

# Prioritising the treatment of oiled wildlife in New Zealand by conservation status.



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## ABSTRACT:

The conservation status of wildlife in New Zealand is categorised by two different classification systems; the globally recognised International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) system and the nationally recognised New Zealand Department of Conservation system. Both systems are used here to give those species at risk of oiling in New Zealand a prioritisation rating for treatment and rehabilitation in the event that multiple species are affected by an oil spill. Triage by medical urgency remains important and would occur in conjunction with 'triage by conservation' during any oiled wildlife response.

As is typical of most island nations, native fauna of New Zealand exhibits a high degree of endemism. In addition, approximately 60% of New Zealand's coastal bird species are of significant conservation concern. These two factors provide sound justification for the prioritisation of different species during oiled wildlife response based on their population conservation status.

In summary, when resources are stretched during oiled wildlife response in New Zealand all affected species that are considered to be either 'threatened' or 'at risk' by the Department of Conservation system and/or 'vulnerable', 'endangered' or 'critically endangered' by the IUCN classification system will be afforded a higher priority for treatment and rehabilitation than affected species that are of less conservation concern.

## BACKGROUND:

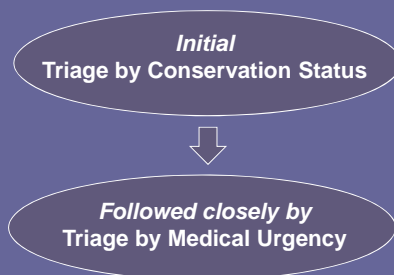
The ideal oiled wildlife response would treat and rehabilitate all oiled individuals. However, more realistically, where significant numbers of wildlife across multiple species are affected, time and resources will be limiting.

Hence, oiled wildlife response preparedness should carefully consider the allocation of time and resources to maximise benefits to wildlife. A system of 'triage by conservation status' has been adopted by New Zealand to address this need.

## TRIAGE:

'Triage by conservation status' acts to provide the most threatened species the highest priority for treatment and rehabilitation.

Medical triage remains important and we suggest that both types of triage occur concurrently during oiled wildlife response. For the majority of oiled wildlife the following sequence will be appropriate.



However, for wildlife with obvious critical injuries, whose welfare could suffer significantly if medical treatment is delayed, we suggest triage by medical urgency in the first instance.

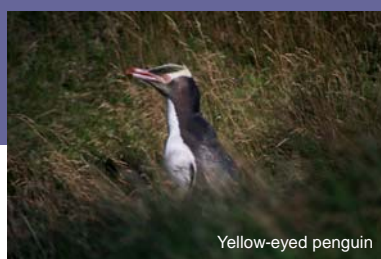
## CONSERVATION STATUS:

Triage by conservation is particularly relevant for a small island nation, such as New Zealand, that:

- Exhibits a high degree of endemism, and
- Has a large proportion of threatened coastal and marine species

Two conservation status classification systems are used here to determine priorities for the treatment and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife, they are:

- The New Zealand Threat Classification System
- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™



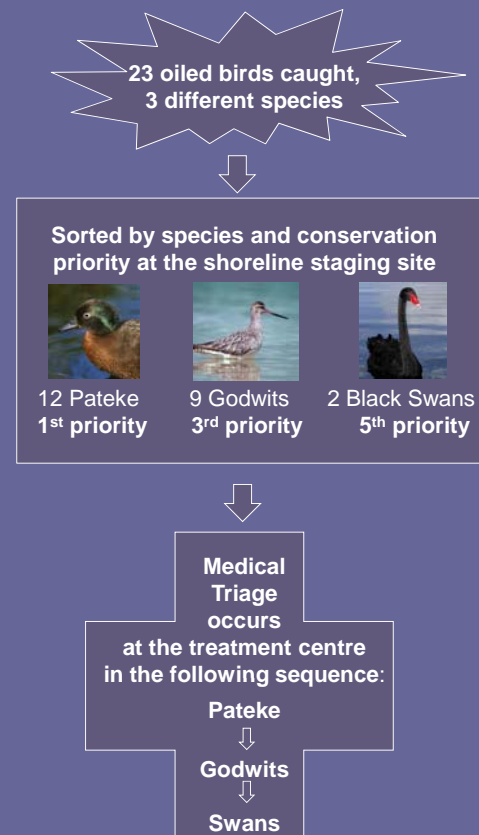
Yellow-eyed penguin

## PRIORITIES:

The following categories have been developed to guide the prioritisation of different species during oiled wildlife response:

- 1<sup>st</sup> priority = threatened species
- 2<sup>nd</sup> priority = endemic species
- 3<sup>rd</sup> priority = migratory species
- 4<sup>th</sup> priority = native species
- 5<sup>th</sup> priority = introduced species

## EXAMPLE:



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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