

Introduction

The Republic of Chile is located in South America, bordering Argentina and Bolivia to the east, Perú to the North and the Pacific Ocean to the west and south, occupying a long narrow coastal strip between the Andean mountains and the Pacific Ocean. The 6,435 kilometers of steep, rocky coastline includes Drake's Passage in the South, the overseas territories of Juan Fernandez Islands, the Salas y Gomez Islands, the Desventuradas Islands and Easter Island/Rapa Nui, which is located in Polynesia. Chile shares the island of Tierra del Fuego with Argentina. The remote Juan Fernandez Islands and Easter Island are managed as national parks.

Chile is divided in 15 regions. All except the Metropolitan Region, have shoreline facing the Pacific Ocean which, in the south becomes a labyrinth of fjords, inlets, channels, islands and peninsulas in the south. Along the cold, nutrient-rich Humboldt Current, the largest upwelling system in the world, the Reserva Nacional Pingüino de Humboldt (Humboldt Penguin National Reserve) and adjacent Chanaral Island, along with the Choros and Damas Islands Marine Reserves, form part of the greater Humboldt Archipelago running north from Punto Poroto to Punta Pajaros where a large number of avian and marine mammal species are either resident or migratory, taking advantage of this rich food source.

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 – Chile hosts seven species of penguin, eleven species of albatross, numerous petrels, shearwaters, storm-petrels, and other marine birds, as well as steamer ducks and migratory shorebirds. Bahia Lomas, on the island of Tierra del Fuego, is an important stop for migratory shorebirds from October through March, as are Santuario de la Naturaleza Laguna Conchalí, a brackish lagoon, and Humedales Costeros de la Bahía Tongoy, an area of wetlands, on the central coast, and

Species of special concern include hooded grebe (CR), waved albatross (CR), Polynesian storm-petrel (E), northern albatross (E), Antipodean albatross (E), grey-headed albatross (E), Westland petrel (E), Peruvian diving petrel (E), Peruvian tern (E). Andean flamingo, austral rail, macaroni, southern rockhopper and Humboldt penguin, southern royal, wandering, Chatham and Salvin's albatross, Masatierra, Stejneger's, Cook's, Chatham, Juan Fernandez and white-chinned petrel, Buller's and pink-footed shearwater, bristle-thighed curlew are all listed as Vulnerable to Extinction (V).

Marine mammals – Marine (E) and southern river (E) otters inhabit coastal waters. Southern elephant seals, South American, Juan Fernandez, Subantarctic fur seals and South American sea lions rest and breed on offshore islands and remote beaches, while leopard seals may be rare visitors to Chile. Chilean dolphins, Burmeister's porpoise, and orca (possibly a new subspecies) are also found in Chilean waters. The Chile-Peru subpopulation of southern right whale is considered Critically Endangered. Numerous other whale species are regularly sighted offshore. Guafo Island, in Northern Chilean Patagonia, is an important site for marine mammal breeding, sheltering and a feeding site for a variety of marine mammals. The Gulf of Corcovado is a feeding and nursing ground for blue whales (E).

Marine reptiles – Chile is in the southernmost range for sea turtles in the American Pacific with green (E) found from Arica to Chiloe, loggerhead (V) from Arica to Coquimbo, leatherback (V) along the central coast, olive ridley (V) nearshore from Valparaiso to San Antonio and hawksbill (CR) around offshore islands.

Regional Seas

Southeast Pacific Ocean

Past experience

In 2018, a leak at an ENAP (Chile's national oil company) plant spilled an estimated 720,000 litres of oil, affecting 6000 square meters of land in Tierra del Fuego. A small number of birds were reported affected.

In 2014, a small spill affected a handful of birds after the MT Mimosa lost 22,000 litres of oil. A small number of pelicans, grebes and cormorants were collected and rehabilitated by an international team from Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

Several spills occurred along the coast of Chile between 1978 and 1992, Cabo Tamar (1978) 12,500 tons of oil, Cabo Pilar (1987) 7,500 tons of oil and Valparaiso oil terminal (1992) 3,000 cubic meters of oil. No wildlife was reported to have been affected.

On May 25, 2007 a pipeline of the Empresa Nacional de Petróleo (National Petroleum Company, ENAP) broke spilling around 650 cubic meters of crude oil in Bahía San Vicente in the South of Chile. During this incident, hundreds of sea birds (one sea lion was found dead) were oiled and treated by a temporary facility built by ENAP.

A 650 cubic meter pipeline spill in Bahia San Vicente (2007) affected hundreds of seabirds. The cargo ship EIDER (2005) ran aground near Antofagasta oiling a small number of birds, which were treated by an international team from the Brazil, Argentina and the US.

The Metula (1974) spilled around 47,000 tonnes of light Arabian crude oil and 3,000 to 4,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil in the Strait of Magellan. It impacted the sandy and rocky shores of Tierra del Fuego. No cleanup operations were performed due to the remoteness of the area. It has been estimated that around 4,000 birds were killed, including cormorants and penguins.

Response: the role of the authorities

Under the Chilean National Contingency Plan, the Dirección General del Territorio Marítimo y de Marina Mercante's (Department for Territorial Waters and Merchant Marine, DIRECTEMAR), a part of the Armada de Chile (Chilean Navy) is responsible for marine pollution response. The national plan established five regional plans, each with its own Coordination Centre: these are found at Punta Arenas, Puerto Montt, Talcahuano, Valparaiso and Iquique. Regional Contingency Plans are activated when spills exceed 500 tonnes or, if the spill might create a significant environmental or economic threat.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

There are no formal guidelines for oiled wildlife response and previous responses have varied depending on the region where the spill occurred, and the types of animals involved.

Response objectives and strategy

N/A

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

While there are no formal guidelines, oiled wildlife rehabilitation is currently allowed with euthanasia accepted based on welfare concerns.

Impact assessment

N/A

Notification and early response

DIRECTEMAR of the Chilean Navy would likely notify Servicio Nacional de Pesca y Acuicultura (National Fisheries and Aquaculture Service, Sernapesca) in the case of sea turtles and/or penguins being affected and the Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero (Agriculture and Livestock Service, SAG) for response to other seabird species.

Wildlife responders

Sernapesca responds to marine mammal, turtle and penguin strandings along the Chilean coast and oversees the country's Marine Parks and Reserves.

Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de la Flora y Fauna (CODEFF) has wildlife rehabilitation centres near Santiago and works on conservation of endangered coastal species including the southern river otter.

The Centro de Rescate y Rehabilitación de Fauna Silvestre de la Facultad de Ciencias Veterinarias de la Universidad de Concepción in Chillan recently received funding to build a new facility with increased capacity to care for wildlife.

Fundación Natura Patagonia (FNP) would provide support for spills in the Tierra del Fuego area.

Cooperation between stakeholders

Chile is a signatory to the Red Operativa de Cooperación Regional de Autoridades Marítimas de las Américas (Operative Network for Regional Cooperation among Maritime Authorities of South America, Mexico, Panama and

Cuba, ROCRAM) and the Quito Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific (with Columbia, Ecuador, Panama and Peru) which includes cooperation in marine pollution response.

Chile has an MoU with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to provide technical assistance to Caribbean and Latin American countries, providing needs assessments and workshops for countries in those regions.

Permanent facilities

The Universidad de Concepcion's Facultad de Ciencias Veterinarias received funding from the Fondo de Protección Ambiental del Ministerio del Medio Ambiente (Environmental Protection Fund of the Ministry of the Environment) to relocate their wildlife rescue center at the Chillan Campus to new quarters with a larger capacity for rehabilitation.

Current processes

N/A

Documentation and references

General references

General references

ITOPF Country Profile (2010)

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