

Introduction

The Republic of Ghana is situated on the west coast of Africa, bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, on the west by Cote d'Ivoire, on the north and northwest by Burkina Faso and on the east by Togo.

The country's 539km coastline is comprised of sandy beaches, open coastal lagoons and estuarine wetlands, mangroves, and semi-enclosed lagoons. The coastline can be divided into three regions – Western (Cote d'Ivoire border to River Ankobra) which is largely sandy beaches with coastal lagoons behind, Central (River Ankobra to Prampam) which is comprised of rocky headlands and shores with some coastal lagoons, and Eastern (Prampam to Togo border) sandy beaches with the delta estuary of the Volta River at mid-point.

Of thirteen key wetlands on the coast, five (the Keta Lagoon complex, Songhor, Sakumo, Densu Delta and Muni-Pomadze) are Ramsar sites. All provide important habitat for manatees, as well as resident and migratory birds. Most of the country's wetlands are concentrated around the ports of Tema and Takoradi. The Volta Lake, the largest manmade lake in the world, would be of concern should there be an inland pipeline spill, particularly should the spill impact the Digya National Park on the western side of the lake.

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 – large numbers of nesting, resident, and migrating waterbirds are found on the Ghana coast and adjacent wetlands mentioned above. Of particular concern are the Damara tern (V), the hooded vulture (V) which feeds on coastal carrion, and the rufous fishing owl (V).

Marine mammals – African manatees (V) are found in nearshore waters, and in coastal lagoons and estuaries. Orca are also seen nearshore. Offshore, multiple species may be present at various times of the year. Of these Atlantic humpback dolphin (CR), sperm whale (V) and Clymene dolphin (status uncertain but often found entangled, thus potentially at risk of extinction) are of particular concern.

Marine reptiles – green (E), leatherback (V), Olive Ridley (V), and loggerhead(V) turtles are confirmed nesting on multiple beaches in Ghana, although loggerhead nesting appears to be limited. There have also been unconfirmed reports of hawksbill (CR) turtles nesting.

Sea snakes have been reported in Ghana's waters.

Regional Seas

Gulf of Guinea-Atlantic Ocean.

Past experience

A number of minor incidents have occurred in Ghana, including a spill at the Tema Refinery in 2007, a fire at the refinery in 2014 and spills at Tema and Takoradi ports. No wildlife impact has been reported from any of these incidents.

Response: the role of the authorities

Under the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is an agency of the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, has responsibility for shoreline response, as well as overall coordination in Tier 2 and 3 spills. The Ghana Navy and Ghana Maritime Authority share responsibility for at sea response.

The Wildlife Division (WD) of the Forestry Commission implements national policies and legislation to protect and conserve wildlife, particularly listed species, and manages Ramsar sites. It is likely WD would be involved in any wildlife response.

Oiled wildlife response**Formal guidelines?**

The NOSCP does not include oiled wildlife response at present, however, there is a working group, led by the EPA and WD, tasked with developing the wildlife response plan.

Response objectives and strategy

N/A

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation would be allowed with euthanasia permitted based health and welfare assessment, however, resources and trained personnel are limited.

Impact assessment

The EPA and WD would have oversight of this process, likely utilising assistance from the University of Ghana School of Veterinary Medicine and Department of Marine and Fisheries Science, the Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences Department of the University of Cape Coast, and the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS), a Birdlife International partner.

Notification and early response

There is not, at present a notification and early response process for oiled wildlife in Ghana.

Wildlife responders

There are no individuals or organisations experienced in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in Ghana. GWS has worked on avian conservation and habitat protection. Although they have no wildlife rehabilitation experience they might be able to assist with search and collection. The Nature Conservation Resource Centre works on community-based conservation efforts and may be able to assist with local contacts but has no wildlife experience.

Cooperation between stakeholders

IUCN's Central and West Africa Program (PACO) Marine and Coastal Program (MACO) works cooperatively in Ghana to integrate coastal ecosystem conservation and biodiversity with the well-being of the coastal population.

Ghana has ratified the Abidjan Convention, the Protocol concerning cooperation in combatting pollution in cases of emergency, the Guinea Large Marine Ecosystem Program (GCLME) Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan and the Bamako Convention (on transboundary movement and management of hazardous wastes within Africa) but these agreements are not embedded in any national legislation.

Permanent facilities

There are no permanent wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Ghana.

Current processes

The Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response is developing this aspect of the NOSCP. Ghana holds exercises and workshops for development and implementation of the NOSCP with assistance from GI-WACAF.

Documentation and references

General references

ITOPF Country Profile (2010)

WACAF Country Profile (2017)

Ghana National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (2009)

State of the World's Sea Turtles Report V.12 (Special Report on Africa)

Tullow Oil Jubilee Field Environmental Impact Assessment

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GHANA

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

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