on the Lambro, an tributary of the Po, resulted in an estimated 550,000 gallons of oil being released. Clean-up efforts prevented the oil from reaching a critical protected wetland at the mouth of the Po. There were reports of ducks being taken to a local animal shelter for care and more found dead.

Italy has also experienced a number of HNS spills, none of which resulted in a documented wildlife response.

Response: the role of the authorities

According to the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan as approved in 2010, the Department of Civil Protection leads strategic direction of all response operations. The Ministry of the Environment, Territory and Sea coordinates the activities of the General Directorate for the Protection of Natural and Marine Environments, the Marine Environmental Department of the Harbour Office Corps, the Superior Institute of Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and the General Directorate for the Protection of Territory and Water Resources.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

The National Plan, states that planning during a response must include recovery, stabilisation and treatment of marine fauna (birds, mammals and reptiles) and the identification of disposal means/ equipment needed for elimination of animal carcasses. It states that pre-planning is essential for the effective implementation of volunteer staff in rescue and rehabilitation of oil affected wildlife.

The document also includes capture and treatment needs in its General Equipment list and requires provincial emergency plans to include a list of volunteer organisations and specialised centres for treatment of birds, mammals and reptiles. Maps of sensitive environments are annexed to the plan.

However, there is no national plan for oiled wildlife response. Instead the advice of the Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) would be sought in the event of an oiled wildlife incident. ISPRA was established in August 2008 by the Ministry of Environment through the merger of three agencies:

- Central Institute for Scientific and Technological Research applied to the Sea (ICRAM)
- National Institute for Wildlife (INFS)
- Italian Environmental Protection and Technical Services Agency (APAT).

Response objectives and strategy

See above.

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation is the preferred response according to the national plan.

Impact assessment

Impact assessment is carried out under the direction of ISPRA.

Notification and early response

ISPRA is notified by the Ministry of the Environment, Territory and Sea. ISPRA then determines how response to wildlife will be carried out.

Wildlife responders

Centro Recupero Uccelli Marini Acquatici (CRUMA) is the only specialised centre in Italy that treats marine and other aquatic bird species. Established in 1987, CRUMA is run by the Italian Bird Protection Society (LIPU) and treats roughly 3000 birds a year, of which a small percentage are oiled birds. CRUMA was involved in the rehabilitation of oiled birds following the Haven incident and the Trecate accident in 1994 (an onshore well blowout). The Director of CRUMA was also present at the Prestige spill in Spain in 2002. LIPU would likely be involved in impact assessment as well.

While other wildlife rescue centres exist throughout Italy, few have experience with oiled wildlife.

There are a number of rescue centres set up in Italy for the rescue and rehabilitation of sea turtles, which are mainly injured as result of by-catch. TARTANET, a European Commission Life Natura programme, is a network of 14 rehabilitation centres across Italy. The centres treat turtles accidentally caught during fishing activity, and operate a 24 hour service to report incidences of injured turtles.

The Centro Studi Cetacei is Italy's marine mammal stranding network. Established in 1985, it is recognized by the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forest Resources, by the C.I.T.E.S. Office and by the Ministry of Environment (Nature Conservation Service).

The Genoa Aquarium works with other public and private institutions to rescue, rehabilitate and release injured

cetaceans and marine turtles. It has not dealt with any cases of oiled wildlife.

Cooperation between stakeholders

CRUMA, ISPRA, TARTANET, and the Genoa Aquarium have a history of cooperation with other NGOs, government agencies and institutions. In particular, CRUMA regularly cooperates with WWF and the Italian Ministry of Environment and ISPRA regularly cooperates with environmental NGOs and the Department of Civil Protection in preparedness and response activities.

Italy is a signatory to the Barcelona Convention, the RAMOGE Agreement for cooperation with France and Monaco on oil spill response, a bilateral agreement with Greece covering the Ionian Sea, and a subregional agreement with Croatia and Slovenia for shared coastal areas.

Permanent facilities

CRUMA is wildlife hospital able to treat a small number of oiled birds at any given moment. With financial support, CRUMA would be able to set up additional facilities (including outdoor pools) to accommodate a larger number of birds. TARTANET's facilities at various points along the Italian coast can house sea turtles. Centro Studi Cetacei has facilities for marine mammals and sea turtles.

Current processes

In 2013, 27 people from the Civil Protection, local authorities and NGOs participated in the pilot POSOW training programme. ISPRA is a partner in the POSOW programme. As of 2014 there are eight Italian POSOW trainers, six from the Marche area, one in Apulia, and one in Emilia Romagna.

Documentation and references

General references

General references

Italian National Emergency Response Plan

ITOPF Country Profile

REMPEC Country Profile

Report on the POSOW Italian National Pilot Training

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