

Introduction

The island nation of Cuba is situated less than 100 miles from the United States and the Bahamas to the North, Mexico to the West, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to the South, and Hispaniola and Turks & Caicos to the East.

In addition to 3,735 miles of coastline, the country has more than 7500 km² of mangrove swamp and more than 3000 km² of coral reef. Since 2002, Cuba has assigned 45 protected areas, including 6 Ramsar sites, 2 World Heritage sites and 2 Biosphere Reserves. 109 potential Marine Protected Areas covering more than 25% of the Cuban Insular Shelf, have been identified, of which 30 are approved and 18 are in the final approval process.

The Caribbean region has some of the most intensive maritime traffic in the world but has, to date, not been affected by a massive oil spill. Cuba will begin drilling for oil off of its northern shores in 2012.

Cuba is an important stopover point for migratory birds and nesting area for aquatic birds and sea turtles. More than 370 birds species have been found in Cuba with 28 endemic to the island and 29 globally threatened. Coastal, pelagic and predator species which may be affected by oil include:

Avian Species

Endangered (includes Critically Endangered): Zapata rail (*Cyanolimnas cerverai*), Gundlach's hawk (*Accipiter gundlachi*),

Vulnerable/Threatened/Near Threatened: West Indian whistling duck/Cuban tree duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*), northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), sooty shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*), Cuban black hawk (*Buteogallus gundlachi*) Caribbean coot (*Fulica caribaea*), piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), buff-breasted sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficolis*)

Other Species of Concern are the Common loon (*Gavia immer*), least grebe (*Tachybaptus dominicus*), pied-billed grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*), darter (*Anhinga anhinga*) and American flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber ruber*).

Marine mammals

There are approximately 15 species of marine mammal found in Cuban waters. Of particular concern are: West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), Sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*), Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*), Gervais beaked whale (*Mesoplodon europaeus*), True's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon mirus*)

Reptiles

Cuban crocodile (*Crocodylus rhombifer*), caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*) and American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*).

Sea Turtles (all endangered)

Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricate*).

Regional Seas

Atlantic Ocean (Northeast)

Gulf of Mexico (Northwest)

Caribbean Sea (South)

Past experience

Cuba has experienced minor spills (<6000 tons) in 1980, 1992, 1993, 1998 and 2002 but large numbers of oiled wildlife have not been recorded and no oiled wildlife response has been initiated.

Response: the role of the authorities

The Cuban State National Contingency Plan gives overall responsibility to the Defense Civil Oficina Nacional (National

Civil Defence) para Casos de Desastres. The Ministerio Ciencia, Tecnologia y Medio Ambiente (CITMA) is also listed as one of the competent national authorities. The Direccion de Inspeccion y Seguridad Maritima (Maritime Survey and Safety Division) of the Ministerio del Transporte is the Spill Notification Point. In the case of a large spill, Cuba is a signatory to the Cartagena Convention, which combines resources from signatories as necessary. Response to oiled wildlife would most likely be within CITMA's remit.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

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

Response objectives and strategy

N/A

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) is working to better prepare Caribbean countries, including Cuba, for oiled bird response. It is likely, therefore, that oiled wildlife would be rescued and rehabilitated.

Impact assessment

Impact assessment would likely be within CITMA's remit. SCSCB, which has seabird monitoring projects in the Caribbean region, might be involved in avian impact assessments.

Notification and early response

At present, there is no notification scheme or plan in place for early response to oil affected wildlife. SCSCB has begun training personnel in waterbird monitoring to assess key sites within the country. The monitoring personnel would likely be unofficial early notification sources for their designated sites.

Wildlife responders

At present there are no organizations in Cuba with experience in oiled wildlife care. The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) is working to prepare Caribbean countries for oil spill response, with an initial training workshop planned for June 2012 and a manual in preparation.

Cooperation between stakeholders

CITMA would likely act as coordinator for any oiled wildlife activities.

Permanent facilities

At present there are no permanent facilities for oiled wildlife rescue/rehabilitation.

Current processes

N/A

Documentation and references

General references

ITOPF Cuba Country Profile

The Marine Protected Areas of Cuba (pdf)

<http://cep.unep.org/cartagena-convention/convention-and-oil-spills.png/view>

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