ARGENTINA

Introduction
The Argentine Republic is a country located in South America bordering Paraguay and Bolivia to the north, Brazil and Uruguay to the northeast, Chile to the west and the South Atlantic Ocean to the east. The coast covers 4,665 km and the following provinces: Buenos Aires, Rio Negro, Chubut, Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego. The coast includes four large gulfs (San Jorge, San Matías, Nuevo, and San José) and the Río de la Plata estuary.

The coast of Argentina is rich in marine fauna being home for the South American Fur Seal (Arctocephalus australis), the Subantarctic Fur Seal (Arctocephalus tropicalis), the South American Sea Lion (Otaria flavescens), the La Plata Dolphin or Franciscana (Pontoporia blainvillei), the Dusky Dolphin (Lagenorhynchus obscurus), the Orca or Killer Whale (Orcinus orca), the Commerson's Dolphin (Cephalorhynchus commersonii), the Peale's Dolphin (Lagenorhynchus australis) and the Southern Right Whale (Eubalaena australis). The sei whale (Balaenoptera borealis) has also been sighted in Argentinean waters.

Argentina is also home to five species of penguins: the King Penguin (Aptenodytes patagonicus), the Southern Rockhopper Penguin (Eudyptes chrysocome), the Macaroni Penguin (Eudyptes chrysolophus), the Magallanes Penguin (Spheniscus magellanicus) and the Gentoo Penguin (Pygoscelis papua).

Many seabirds are found along the Argentinean coast including the Red-legged Cormorant (Phalacrocorax gaimardi), three species of Skua: the Southern Skua (Catharacta antarctica), the Chilean Skua (Catharacta chilensis) and the South Polar Skua (Catharacta maccormicki). Many species of albatross are also found including the critically endangered Tristan Albatross (Diomedea dabbenena) and the endangered Northern Royal Albatross (Diomedea sanfordi), the Sooty Albatross (Phoebetria fusca), the Black-browed Albatross (Thalassarche melanophrys) and the Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross (Thalassarche chlororhynchos).

Three species of turtles have been sighted in Argentinean waters: Green turtle (Chelonia mydas), The Loggerhead Sea Turtle (Caretta caretta) and The Leatherback Turtle (Dermochelys coriacea).

Peninsula Valdez is located in the north east of Chubut province. It is known as an important nature reserve and listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This peninsula is home to sea lions, elephant seals and fur seals as well as Southern right whales and orcas.

There are 17 RAMSAR Sites in Argentina, of which two are located on the coast, Samborombón Bay (Bahía de Samborombón) in Buenos Aires province and the Atlantic coast Reserve Tierra del Fuego in Tierra del Fuego province. Both sites are essential habitats for migratory birds; between 65% and 75% of the migratory birds spend the austral summer in Samborombón Bay. Both Ramsar Sites are key locations for the following shorebirds species: the White-rumped Sandpiper (Calidris fuscicollis), the Hudsonian Godwit (Limosa haemastica) and the Red Knot (Calidris canutus). The Atlantic coast Reserve Tierra del Fuego is one of the breeding areas of the South American population of the critically endangered Ruddy-headed Goose (Chloephaga rubidiceps).

Argentina has 5 active areas of gas and oil production including offshore production. Around 20% of Argentinean exports are petro chemical products and out this around three quarters oil and natural gas.

The city of Comodoro Ridavavia is located in the South of the country in the province of Chubut. It has been producing oil since its discovery in Argentina in 1906. Today, it continues to be an important location for oil production and it’s an important export point for Argentina. A1,770 km pipeline transports natural gas to the Argentinean capital, Buenos Aires.

Regional Seas
Argentinean Sea
South Atlantic Ocean

Past experience
Argentina has experience several oils spills mostly in the Patagonia, in the south of the country. The tanker Presidente Arturo Umberto Illia (December, 2007) caused an oil spill in "Caleta Córdova" in the province of Chubut which produced an oil slick of 4 km impacting two km of coast. According to the International Fund for Animal Welfare's (IFAW)
Emergency Relief Team, managed by IFAW and the International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) who assisted during this incident, the total number of oiled animals were 632 including steamer ducks, Magellanic penguins, silvery grebes and cormorants.

In May, 2006, 224 penguins, mostly Magellanic, were oiled due to occurrence of the so-called Cabo Virgenes Mystery Spill in the southern region of Santa Cruz. The IFAW’s Emergency Relief Team along with Consejo Agrario Provincial de Santa Cruz (CAP), Fundación Patagonia Natural and Fundación Mundo Marino conducted the rescue, rehabilitation and release of the birds. A temporary rehabilitation center was built 179 km from Cabo Virgenes in the facilities of The Centro Marítimo Austral (CeMA). The Argentinean Air Force (Fuerza Aérea Argentina) and the government of the Province of Santa Cruz also were part of the response team.

Other spills (Presidente Arturo Umberto Illia (1992), Litoral (1996), Campo Durán (1997), Estrella Pampeana (1999)) have occurred along the Argentinean coast, however none of these included any oiled wildlife incident of significance. However, the coast from Southern Brazil to northern Argentina has been subjected to chronic oil pollution since the 1980s. Approximately 3,869 Magellanic penguins were reported as sick or oiled since 1987 by many of the rehabilitation centers located in Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil. The number of oiled penguins reported in their wintering range has greatly increased since the early 1990s and is strongly correlated with petroleum exports from Argentina (P. García-Borboroglu et al., 2005).

**Response: the role of the authorities**

The national competent authority is the Prefectura Naval Argentina, specifically the Head of Environmental Protection. They are in charge of planning and responding to an oil spill accident. Therefore, they are responsible for the development and implementation of the Plan Nacional de Contigencia (PLANACON) which has been in place since 1998. According to the plan, all terminals, oil companies and tankers operating in Argentina are obliged to have in place a contingency plan for oil spills, thus they are responsible for clean-up operations. However, the government is in charge of coordination.

As a federal country, in case of an oiled wildlife incident in the Argentinean coast, the affected province will assume responsibility of the oiled animals. However, as occurred in 2007, if the province is overwhelmed by the incident it would call upon the Environment and Sustainable development Secretary (Secretaría de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable) and specifically the following departments Wildlife Fauna Headship (Dirección fauna Silvestre) and the Working group on aquatic resources (Grupo de trabajo de recursos acuáticos) under the Sub-secretary of Environmental Planning and Policies. The following entities will also be involved: the Dangerous waste Headship (Dirección de residuos peligrosos) under the Sub-secretary of Environmental Supervision and Control and Contamination prevention.

In each of the provinces, the departments or heads of environment/wildlife are in charge of the response if the oiled wildlife incident occurs in their jurisdiction.

- **Buenos Aires Province**: Department of Resources conservation (Departamento Conservación de Recursos) of the Provincial Headship of Natural Resources of the Provincial Organism for Sustainable Development (Dirección Provincial de Recursos Naturales del Organismo Provincial Para el Desarrollo Sostenible (OPDS))
- **Chubut Province**: Headship of Environmental Protection (Dirección General de Protección Ambiental) and the Headship of Wildlife and Flora (Dirección de Fauna y Flora Silvestre)
- **Rio Negro Province**: Wildlife Headship (Dirección de Fauna Silvestre) of the Subsecretary of environment.
- **Santa Cruz Province**: Headship of Wildlife of the Agrarian Provincial Council (Consejo Agrario Provincial) of the provincial government would take the responsibility as it did in the Cabo Virgenes spill in 2006.
- **Tierra del Fuego Province**: the Secretary of Sustainable Development and Environment (Secretaría de Desarrollo Sustentable y Ambiente)

**Oiled wildlife response**

**Formal guidelines?**

No governmental wildlife response plan as such exists. However, the Headship of Aquatic Resources of the Environment and Sustainable Development Secretary has prepared and published in 2006 a Handbook with recommendations on how to handle and rescue birds, marine mammals and turtles. The Handbook is the result of a process that started in 1999 with the aim of establishing national standards for rescuing wildlife. This process included capacity building for the personnel of the Prefectura Naval Argentina, natural parks guards and provincial authorities dealing with the issue. The Governmental Handbook is not exclusively for oiled wildlife but for other wildlife incidents too.

Furthermore, the Foundation Mundo Marino and the Foundation Patagonia Natural have developed a Contingency Plan for oiled environmental crisis which includes a Protocol of procedures to follow. The Protocol establishes that the Foundations Mundo Marino and Patagonia Natural should be notified as soon as possible when oiled animals are
Response objectives and strategy
The Handbook developed by the Environment and Sustainable Development Secretary specifies that in the case of a wildlife incident the Prefectura Naval Argentina should be notified as soon as possible using the emergency number (#106). They will then notify its branches in the province and the relevant regional government. The Handbook is intended for the relevant authorities in regional governments and security authorities. It endorses that general public should only handle and rescue wildlife under the supervision of the relevant authorities. The Handbook gives a brief introduction and characteristics of sea turtles, birds and cetaceans. It then gives general recommendations for rescuing, handling, transporting and rehabilitating wildlife. It provides with very general guidelines for oiled birds. The Governmental Handbook also establishes a few minimum requirements for appropriated rehabilitation facilities, exposes the minimum conditions to be satisfied in order to release rehabilitated wildlife and provides a protocol to measure dead animals.

The Protocol, developed by the Foundations Mundo Marino and Patagonia Natural, establishes a Response team managed by a General Coordinator. Two committees are considered: the Field Committee and the Logistic Committee. The Field Committee will comprise a Responsible Veterinarian and a General Supervisor who will manage the Person responsible for Washing, Person responsible for Rinsing, Person responsible for Drying and Person Responsible for the Exercise area. The decision to release the animals is taken by the Responsible Veterinarian, the General Supervisor and the General coordinator. The Logistic Committee will be divided into the Person Responsible for Infrastructure, the Responsible Person for Security and support and the Responsible Person for Media.

The next step would be to contact and create communication channels with the relevant national authorities, Environment and Sustainable Development Secretary, environmental departments of the relevant provincial governments, the relevant municipalities and the Prefectura Naval Argentina.

The Protocol also determines the tasks for each committee and for the responsible persons. The General coordinator is in charge of assessing the situation and deciding the next steps, to assign the members of both committees and to call specialists for the rescue operations. The tasks for the Responsible person of the Logistic Committee will be to link with relevant authorities and other institutions, estimate the risks of the operations and provide assistance for the maintenance of the operations (electricity, gas), to coordinate with the Field Committee, call upon volunteers (including the IFAW Emergency Relief Team, if necessary), manage all logistic operations with the authorities, to provide all necessary services for personnel while the crisis takes place, to register the incident and to handle the media.

The Field Committee will be in charge of the rescue, transportation, stabilization, cleaning and release tasks as well as to establish the number of trained volunteers to work in situ and at the rehabilitation centre, to establish the non trained volunteers to cooperate if necessary with the trained volunteers, to distribute the working components, to supervise the work of volunteers, to instruct, if necessary, in the tasks to be accomplished and to implement a control system of the birds transported to the rehabilitation center.

The Protocol also gives specific minimum conditions to be met by the Rehabilitation center and the temporary facilities for reception and stabilization. It also gives specific considerations in regards to the rescue, transportation, stabilization, rehabilitation, rinsing, drying, exercising, impermeability control and release. Its scope also includes research work and the disposal of dead corpses.

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?
No formal guidelines exist and as a federal country, probably this decision would be taken by regional governments. However, there is confidence that Argentinean authorities would attempt to rescue and rehabilitate oiled wildlife, as has happened in the past.

Both the Handbook developed by the Environment and Sustainable Development Secretary and the Protocol developed by the foundations have wildlife rehabilitation as a clear strategy and both provide procedures and standards for it. No guidelines for triage and euthanasia are given though.

Impact assessment
The Handbook puts in evidence that animal corpses should be collected for scientific purposes. However, it is not clear which is the competent authority to undertake this activity although it is noted that the Prefectura Naval Argentina should be notified as soon as possible using the emergency number (106) in case of any wildlife incident. However, the Protocol notes that dead corpses are considered under Argentinean Legislation as Pathogenic Residues (Residuos Patogenicos), therefore, certain specific considerations have to be taken into account. As a result, the disposal of dead corpses has to be done in coordination with the regional competent bodies of each of the governments of the respective province.
Besides Fundación Mundo Marino and Patagonia Natural, the following organizations and universities could be contacted to undertake the impact assessment in the aftermath of an oil spill: Acuario de Buenos Aires SRL, Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina, AQUAMARINA- Centro de Estudios en Ciencias Marinas (CECIM), Centro Nacional Patagónico (CENPAT), the Department of Marine Sciences of the Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas (ICB), Proyecto Peyu, the Laboratory of marine mammals’ ecology and behavior and the Hidrobiologic of Puerto Quequén (MACN – CONICET) of the Argentinean Natural Sciences Museum “Bernardino Rivadavia” (Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia”) and the Centro Austral de Investigaciones Científicas (CADIC CONICET).

Notification and early response
It is expected that the Prefectura Naval Argentina, the Foundations Mundo Marino and Patagonia Natural as well as the provincial governments would be notified. Probably, all of them would notify the others and other relevant authorities.

Wildlife responders
Fundación Mundo Marino, active since 1987, is considered a pioneer in the region. It has broad experience handling oiled seabirds and in 2008 published a Handbook, with Fundación Patagonia Natural, for handling and attending oiled seabirds. Both foundations have also published a Protocol, as previously described. They have also organized the 1st conference in Latin-American and a workshop on fauna rehabilitation in 2008. It also manages a rehabilitation center that was the first facility in Latin America to treat oiled penguins. Until 2008 they treated 2652 sea birds and 990 mammals. Among these, the most common animals rehabilitated have been Magallanes penguins, South American Fur Seals, Subantarctic Fur Seals, South American Sea Lions and La Plata Dolphins or Franciscanas.

Fundación Patagonia Natural has been active since 1991 and Works in close cooperation with Fundación Mundo Marino. It has worked in previous oiled wildlife incidents and in more than five Southern Right Whale strandings. It has one veterinarian, one wildlife responder and a group of volunteers.

The Fundación Mar del Plata Aquarium has been carrying out wildlife rescue and rehabilitation duties since 1993. Since then, they have rehabilitated around 300 sea birds annually, fifty sea lions and a variable number of cetaceans. These three foundations are part of the IFAW South American Penguin Network, in place since 2001, as rehabilitation centers.

The Acuario de Buenos Aires SRL (Buenos Aires Zoo) has been implementing since 1998 a Pinnipeds Rescue and Rehabilitation Project. Since then they have also rehabilitated sea turtles, cetaceans and sea birds. The Consejo Agrario Provincial, part of the Santa Cruz Provincial government does not have facilities but has wildlife guards and conservation agents with experience in wildlife (sea birds and sea lions) rehabilitation.

The Government of the Buenos Aires Province through the Provincial Headship of Natural Resources of the Provincial Organism for Sustainable Development (Dirección Provincial de Recursos Naturales del Organismo Provincial Para el Desarrollo Sostenible (OPDS)) has the capacity with trained staff to response to emergency wildlife rehabilitation however, it does yet have an operational rehabilitation center. They have treated sea birds, pinnipeds and green turtles. It is located in the Natural Reserve Bahia Blanca, Falsa y Verde in Bahia Blanca, 650 km from Buenos Aires.

Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina, an NGO with goal the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources, has been active in Argentina since 1977. In 1995 they inaugurated the Wildlife Rehabilitation center at the Natural park, Parque Pereyra Iraola in Buenos Aires. In 1996 they published a Handbook on Wildlife Rehabilitation with a specific chapter on oiled wildlife.

Fundación Cethus and Fundación Ecocentro could provide with useful information, even though they have no capacity or experience in oiled wildlife response.

Cooperation between stakeholders
Fundación Mundo Marino organized the 1st Latin America congress on wildlife rehabilitation in April 2008. The aim of the congress was to strengthen the cooperation between organizations and relevant authorities for wildlife rehabilitation. The congress was sponsored by IFAW, Fundación Patagonia Natural and Mundo Marino while it was supported by the Provincial Government of Buenos Aires. In October 2008, a workshop was also organized by Fundación Mundo Marino. In previous spills, cooperation between the central and provincial governments, the Prefectura Naval Argentina and the wildlife responders was close. However, in order to deal effectively with an oiled wildlife incident in Argentina, a formal pre-defined strategy including all stakeholders and integrated into the NCP should be pursued.

Permanent facilities
Fundación Mundo Marino was the first facility in South America to establish a rehabilitation center for oiled penguins. It also serves as a rehabilitation center for other marine animals. Fundación Patagonia Natural, Acuario de Buenos Aires...
SRL, Fundación Mar del Plata Aquarium and the Government of the Buenos Aires Province have all also permanent facilities to rehabilitate marine wildlife.

Current processes
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Documentation and references
General references
Country Profile ITOPF Argentina

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