

Introduction

Sakhalin Island is a large island located in the Russian Far East (RFE) between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan. It is separated from the Russian Federation mainland by the Tatar Strait and from the northernmost island of Japan, Hokkaido, by La Pérouse Strait. It's 965 km coastline consists of sandy beaches, steep cliffs, and deep bays. Sakhalin Island's climate varies from warm, humid summers with cold winters in the south to cool, short summers with long, very cold winters in the north. The Tatar Strait often freezes in winter.

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 – Along the coast the North-East Sakhalin lagoons host large numbers of wintering shorebirds, ducks and geese including 1-2 million Siberian scoter and 300,000 greater scaup. Aleutian terns breed here in significant numbers. Nevskoye Lake also hosts breeding, migrant and wintering shorebirds, ducks and geese. More than 20,000 waterbirds, including 10,000 breeding pairs of seabirds can be found on Aniva Bay. Breeding seabirds and wintering sea eagles are found on Tyuleniy Island.

Species of concern include Siberian crane (CR), Baer's pochard (CR), spoon-billed sandpiper (CR), red-crowned crane (E), Oriental white stork (E), Japanese night heron (E), spotted (Nordmann's) greenshank (E), Far-Eastern curlew (E), great knot (E), swan goose (V), lesser white-fronted goose (V), long-tailed duck (V), Steller's eider (V), common pochard (V), horned grebe (V), white-naped crane (V), hooded crane (V), Leach's storm-petrel (V), short-tailed albatross (V), Buller's shearwater (V), Providence petrel (V), Chinese egret (V), Japanese murrelet (V), black-legged kittiwake (V), red-legged kittiwake (V), Saunder's gull (V), Aleutian tern (V), Steller's sea eagle (V).

Marine mammals – pinnipeds on Sakhalin Island include harbour, ribbon, spotted, bearded and ringed seals, the Western subspecies of Steller sea lion (E), which has significant rookeries on Tyuleniy Island and the breakwater of the city of Nevelsk, and the Northern fur seal (V) which is rare to the island. Sea otters (E) are found on the Kurile Ridge islands.

Nearshore cetacean species include the Western sub-population of grey whale (CR), and Northern Pacific right whale (E), beluga whale, orca, and harbour porpoise, depending on season with a number of other cetacean species inhabiting offshore waters.

Note: Brown bears forage along the shorelines of the island, putting them at risk of exposure, and European otter, muskrat, wolverine, ermine, weasel and water shrew may be found in the areas around the pipelines of the island.

Marine reptiles – There are no marine reptiles in the waters around Sakhalin Island but inland spills may impact wood frogs.

Regional Seas

North-West Pacific Regional Sea (NOWPAP)—Pacific Ocean

Sea of Okhotsk

Sea of Japan

Past experience

A small oil spill (3.5 tonnes) occurred in 1999 at the Vityaz Marine Terminal. In 2004 the dredger "Cristoforo Colombo" grounded during a typhoon between Kholmsk Fishing Port and Kholmsk Commercial Marine Port, spilled 190 tonnes of heavy oil and fuel into coastal waters. In March of 2016 a spill of 15 tonnes was reported from an inactive pipeline at the Ekhabi oilfield. The oil was burned off. There were no reports of oiled wildlife in these incidents.

In 2015, the tanker Nadezhda ran aground near Nevelsk. The oil and gas industry activated its response equipment and team to respond to more than 150 Pelagic cormorants affected by the spill. Klub Boomerang, Ocean Friends, and Sakhalin Environmental Watch assisted with the wildlife response.

Response: the role of the authorities

RUSSIAN FEDERATION (SAKHALIN ISLAND)

The State Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (SMRCC) of the State Marine Pollution Control, Salvage and Rescue Administration (MPCSA)'s Maritime Rescue and Coordination Subcentre Uzhno-Sakhalinsk is the spill notification point. MPCSA is the competent national authority working with the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM) under the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP). In addition, there is a regional plan under development for Sakhalin. Some oil and gas development companies also have individual response plans either in place or under development. The Sakhalin Oblast, Sakhalin Energy and other oil and gas industry partners have a signed agreement to integrate response to emergencies.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Minprirody) of the Sakhalin region will oversee oiled wildlife response. The Ministry of Agriculture's Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (Rosselkhoznadzor) would also be involved.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

There is no formal plan for oiled wildlife response. Several oil companies have in-house response plans to address wildlife issues but local expertise and facilities do not exist.

Response objectives and strategy

N/A

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation would be allowed, with euthanasia permitted based on best welfare practices, however, there are limited resources and personnel in the region.

Impact assessment

Minprirody and Rosselkhoznadzor would likely oversee impact assessment.

Notification and early response

There is no formal plan for oiled wildlife response but several oil companies have in-house response plans to address wildlife issues.

Wildlife responders

Ocean Friends have had training and experience in marine mammal rescue, disentanglement and first aid, Ocean Friends, Klub Boomerang, and Sakhalin Environmental Watch assisted with capture, hazing and shoreline cleanup during the Nevelsk oil spill in 2015. Oil and gas industry personnel with training in oiled wildlife rehabilitation handled that aspect of the response.

Cooperation between stakeholders

Three NGOs (Sakhalin Environment Watch, Ocean Friends and Club Boomerang) work with the oil and gas industry on the island on oiled wildlife response.

The IUCN sponsored Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel provides advice on reducing the industry's impact on this critically endangered population. The Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Marine Mammal Council serve on this advisory panel.

The Russian Federation is a signatory to the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) with Japan, China and the Republic of Korea which includes a Regional Oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substance Spill Contingency Plan. Russia maintains a Pollution Monitoring Regional Activity Centre (POMRAC) in Vladivostok, near the border with North Korea.

Permanent facilities

There are no permanent facilities for wildlife rehabilitation on Sakhalin Island, however, the oil and gas industry has a warehouse with equipment for setting up a temporary rehabilitation facility. This unit is deployed annually to ensure its functionality. The industry also maintains stockpiles of hazing and stabilisation equipment at two satellite sites.

Current processes

The oil and gas industry holds annual training for staff on handling and washing birds and deploying equipment. A training on capture and hazing is held each year as well. A further basic training, which is usually integrated into an overall response training, is given for oil spill responders who may encounter impacted wildlife.



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Documentation and references

General references

IТОPF Country Profile (2013)

Birdlife International Country Profile for Asian Russia

Avibase Sakhalin Island Birdlist

Sakhalin Energy Investment Company Oiled Wildlife Response Plan (2009)

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