

**Introduction**

The Republic of South Africa is situated at the southernmost tip of the African continent and is bordered by Namibia to the northwest, Botswana and Zimbabwe to the north, Mozambique and Swaziland to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the east and south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest. South African territory also completely surrounds the Kingdom of Lesotho, situated in the east.

South Africa's 2,798 km of coastline includes numerous islands, steep cliffs, wetlands and sandy beaches. The warm Mozambique-Agulhas Current in the Indian Ocean and the cold Benguela Current in the Atlantic meet just offshore.

The Benguela Current is rich in nutrients which draw marine wildlife to forage.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) include Robben Island, which is an important nesting site for African penguins, bank cormorants and swift terns nest; Addo Elephant National Park, which provides feeding areas for sharks, whales and penguins; Betty's Bay, which also hosts breeding penguins; De Hoop where southern right whales give birth in May and June and other whales feed; Pondoland, with large numbers of whales and dolphins during winter; Tsitsikamma, where large numbers of seabirds, whales and dolphins feed; and Walker Bay which is an important resting area for southern right whales and calves from July to November. Offshore the Agulhas Front, iSimangaliso, and Orange Shelf Edge MPAs provide feeding grounds for turtles and albatrosses.

**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 – As noted above there are large numbers of seabirds and more than 15 species of shorebird along the coast and on offshore islands.

Species of special concern include the Tristan albatross (CR); Grey-crowned (E), wattled (V) and blue (V) crane; African (E), macaroni (V) and southern rockhopper (V) penguin; northern royal (E), sooty (E), Atlantic yellow-nosed (E), Indian yellow-nosed, grey-headed (E), Salvin's (V) and wandering (V) albatross; Barau's (E), Atlantic (E), white-chinned (V) and spectacled (V) petrel; Cape Gannet (E), Cape (E) and bank (E) cormorant; red-knobbed coot (E); Maccoa duck (V); Leach's storm-petrel (V); southern bald ibis (V); slaty egret (V); and Damara tern (V).

Marine mammals – Cape fur seals are found between Algoa Bay and Cape Frio in Namibia, mostly on offshore islands. Southern elephant seals are rare visitors to the country. Cape clawless otters inhabit nearshore areas of the south and east coasts of South Africa, tending to prefer areas which provide both fresh and salt water. Thirty-seven species of whale and dolphin are found in South African waters with common, dusky and bottlenose dolphins, as well as southern right, humpback minke, orca and Brydes whales being the most common. Of special concern is the Indian Ocean humpback dolphin (E) which ranges from False Bay in the west to the Mozambique border to the east.

Marine reptiles – Leatherback (CR) and loggerhead (E) turtles nest in KwaZulu-Natal. Green turtles (E) are resident in South African waters. Hawksbill (CR) and olive ridley (V) turtles are occasional offshore visitors.

**Regional Seas**

Indian Ocean

South Atlantic Ocean

**Past experience**

Some spills in South African waters that have impacted wildlife include:

Mystery spill (2016) in Algoa Bay oiled at least 100 penguins, of which approximately 70 were rehabilitated. Ship aground (2013) in Goukamma Nature Reserve outside of Knysna. It was a minor spill with only 227 birds affected, 95% of them were successfully rehabilitated.

MV Treasure (2000): 1,300 tonnes of heavy fuel oil were spilled, oiling 19,000 penguins. An additional 19,500 un-oiled penguins were removed from Dassen and Robben Islands before they could become oiled, and were released about a thousand kilometres east of Cape Town, near Port Elizabeth. This gave workers enough time to clean up the oiled waters and shores before the birds returned home. The MV Treasure spill was particularly dangerous as it occurred at the peak of the breeding season and a third of the entire African Penguin population lived in the affected area. The response to the MV Treasure spill is considered as the most successful oiled bird rehabilitation effort to date, with more than 91% of the penguins successfully rehabilitated and released.

MV Cordigliera (1996): 1,200 penguins affected  
Mystery spill off Danger Point (1995): 1,600 penguins affected  
Apollo Sea (1994): 2,400 tonnes were spilled, affecting 10,000 penguins on Dassen and Robben Island. 50% of the oiled penguins were successfully rehabilitated and released  
Capodistrias (1985): 900 birds affected  
Castillo de Belver (1983): 190,000 tonnes of crude oil were spilled, affecting 1,400 Cape Gannets and 800 penguins  
Oriental Pioneer (1974): thousands of birds affected  
Mystery spill off Dassen Island (1972): 4,000 birds affected  
Wafra (1971): 15,000 tonnes of crude oil were spilled, affecting 1,200 penguins; a fencing operation saved the majority of the Dyer Island penguin population  
Kazimah (1970): 1,000 penguins affected  
Esso Essen (1968): 15,000 tonnes of crude oil were spilled, affecting 3,000 penguins and 500 gannets

### **Response: the role of the authorities**

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (formerly the Department of Environment Affairs) or DEFF and the National Department of Transportation's South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) share responsibility for oil spill response with SAMSA overseeing salvage, transshipment and lightering, and DEFF handling shoreline protection and clean-up as well as at-sea response. DEFF personnel take on the role of On-Scene Coordinator in large events. Smaller spills may be coordinated by local Civil Defence Control Centres in conjunction with the Shore Control Centre.

### **Oiled wildlife response**

#### Formal guidelines?

As of November 2017 the Oiled Wildlife Response Contingency Plan was being developed by DEFF with input from South African National Parks (SANParks), CapeNature, and wildlife rehabilitation centres and captive institutions, such as SANCCOB and Two Oceans Aquarium.

CapeNature is responsible for response on Dassen Island, Bird Island-Lambert's Bay, Dyer Island, Vondeling Island-False Bay, and Betty's Bay and Stoney Point in Overberg Municipality.

SANParks is responsible for the West Coast National Park, Saldanha Bay Islands (other than Meeuw), Boulders, Addo National Park, Algoa Bay Islands, and Bird and St. Croix Islands.

Robben Island Museum is responsible for Robben Island.

The South African National Defence Force is responsible for Meeuw Island in Saldanha Bay.

#### Response objectives and strategy

At present, the primary objective is to minimize the impact of spills on seabird populations. It is likely this will continue to be a priority in the national plan which DEFF is developing, with response to oiled wildlife addressed as well.

In the absence of the national plan, SANCCOB developed an Oil Spill Contingency Plan for their response to oiled wildlife. This plan is divided into three tiers:

Tier 1 is activated when there are 1-500 birds affected with SANCCOB as the lead organisation for rehabilitation.

Tier 2 is activated when 500-2000 birds are affected SANCCOB would be the lead rehabilitation organisation but would be provided operational support by DEFF, the Animal Demography Unit (ADU) at the University of Cape Town, SANParks, and may call in other international oiled wildlife response support.

Tier 3 is activated when more than 2000 birds are affected. DEFF, the ADU, CapeNature and SANParks would provide operational support with international oiled wildlife response organisations called in to assist.

Once the national oiled wildlife response plan is completed, it will take precedence over SANCCOB's plan.

#### Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation has been allowed since the 1960s with euthanasia employed as needed based on welfare concerns.

#### Impact assessment

The relevant authority for each area, as listed above in the Formal Guidelines section, is responsible for collected dead animals in their designated area. SANCCOB performs necropsies and sample collection, with veterinary pathology laboratories brought on board as needed. DEFF scientists have ongoing studies of marine wildlife populations and the ADU undertakes post-release monitoring or rehabilitated birds after release.

#### Notification and early response

Despite there being no Oiled Wildlife Contingency Plan to date, SANParks, CapeNature and SANCCOB are notified by DEFF when oil spills may impact birds. Surveys are carried out in areas where birds may have been affected. If

birds are to be taken in for rehabilitation SANCCOB operates under the supervision of the relevant Island Authority.

### **Wildlife responders**

SANCCOB is the primary responder for oiled birds in South Africa.  
Two Oceans Aquarium rescue and rehabilitates sea turtles.

### **Cooperation between stakeholders**

There is good cooperation between government agencies, the park authorities and SANCCOB on oiled wildlife response.

South Africa is a signatory to the Regional Contingency Plan for Preparedness for and Response to Major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Western Indian Ocean and its Emergency Protocol with Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros and the Seychelles; as well as the the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention).

### **Permanent facilities**

SANCCOB maintains two seabird rehabilitation facilities, one in Cape Town and one in Port Elizabeth. Both facilities are equipped for admission, intensive care, washing and rehabilitation of oiled birds. The Cape Town facility is a full-service avian wildlife hospital with laboratory, radiography and surgical capabilities.

### **Current processes**

Relevant organisations and agencies are developing a formal Oiled Wildlife Response Plan which will be integrated into the South African NOSCP. DEFF has recently distributed Draft Norms and Standards Relating to the Management of Seabirds in Captivity and a Draft Biodiversity Management Plan for the African Penguin. In 2019, South Africa hosted the 8th Global Initiative for West, Central and Southern Africa (GI-WACAF) regional conference where priority oil spill preparedness actions for the region in 2020-2021 were determined. In 2018, the country held a national workshop and training session on the Incident Command System in oil spill response.

### **Documentation and references**

General references

ITOPF Country Profile (2008)

Birdlife International Profile

GI-WACAF Country Profile ( 2017)

South African Incident Response Plan for Prevention and Combatting of Pollution at Sea

Norms and Standards Relating to the Management of Seabirds in Captivity (2019, DRAFT)

Biodiversity Management Plan for the African Penguin (2019, DRAFT)

State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT) Special Report: Africa.

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# SOUTH AFRICA

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