



# OIL SPILL SCIENCE

## SEA GRANT PROGRAMS OF THE GULF OF MEXICO

### HELPING OILED ANIMALS RECOVER: GULF OF MEXICO

When a marine oil spill occurs, animals like birds, dolphins, whales, and sea turtles who migrate throughout a wide range of habitats tend to be at high risk of exposure.

Migratory marine animals move through coastal marshes, shallow bays, and deep water to eat, grow, and mate. Oil and spill-related chemicals can enter all of these habitats, putting birds, dolphins, whales, and sea turtles in danger of breathing in oil, eating it, or absorbing it through the skin.

Experts in the emergency response community are trained in how to rescue oiled animals. Yet beachcombers, boaters, fishermen, beach hotel staff, and others working and playing along the coast may also encounter oiled or injured wildlife and not know how to help. Learn what to do if you come across an oiled animal, and call the experts, listed below.\*

#### WHAT TO DO



- Call your local animal rescue authorities.
- Do not attempt to capture or touch oiled, sick, injured, or dead animals.
- Keep children and pets away.
- Note your location, nearby landmarks, and GPS position, so you can tell the authorities where to find the animal.

#### Dolphins and Whales



#### Birds



#### Sea Turtles



**TX 877-WHALEHELP**  
or **800-962-6625**

**TX 512-389-4848**  
or **281-842-8100**

**TX 866-TURTLES5**



**LA 877-WHALEHELP**  
or **504-235-3005**

**LA 800-256-2749**  
or **225 -765-2800**

**LA 504-235-3005**



**MS 877-WHALEHELP**  
or **888-767-3657**

**MS 601-576-6000**

**MS 228-369-4796**



**AL 877-WHALEHELP**

**AL 334-242-3469**

**AL 866-SEA-TURT**



**FL 877-WHALEHELP**  
or **888-404-3922**

**FL 888-404-3922**

**FL 888-404-3922**

#### There's an app for that!

To access state stranding information or to download the Dolphin & Whale 911 application for your phone, visit



<http://bit.ly/19KX6Hv>.

#### \*What if it's a sizable spill?

In the event of a large spill, check the media for a temporary hotline that can be set up to assist these agencies with the volume of calls.

# DEEPWATER HORIZON SUMMARY: WILDLIFE INJURIES



From 2010 through 2014, 1,101 dolphins and whales were found stranded along the coasts of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.<sup>1,2</sup> This was the largest known marine mammal die-off in the Gulf of Mexico. Experts determined that this unusual die-off was in part due to oil exposure from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Oil exposure led to reproductive failure and sickness in dolphins living within oiled waters.<sup>1,2</sup>



Scientists estimate that between 56,100 and 102,400 birds of 93 species died because of the oil spill.<sup>2</sup> This estimate includes fledglings that would have been born had their parents not died from the spill. Birds living in hard-to-reach areas like marsh and island colonies were not counted, which suggests that the total number of harmed birds is considerably higher. Several organizations successfully rescued, rehabilitated, and released oiled birds.<sup>2</sup>



Scientists estimate that the oil spill killed nearly 35,000 hatchling sea turtles, between 55,000 and 160,000 small juvenile sea turtles, and between 4,900 and 7,600 large juvenile and adult sea turtles.<sup>2,3</sup> However, more than 28,000 eggs from 274 nests were

excavated and moved from Florida and Alabama beaches to a protected hatchery on the Atlantic coast of Florida.<sup>2,3</sup> Nearly 15,000 baby turtles emerged from these nests and made their way into the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>2,3</sup>



## Restoring wildlife

### EXPERTS RECOMMEND

- Including habitat protections in restoration plans.
- Considering all life stages of animals, as well as where they live and move throughout their lives.
- Monitoring the health of individuals and groups and tracking their movements throughout the Gulf and other regions.
- Limiting human-caused threats, such as boat collisions, noise, industrial activities, fishing-related injuries, and illegal feeding and harassment, to help populations return to pre-spill numbers.<sup>2,4</sup>

## REFERENCES

1. Graham, L., Hale, C., Maung-Douglass, E., Sempier, S., Skelton, T., Swann, L., and Wilson, M. (2017). *Oil spill science: The Deepwater Horizon oil spill's impact on bottlenose dolphins*. MASGP-17-0022. 2. Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees. (2016). Chapter 4- Injury to natural resources. In Deepwater Horizon oil spill: Final programmatic damage assessment and restoration plan and final programmatic environmental impact statement. Retrieved from <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-planning/gulf-plan>. 3. Hale, C., Graham, L., Maung-Douglass, E., Sempier, S., Skelton, T., Swann, L., and Wilson, M. (2017). *Oil spill science: Sea turtles and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill*. TAMU-SG-17-501. 4. Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees. (2016). Chapter 5 - Restoring natural resources. In Deepwater Horizon oil spill: Final programmatic damage assessment and restoration plan and final programmatic environmental impact statement. Retrieved from <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-planning/gulf-plan>.

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[gulfseagrant.org/oilspilloutreach](http://gulfseagrant.org/oilspilloutreach)



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