

Introduction

The Arab Republic of Egypt is bordered on the east by Israel, on the west by Libya and on the south by Sudan. Its 2900 km of coastline includes the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the east, with the Gulfs of Aqaba and Suez flanking the Sinai Peninsula to the east and west respectively. The Suez Canal connects the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean Sea.

Oil and gas exploration and development in the coastal waters of Egypt and shipping, particularly through the Suez Canal and the SUMED pipeline (the alternative for oil transport should ships be unable to navigate the Canal) through which an estimated 4.5 million barrels of oil per day pass, are the main potential sources for spill incidents.

The coastline along the Nile Delta between Alexandria and Port Said includes the brackish lagoons of four Lakes: Maryūt, Idkū, Burullus and Manzilah. Mangroves forests, coral reefs and sandy beaches cover much of the rest of the coastline.

At risk Wildlife

Avian Species – some of the greatest densities of wintering and breeding seabirds are found in the El Malaha near Port Said but other areas (Lake Burullus, the Hurghada Archipelago, Wadi El Gemal, Nabq and Ras Mohamed) also support significant breeding, migratory and wintering populations of birds. The area around the city of Suez is an important staging area for migrating birds of prey which could be at risk from foraging on oiled beaches.

Species of concern include white-eyed gull, Yelkouan shearwater, ferruginous duck, great snipe, black-tailed godwit, marbled teal, Eurasian curlew, Dalmatian pelican and African skimmer.

Marine mammals – Thirteen species of whales and dolphins have been recorded in Egyptian waters, with spinner and Indo-Pacific bottlenose being most common. Within the Hurghada Archipelago, areas such as El-Fanou, Shaab-el-Erg and Shaab abu Nugar are known as consistent resting areas for the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin. Dugong are found in the seagrass beds in Red Sea areas such as the Hurghada Archipelago and Wadi El Gemal Hamata Protected Area.

Marine Reptiles – Hawksbill, loggerhead and green sea turtles forage in the Red Sea and nest on some of the offshore islands of the Hurghada Archipelago, Ras Mohamed and Wadi El Gamal. Loggerhead turtles have been reported nesting on the Mediterranean shore of the Lake Burullus Ramar site.

Both Nile crocodiles and Nile monitors are found in and around the Nile River.

Regional Seas

Mediterranean Sea

Red Sea

Past experience

Egypt has experienced a number of medium-sized spills such as Al Duriyah (1985); Virgo (1987); Esso Picardie (1989); Million Hope (1996); Kriti Sea (1996); Good Hope (2004); Al Samidoon (2004); Genmar Kestrel (2005). In addition, in 2006, there were two spills the Grigoroussa 1 and the Anna PC) in the Great Bitter Lake, a saltwater lake that is part of the Suez Canal complex.

In 2010, an oil spill of uncertain origin affected a section of the Red Sea that is popular as a tourist destination. There were very few cases of oiled wildlife reported by the Egyptian Environment Affairs Agency (EEAA), although there were unconfirmed reports of dead birds and sea turtles after the spill. Also in 2010, a dock incident spilled 100 tons of petroleum into the Nile River and in 2015, a pipeline ruptured at a power plant on the Nile River, spilling an unknown quantity of fuel oil.

There are no references to any oiled wildlife response during these incidents.

Response: the role of the authorities

Overall responsibility for oil spill response rests with the Egyptian Environment Affairs Agency (EEAA) under the

direction of the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA). EEAA also assumes responsibility for any oiled wildlife response, which will then be coordinated by the Department of Protectorate. EEAA is responsible for preparedness and response for marine pollution, national park and coastal zone management, the development of environmental preservation policy and legislation, and law enforcement.

Egypt's National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) was first prepared by the petroleum sector in 1986, was updated by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) in 1998 and is currently undergoing a further update. It covers all coastline of Egypt, but not oil spills in Egypt's fresh water system; nor does it cover oil spills on land.

Local port authorities manage Tier 1 spills, with oil companies responsible for offshore incidents, and coastal governments for on-shore cleanup. The EEAA's sub-centres for the Mediterranean (Sidi Kerir) and Gulf of Suez (Ras Gherih) respond to Tier 2 incidents. The National Response Centre at Alexandria manages Tier 3 incidents.

Exploration, production and transshipment incidents are the responsibility of the Minister of Petroleum, who generally delegates response to the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC). The Egyptian Petroleum Industry Oil Spill Contingency Plan, administered by the EGPC, complements the NOSCP. The Suez Canal Authority and four main ports of the country also have response plans. All response plans are currently under review by the EEAA to ensure compatibility. There is also a separate plan under development for the Nile River.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

Egypt does not have an oiled wildlife response plan in place, however the NOSCP 2009 lists the on-scene Scientific Advisor as coordinating any wildlife response undertaken.

Response objectives and strategy

An Environment Group would be formed as part of the incident management system described in the NOSCP 2009, which would then liaise with both the Management and Technical Teams at the Central Operations Room (COR), and act as liaison with NGOs interested in oiled wildlife response. The on-scene Scientific Advisor would be responsible for coordinating any oiled wildlife response undertaken.

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

The EEAA would likely allow rehabilitation of oiled wildlife.

Impact assessment

According to the NOSCP 2009, the on-scene Scientific Advisor would liaise closely with the Environment Group at the COR to determine what post-spill environmental monitoring studies will be required and when action should be initiated, dependent on the circumstances, in particular the size and likely environmental impact of the spill. The Scientific Advisor would coordinate any post-spill environmental monitoring projects.

Regional agencies such as the Regional Activity Centre for Special Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) the Mediterranean Association to Save Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) and the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) might provide support and expertise in this area.

Notification and early response

There is no reference to notification and early response to oiled wildlife in the National Contingency Plan.

Wildlife responders

There are no wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Egypt however; a number of agencies might be able to assist with support and logistics. Nature Egypt is the Birdlife International Partner, the Hurgada Environmental Protection Association (HEPCA) manages the Samadai dolphin sanctuary in the Red Sea and is involved in several sea turtle and dugong monitoring projects, and the Egyptian Federation for Animal Welfare, which is largely focused on domestic animal issues, all have potential for assistance in a response. The Brooke, which has been working in Egypt for many years caring for working equids (horses, donkeys and mules) has mobile veterinary clinics and trains paraprofessionals to perform some basic veterinary functions. Their resources are limited but they may be able to provide assistance in logistics.

Marine Science Faculties at National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (NIOF), the Coastal Research Institute, the Department of Oceanography at the University of Alexandria and the Marine Science Department at the Suez Canal University are also potential resources.

Cooperation between stakeholders

Agencies such as RAC/SPA, MEDASSET and RAED cooperate within the region however, there is no history of cooperative action on wildlife response within the country.

Egypt is a signatory to the Jeddah Convention (Red Sea and Gulf of Aden), the Barcelona Convention (Mediterranean Sea), a trilateral sub-regional contingency plan with Israel and Jordan for the Upper Gulf of Aqaba, and a trilateral agreement and sub-regional contingency plan with Israel and Cyprus.

Permanent facilities

There are no permanent facilities for oiled wildlife response within Egypt.

Current processes

There are no current processes in place for responding to oiled wildlife.

Documentation and references

General references

Birdlife International Country profile. Accessed online 6.2015

ITOPF Profile

REMPEC Profile

National Oil Spill Contingency Plan 2009

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