

Abstract

The Rehabilitation of Oiled Grebes and Loons From Natural Seep Oil off the California Coast

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Natural seep oil from under water fishers off California's central coast impacts large numbers of migratory and localized aquatic birds on a regular basis. This thick oil known as "San Jauquin Heavy" floats to the surface of the ocean, creating thick oil patties that stick to the feathers of birds. A new study by researchers at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and the University of California, Santa Barbara states that "there is an oil spill everyday at Coal Oil Point (COP), the natural seeps off Santa Barbara, California, where 20-25 tons of oil have leaked from the seafloor each day for the last several hundred thousand years. IBRRC receives many natural seep oiled birds in our rehabilitation clinics on an annual basis, year round. These birds are challenging as the heavy, sticky oil that penetrates bird feathers presents numerous challenges to our rehabilitation staff. Removing thick oil with pre-treatment products and new techniques, washing, rehydrating, medical treatments and waterproofing of these birds will be discussed.