

Introduction

The Republic of Tunisia, on the north coast of Africa, borders Algeria to the west, Libya to the east and southeast and the Mediterranean Sea to the north and northeast. Its 115 km coastline includes the mainland shore, the archipelago of La Galite in the north, the Zembra and Zembretta Islands in the eastern Gulf of Tunis, the Kerkennah Islands in the east, the Kuriat Islands and Djerba Island in the southeast and the Kneiss Islands in the Gulf of Gabés in the southeast. On-going political concerns in the region may affect access to Algerian and Libyan border regions. Steep cliffs are found on the coastal plain of Soliman at the southern end of the Gulf of Tunis. Sandy beaches, lagoons, natural harbours and inlets, and rocky shores make up much of the rest of the coastline.

At Risk Wildlife

In this section 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 variety of seabirds (gulls, terns, ducks, geese, etc.), shorebirds (plovers, sandpipers, etc.) and other waterbirds (ducks, geese, herons, etc.) migrate through the region. Of special concern are the white-headed duck (E), marbled teal (V), common pochard (V), Yelkouan shearwater (V), slender-billed curlew (CR), and Atlantic puffin (V).

The Ichkeul National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage site, a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance and a Biosphere Reserve. Located on the north coast, it hosts wintering and nesting waterbirds. Several Ramsar sites in the Gulf of Gabés, on Jerba Island, and on the Kerkennah Islands are also important avian habitats.

Marine mammals – eight species of whale and dolphin are found in the Mediterranean, most of which are only seen on the north coast of Tunisia. Bottlenose dolphin (V) is the only species regularly sighted along the rest of Tunisia's coast. Although the Mediterranean monk seal (E) may still occasionally be found in southern Mediterranean waters, it is considered likely to be locally extinct in Tunisia. The Eurasian otter, which regularly inhabits coastal areas, may be of concern should there be a spill in Tunisia.

Marine reptiles – Loggerhead turtle (V) is the most common species locally and the only one that nests in Tunisia. Green (E) and leatherback (V) are rare visitors to Tunisian waters. The Gulf of Gabés is important foraging habitat for loggerheads and the Kuriat Islands are a key nesting area for the species.

Regional Seas

Mediterranean Sea

Past experience

There have been a number of small spills in Tunisia, including the BLOSSOM (1980), BLUE SEA (1992), ALCANTRA (1994), MSC AL AMINE (2005) and the Thyna Petroleum Service pipeline spill in 2016. The latter two spills resulted in clean-up responses but no affected wildlife was reported.

Response: the role of the authorities

Under the National Contingency Plan (PLAN NATIONAL D'INTERVENTION URGENTE (PNIU) POUR LUTTER CONTRE LES EVENEMENTS DE POLLUTION MARINE), the Agence Nationale de Protection de l'Environnement (ANPE) is responsible for maintaining and updating the plan, which was under review as of 2011. In the event of a spill, the ANPE informs the Comité nationale pour la Prévention et/la Lutte contre les Evénements de Pollution Marine (CN-PLP), which initiates a response.

The CN-PLP is led by the Environment Minister and includes representatives of a number of ministries. Other agencies, including the Service National de Surveillance Côtière (SNSC), the Agence Nationale de Protection de l'Environnement (ANPE), the Garde Nationale Maritime, the Direction Générale de la Marine Marchande, Office des Ports Nationaux de Tunisie, the Direction Générale de l'Energie, and a committee of experts, may be involved depending on the situation. The Poste de Commandement en mer (P.C. mer) is responsible for operations at sea. There are provisions in the plan for prioritising protection of sensitive areas.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

The PNIU has wording in place requiring the CN-PLEPM to notify relevant NGOs and agencies to obtain advice and assistance in the rescue of oiled birds.

Response objectives and strategy

No further details are found in the PNIU.

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

It is likely that rehabilitation would be allowed (see Formal Guidelines).

Impact assessment

The committee of experts, appointed by the National Coordinator, is responsible for overseeing environmental issues and monitoring of impacts during and after the spill. The National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technology (INSTM) is also part of the Inter-Islamic Science and Technology Network on Oceanography which may become involved in assessment during larger or cross-border spills. The Association les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO), the Tunisian Birdlife International Partner, might be called upon to assist with avian impact assessment.

Notification and early response

See Formal Guidelines.

Wildlife responders

INSTM, in collaboration with the Regional Activity Centre of Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) and the Agency for Protection and Management of the Littoral (APAL) manages a turtle rescue and rehabilitation facility at Monastir on the Kuriat Islands, an important turtle nesting area.

AAO has some experience in avian rehabilitation but none specifically with oiled birds. There are no organisations experienced in marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation.

SPANAs, an NGO providing veterinary and welfare assistance to working animals in Tunisia, may be able to assist with sourcing supplies and equipment but has no local staff trained in wildlife rehabilitation.

Cooperation between stakeholders

Groups involved in sea turtle research, conservation and rehabilitation have a history of working together on these issues. AAO cooperates with other members of TunWet (Network of Wetland Associations in Tunisia) in habitat conservation and biodiversity.

Tunisia is a signatory to the Barcelona Convention and held its first POSOW Train the Trainers course in the autumn of 2016.

Permanent facilities

There is one turtle rehabilitation facility (see Wildlife Responders) at Monastir but no other permanent wildlife rehabilitation facilities.

Current processes

The Mediterranean Oil Industry Group (MOIG) and Transport par Pipeline au Sahara (TRAPSA) will coordinate two day workshop on a Tier 1 oil spill response exercise in the Gulf of Gabès in 2017. The event will include a shoreline cleanup exercise based on POSOW guidelines.

Documentation and references

General references

General References

ITOPF Country Profile

Tunisia National Oil Spill Contingency Plan 2012

Birdlife International Country Profile

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

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