

Introduction

The Argentine Republic is bordered on the north by Bolivia and Paraguay, on the northeast by Brazil and Uruguay, on the east and south by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the south and west by Chile. The country's 4,665km of coastline includes sandy beaches; steep cliffs, particularly on Peninsula Valdés; four major gulfs, those of San Jorge, San Matías, Nuevo and San José; multiple smaller gulfs, bays and inlets; and the Río de la Plata estuary. Larger offshore islands include Tierra del Fuego which is shared with Chile and separated from mainland Argentina by the Strait of Magellan, Isla de los Estados, and Islas Malvinas, also known as the Falkland Islands and claimed by both Argentina and the United Kingdom.

Three coastal RAMSAR sites (Bahía Samborombón in Buenos Aires province, Reserva Tierra del Fuego, and the World Heritage site Peninsula Valdés), provide important habitat for many wildlife species, both resident and migratory.

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 – In addition to the RAMSAR sites listed above, San Antonio Oeste and Punto Tombo are important migratory and nesting sites for water and shore birds. Three species of penguin (southern rockhopper, macaroni, and Gentoo) penguin occur regularly along the Argentine coast. King penguins are rare visitors. Three species of skua (Southern, South Polar and Chilean) and five species of albatross (Tristan, sooty, Northern royal, black-browed, and Atlantic yellow-nosed), nest or forage in this country. Cormorants, grebes, gulls, terns, ducks and shorebirds are also common on the coast.

Species of special concern include Brazilian merganser (CR), hooded grebe (CR), Tristan albatross (CR), sooty, Atlantic yellow-nosed, grey-headed and northern royal albatross ((E), Atlantic petrel (E), white-chinned petrel and spectacled petrel (V), Southern royal and wandering albatross (V), white-headed steamer duck (V), Andean flamingo (V), Austral rail (V), dot-winged crane (V), macaroni and southern rockhopper penguin (V) and Leach's storm-petrel (V).

Marine mammals – More than 20 species of whales and dolphins are found in the waters off Argentina. Southern right whale, orca, Commerson's dolphin, Peale's dolphin, Burmeister's porpoise and La Plata River dolphin or pontoporia (V) inhabit nearshore areas, particularly in Patagonia. South American sea lions, South American fur seal, Subantarctic fur seal, crabeater seal (rare), and Southern elephant seal also inhabit Argentine waters. Three species of otter, marine (EN), neotropical, and southern river (EN), also occur along the coast and in coastal estuaries and bays.

Marine reptiles – Green (E), loggerhead (V) and leatherback (V) turtles forage in Argentinian waters but do not nest on Argentine beaches.

Regional Seas

Atlantic Ocean-Argentinean Sea
South Atlantic Ocean

Past experience

Argentina has experienced a number of oils spills; most have occurred in Patagonia.

In 2016 the tanker 'Octbreeze Island' and the bulk carrier 'Ghetty Bottiglieri' collision caused a spill of unnamed size with no wildlife impact reported.

In 2007, 700 tons of crude oil washed ashore near Caleta Córdova, creating a 4km oil slick. 632 steamer ducks, Magellanic penguins, silvery grebes and cormorants were oiled. The spill is suspected to have resulted from an incident at an offshore platform during loading operations however two ships, the Presidente Arturo Umberto Illia and the San Julian, were cited as possible sources of this oil during IOPC Funds investigations.

In 2006, over 1200 penguins, most Magellanic, were oiled during the Cabo Vírgenes Mystery Spill, most washing up dead, however 224 were taken into care.

Other spills (Presidente Arturo Umberto Illia (1992), Litoral (1996), Campo Durán (1997), Estrella Pampeana (1999))

have occurred along the Argentinean coast, however none of these included an oiled wildlife incident of any significance.

The coast from Southern Brazil to northern Argentina has been subject to chronic oil pollution since the 1980s. Between 1987 and 2009, approximately 3,869 sick or oiled Magellanic penguins were reported by rehabilitation centers located in Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil.

Response: the role of the authorities

The Directorate for Environmental Protection within the Prefectura Naval Argentina (PNA), the Competent National Authority, oversees the National Contingency Plan (Planacon). As of 2007, vegetable oil spills are included in the Planacon. Smaller incidents are handled by the affected province, as noted below:

Buenos Aires Province: Department of Resources conservation (Departamento Conservación de Recursos) of the Director of Natural Resources in the Provincial Department for Sustainable Development (Dirección Provincial de Recursos Naturales del Organismo Provincial Para el Desarrollo Sostenible (OPDS)

Chubut Province: Director General of Environmental Protection (Dirección General de Protección Ambiental) and the Director of Wildlife and Flora (Dirección de Fauna y Flora Silvestre)

Rio Negro Province: Director of Wildlife (Dirección de Fauna Silvestre) of the Sub-secretariat of Environment.

Santa Cruz Province: Director of Wildlife at the Agrarian Provincial Council (Consejo Agrario Provincial) in the provincial government would take the responsibility as it did in the Cabo Virgenes spill in 2006.

Tierra del Fuego Province: the Secretary of Sustainable Development and Environment (Secretaría de Desarrollo Sustentable y Ambiente).

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

Wildlife response is not addressed in the national contingency plan (Planacon), however, the Dirección Fauna Silvestre (Department of Wildlife) within the Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable (Secretariat of the Environment and Sustainable Development) and the Dirección Recursos Acuáticos (Department of Aquatic Resources) may be involved in oiled wildlife response. The Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable handbook, developed for all types of wildlife response, provides some general guidelines for response to sea turtles, birds and cetaceans, and provides minimal guidelines for rehabilitation facilities and release criteria for rehabilitated wildlife.

In addition, Fundación Mundo Marino (Marine World Foundation, FMM) and the Fundación Patagonia Natural (Patagonia Nature Foundation, FPN) have developed a Contingency Plan for oiled wildlife incidents with a protocol which states that the two foundations should be notified as soon as possible when oiled animals are found. Dependent on the location of the spill, other organisations, such as Fundación Mar de la Plata would be notified as needed.

Response objectives and strategy

Under the FMM/FPN Protocol, a Response Team, managed by a General Coordinator, is established with Logistics and Field Committees to oversee various aspects of the response. The General Coordinator assesses the situation and works with the committees to determine the appropriate strategy for the response.

The objective of each response is to ensure that animals are rescued and cared for appropriately and that staff and volunteers are trained and provided with necessary equipment to work safely and effectively.

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

While no formal government guidelines exist, based on the Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo and FPN/FMM Protocols, it is assumed that oiled wildlife will be rehabilitated, and that euthanasia would be employed as indicated by welfare concerns.

Impact assessment

The Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable handbook provides basic criteria for impact assessment such as collection of dead animals. Handling and disposal of such carcasses must be done in coordination with provincial government regulations. Aves Argentina, a Birdlife International partner, has been involved in research and conservation and may be able to assist with impact assessment.

The Departamento de Ciencias Marinas in the Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales at the Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, various laboratories at the Centro Nacional Patagónico (CENPAT), the Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas (ICB), the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones

Científicas y Técnicas, CONICET), and Centro Austral de Investigaciones Científicas (CADIC CONICET) might be called in to assist with impact assessment.

Notification and early response

Based on the documents by the government and the two foundations, it is likely that the PNA and the two foundations would be included in any notification of a spill impacting wildlife. The two foundations would likely initiate any wildlife response.

Wildlife responders

FMM rehabilitates marine mammals, seabirds and sea turtles and has extensive experience in oiled wildlife response in Latin America. FPN has experience in oiled wildlife response, as does Fundación Aquarium Mar del Plata further north.

Fundación Mar de la Plata has a rehabilitation facility, the Centro de Rehabilitación de Fauna Marina (CRFM), which has experience caring for birds, sea turtles and marine mammals along the northern coast of the country.

Cooperation between stakeholders

Fundación Mundo Marino organized the 1st Latin America congress on wildlife rehabilitation in April 2008. The aim of the congress was to strengthen the cooperation between organizations and relevant authorities for wildlife rehabilitation. The congress was sponsored by IFAW, Fundación Patagonia Natural and Mundo Marino while it was supported by the Provincial Government of Buenos Aires. In October 2008, a workshop was also organized by Fundación Mundo Marino.

In previous spills, cooperation between the central and provincial governments, the Prefectura Naval Argentina and the wildlife responders was close. However, in order to deal effectively with an oiled wildlife incident in Argentina, a formal pre-defined strategy including all stakeholders and integrated into the NCP should be pursued.

Permanent facilities

FMM has a rehabilitation centre for marine wildlife with moderate capacity for oiled wildlife response to all species. FPN has a small facility and capacity to set up larger temporary facilities. Fundación Aquarium Mar del Plata has a wildlife hospital with capacity to care for marine mammals and birds.

Current processes

N/A

Documentation and references

General references

General references

ITOPF Country Profile (2015)

BirdLife International Country Profile

RAMSAR Country Profile

Sea Turtles of South America (in) State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT) Volume XI

García-Borboroglu, P., et al. 2005. Chronic oil pollution harms Magellanic penguins in the Southwest Atlantic. Marine Pollution Bulletin 52 (2006) 193–198.

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ARGENTINA

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

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