

Abstract

Seabirds Impacted By Oiling Treated at Centro de Recuperação de Animais Marinhos (CRAM), Rio Grande- Brazil: A Review of the Past 12 Years (1997-2008)

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CRAM (MO-FURG) is located in the city of Rio Grande, State of Rio Grande do Sul, by the margins of Patos' Lagoon, on Brazil's extreme south. Yearly, a great diversity of marine animals migrates through this region in winter, feeding in the Southwestern Atlantic's productive waters. Debilitated animals that are found ashore are admitted to CRAM, whose objective is to rescue, treat and study stranded marine animals found in the region. The Center regularly receives oil-impacted birds. Between 1997 and 2008, CRAM admitted 1153 birds, of which 30.4% (351/1153) were oiled. Of the oiled birds, 97.4% (342/351) were Magellanic penguins (*Spheniscus magellanicus*), 1.7% (6/351) were Great grebes (*Podiceps major*) and 0.8% (3/351) were Procelariformes (2 *Thalassarche melanophris* and 1 *Puffinus puffinus*). Of the penguins, 72.2% (247/342) were juveniles and 27.7% (95/342) were adults. Of the total of 1153 animals treated 75% (865/1153) were released. 2002 was the busiest year for oiled birds with 113 and 2001 the year that had the least number of oiled birds, with 2 birds only. The origin of the oil affecting these animals is unknown, as no oil spill was ever recorded for the region concurrent with oiled bird casualties. Rio Grande is a port of regional and national importance, evidenced by the traffic of large-sized cargo ships and intense fishing activities, and according to CRAM's records, Magellanic penguins are the most commonly affected wildlife. Juveniles were most affected, as there are far more juveniles than adults in Brazilian waters. Petroleum pollution has long been known to affect the Magellanic penguin's population (Jehl, 1975; García-Borboroglu et. al, 2006), which is decreasing. South America is known to be one of the hot spots for chronic oil pollution events and local governments should unite to act for the conservation of its natural resources.