

**Introduction**

The Republic of Nicaragua is bordered on the north by Honduras, on the east by the Caribbean Sea, on the south by Costa Rica and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. It shares control of the Gulf of Fonseca with Honduras and El Salvador.

The country's 910km of coastline is divided between the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. On the Caribbean side, there are four groups of coral-based islands: the Moskitos, the Guerrero Cays, the Pearl Cays and the Maiz Islands. This sparsely populated coast is interrupted by the lagoons and estuaries of a number of major rivers where there is significant muddy sedimentation. A large portion of this coast is within two Autonomous Regions – Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur or RAAS (now Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Sur/RACCS) between Río San Juan Department and Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte or RAAN (now Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Norte/RACCN). These autonomous regions were developed in response to conflicts with local indigenous groups. How this system of governing would affect oiled wildlife response is not clear.

On the Pacific side there are few inlets other than the Gulf of Fonseca in the north. Sandy and rocky beaches predominate on this side, with some cliffs and coastal forests.

Travel in much of the country can be difficult, particularly in the rainy season.

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).

There are four Ramsar sites where wildlife may be found in significant numbers. Three are on the Caribbean coast: Sistema de Humedales de la Bahía de Bluefields (a coastal lagoon connecting to inland freshwater bodies), Cayos Miskitos y Franja Costera (part of the Miskito Cays Biological Reserve) and Refugio de Vida Silvestre Río San Juan (connecting Lake Nicaragua to the Caribbean coast). The latter two are primary habitat for manatees, Guiana dolphin and sea turtles. Deltas del Estero Real y Llanos de Aacunca on the Pacific coast is part of the large mangrove system of the Golfo de Fonseca which hosts a variety of birds, as well as the neotropical otter and some coastal dwelling primates.

Avian Species – a variety of wading birds (herons, egrets, sandpipers, etc.) are either resident in, or migrate through, Nicaragua. Other resident waterbirds include multiple species of rails, ducks, geese, plovers and herons with seabirds such as pelicans, gulls, and terns found nearshore as well. Species of special concern include the Galapagos petrel (CR), black petrel (V), pink-footed shearwater (V) and Agami heron (V).

Marine mammals – more than 20 species of whales and dolphins are found off Nicaragua's coast, but most are offshore inhabitants. Species of concern include West Indian manatee (V) and the nearshore Guiana dolphin or costero, both of which are found in the Caribbean. Pacific cetaceans are almost exclusively found offshore.

Marine Reptiles – green turtle (E), leatherback turtle (V), hawksbill turtle (CR), olive ridley (V), and loggerhead turtle (V) are found on Nicaragua's coast. Olive ridley, leatherback and hawksbill nest on the Pacific coast, largely from July to January. Green, hawksbill, loggerhead and leatherback are found on the Caribbean coast, year round, both nesting and foraging. American crocodile (V) and common caiman are also found here.

**Regional Seas**

Caribbean Sea (Wider Caribbean LME)

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

**Past experience**

There have been no major pollution incidents in Nicaragua. A small spill of oil drilling muds in Corinoto

Harbour was cleaned by the spiller and no wildlife impacts were reported. In 2016, a refinery fire north of Managua resulted in an oil spill affecting the Gulf of Fonseca (a waterbody under joint control with El Salvador and Honduras). There were unconfirmed news reports of dead turtles but no wildlife response was initiated.

### **Response: the role of the authorities**

Under the draft national contingency plan the Ministerio de Transporte y Infraestructura (MTI)'s Dirección General de Transporte Acuatico Nacional (DGTA), with assistance from a technical committee which includes the national port authority (Empresa Portuaria Nacional-EPN), the national department for natural disaster prevention, mitigation (Sistema Nacional para la Prevención, Mitigación y Atención de Desastres-SINAPRED), the Nicaraguan navy and industry representatives, is the lead agency for oil spill response. SINAPRED's Directorate General of Customs is part of a mechanism for transboundary movement of equipment, as needed, between neighbouring states.

### **Oiled wildlife response**

#### Formal guidelines?

There are no formal guidelines for oiled wildlife response in Nicaragua.

#### Response objectives and strategy

N/A

#### Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

Humane Society International (HSI) has worked with Fundación Amigos del Zoológico Nicaragüense (FAZONIC) on developing a rescue centre for wildlife seized from the illegal trade, suggesting that rehabilitation would be allowed.

#### Impact assessment

It is likely that the Ministerio del Ambiente y los Recursos Naturales (MARENA, Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources) and Sistema Nacional de Areas Protegidas (SINAP, National System of Protected Areas) would be involved in impact assessment.

On the Caribbean coast, the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment (Facultad de Recursos Naturales y Medio Ambiente) of the Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University would likely be involved in impact assessment as well.

#### Notification and early response

There is no system in place for notification regarding, or early response to, oiled wildlife.

### **Wildlife responders**

Wildlife response experience in Nicaragua is limited and there are no experienced oiled wildlife responders in the country. FAZONIC had the only approved wildlife rehabilitation facility in the country but it is unclear whether their rehabilitation centre is still operational. The Turtle Island Restoration Network cooperates with Reserva Sivistre Quelantro, a sustainable development and ecotourism group, on wildlife conservation. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), an international NGO, works on sea turtle conservation in RACCS and helped establish the Pearl Cays Wildlife Refuge which protects sea turtles, manatees and marine birds, as well as terrestrial species.

### **Cooperation between stakeholders**

Nicaragua is a signatory to the Convention for the Cooperation in the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment (with Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) which addresses pollutant issues.

### **Permanent facilities**

There are no permanent facilities for oiled wildlife rehabilitation in Nicaragua.

### **Current processes**

No reference.

### **Documentation and references**



General references  
ITOPF Country Profile  
Birdlife International Country Profile  
RAC-REMPEITC Country Profile

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