On Friday 12 January 2007, the Greek tanker MS Server hit the island of Fedje, N-NW of Bergen, in Norway, due to the heavy storms and broke into two. The tanker spilled 300-600 tons of heavy fuel oil as well as some diesel close to seabird wintering areas.

Ornithologists carried out aerial surveys in different sections of the affected area observed hundreds of oiled birds shortly after the incident. An oiled wildlife response plan was developed between the local responders and the Norwegian Coastal Administration (Kystverket) and the authorities provided Sea and Wildlife Alert Norway (SWAN, a Norwegian wildlife responder organisation) with a budget to coordinate the wildlife response according to the plan. It was the first time that wildlife rehabilitation was integrated with oil spill response activities in Norway.

Due to the severe rough weather and sea conditions, wildlife search and collection - an activity that was led by Norwegian Nature Information (NNI) - had to be postponed until almost a week after the incident. Boats, adequate equipment and trained people were required to collect birds that were not coming ashore easily, a job that was extremely challenging and risky due to the rocky Norwegian coastline in combination with the harsh weather conditions.

A bird stabilisation and holding facility was set up jointly by SWAN and WWF-Norway on the island of Fedje. Meanwhile, the Norwegian oil company HYDRO provided a warehouse at the Sture Terminal, near Bergen, which was developed by SWAN into a temporary wildlife hospital. All the birds that were captured eventually received their further treatment in this facility and remained there until they were ready to be released.

A total of 36 birds (4 long tailed ducks, 5 common gulls, 1 mew gull, 1 golden eye, 1 little auk and 24 eiders) were captured and treated and 24 birds made it to a release.

Sea Alarm was notified about the incident by SWAN only a few hours after the collision and was asked to advise on the oiled wildlife response. Sea Alarm kept close contact with the different groups involved and also advised the leading authorities at different stages. Project Blue Sea, a German wildlife response organisation, was asked to sent 2 hands-on experts to Norway. They assisted SWAN’s cleaning and rehabilitation activities for over a week.

The MS Server wildlife response demonstrated a successful cooperation between NGO’s, the government and the oil industry and the effective use of international resources. The positive experience initiated discussions between wildlife responders and the Norwegian authorities which could result in an integrated response strategy for oiled wildlife incidents in Norway.