

Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is bordered on the east by Mali, on the south by Mali and Senegal, on the west by the Atlantic Ocean and Western Sahara, on the north by Western Sahara and Algeria.

The country's approximately 754km of coastline consists of steep rocky cliffs in the north, with sandy beaches, tidal mudflats, lagoons, and estuaries extending south. There are four coastal Ramsar wetlands which are important habitat for wildlife: Parc National Banc d'Arguin (also a UNESCO Heritage Site), Parc National du Diawling, the Réserve Intégrale de Cap Blanc, and Chat T Boul.

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 – Banc d'Arguin hosts the world's largest concentration of wintering and migratory waders, including storks, spoonbills, egrets, herons, flamingos and sandpipers, and significant numbers of breeding waterbirds such as ducks and geese. Along the Canary Current shelf, just offshore, are breeding shearwaters and migrant jaegers, storm petrels, phalaropes and gannets.

Marine mammals – at least thirty species of whale and dolphin occur in offshore waters. Of special concern are the Mediterranean monk seal (E) the largest global population of which is found in the Cap Blanc area, the Atlantic humpback dolphin (CR) and the harbour porpoise which inhabit nearshore waters.

Note: some land mammals such as jackals forage along the coast as well.

Marine reptiles – Green (E), and hawksbill (CR) turtles regularly nest along the coast, largely between Nouakchott and Chat TBoul. Loggerhead (V) are more sporadic nesters in the region. Banc d'Arguin is an important foraging area for green turtles. Leatherback (V) turtles have been noted in the region historically but sightings are less common now.

Regional Seas

East Atlantic Ocean.

Past experience

Major spills have not happened in Mauritania. In 1992, the World Hitachi Zosen collided with a bulk carrier off Cape Blanc. Circa 950 t of oil was lost, but did not reach the shore. There is no report on oiled wildlife connected to this incident.

Response: the role of the authorities

The Ministère des Pêches et de l'Économie Maritime, Direction de la Marine Marchande (Department of Fisheries and Maritime Economy, Directorate Merchant Marine) is the competent national authority administering the Plan de Lutte contre les Pollutions par les Hydrocarbures et les Substances Chimiques Dangereuses (Plan Polmar).

The Minister is assisted by four other Ministers, for example, L'Institut Mauritanien des Recherches Océanographique et de Pêche (IMROP or Mauritanian Institute for Oceanographic and Fisheries Research) is the Responsible Authority for approving dispersant use. Le Ministère chargé de l'Environnement et les Parcs et Zones Protégées (Ministry of Environment, Parks and Protected Areas) assists IMROP and the Directorate Marine Marchande in the development of sensitivity maps.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

There are no formal guidelines for wildlife response in the Plan Polmar.

Response objectives and strategy

N/A

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

It is likely that rehabilitation would be allowed, however, there is limited capacity in the country.

Impact assessment

It is likely that IMROP would be involved in impact assessment under the direction of the Ministère des Pêches et de l'Économie Maritime, as they have done beach surveys and performed necropsies on monk seals, sea turtles and cetaceans.

Notification and early response

If an oil spill happens and marine wildlife gets oiled, it would probably be either local NGO's such as Hannajah that would notify the relevant authorities (IMROP and ONISPA). Also ONISPA carries out beach patrols regularly.

Wildlife responders

There are no experienced oiled wildlife responders in Mauritania and limited wildlife rehabilitation, however some limited capacity to respond to wildlife does exist in the country.

IMROP has rehabilitated monk seals at their facility in cooperation with the Mauritanian NGO Annajah and the Monk Seal Conservation Program of the Spanish NGO CBD-Habitat.

Nature Mauritanie (the Mauritanian Association of the Protection of the Environment), a BirdLife International partner, might be able to assist with avian response but has no experience in rescue and rehabilitation.

Cooperation between stakeholders

IMROP, Annajah and the Monk Seal Conservation Program of CBD-Habitat cooperate on monk seal research, conservation and rehabilitation. Nature Mauritanie works closely with local coastal communities on combining habitat protection with sustainable livelihoods.

Mauritania is a signatory to the Bamako Convention (on the Prohibition of the Importation of Hazardous Wastes into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes Produced in Africa) and the Abidjan Convention but not to the associated Protocol on Oil Pollution or to the Regional Plan for Spill Control of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME).

Permanent facilities

There is a small rehabilitation facility at IMROP for monk seals, which might also be appropriate for sea turtles. There are no facilities for birds.

Current processes

Mauritania, GI-WACAF and the MAVA Foundation are cooperating on improving oil spill response capabilities on the Mauritanian coast. MAVA active in protection and conservation of habitat, seabirds and turtles in West Africa.

Documentation and references

General references

ITOPF Country Profile (2012)

WACAF Country Profile (2017)

Hama-Ghrib, F.L. 2018. Chelonia mydas and Caretta caretta nesting activity along the Mauritanian coast.

Salamandra 54(1) 45-55.

Report on the National Workshop and table-top exercise to test the newly developed National Oil Spill Contingency Plan of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (Plan POLMAR.) (2017)

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MAURITANIA

*Country Wildlife Response Profiles
A Summary of oiled wildlife response
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