



BALTIC OILED WILDLIFE RESPONDERS EXCHANGE MEETING

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1. Introduction

The Meeting was organized by Sea Alarm, WWF Finland, WWF Poland and the Institute of Oceanography of the University of Gdansk, in partnership with HELCOM RESPONSE as part of the Oiled Wildlife Response and Preparedness Working Programme for 2011-2014 approved by HELCOM RESPONSE.

The Meeting took place on the 16th and 17th of April 2012 at the Institute of Oceanography of the University of Gdansk in Gdynia, Poland and was organized back to back with the 15th meeting of HELCOM RESPONSE in Sopot, Poland.

The Meeting was open to wildlife responders, wildlife authorities and scientists from all HELCOM member states. 32 representatives from all 9 Baltic countries, and also Belgium, HELCOM and Nord Stream attended the meeting. The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1** of this report.

2. Aims

The aims of the Meeting were predefined as follows:

- To provide specific knowledge and a common understanding of oiled wildlife response planning and its challenges.
- To update and extend the oiled wildlife response network in the Baltic Sea Area.
- To assess gaps in existing national oiled wildlife response preparedness
- To identify specific training needs in different Baltic countries and in the Baltic as a whole.
- To look at various methodologies that are applied in the Baltic to deal with oiled wildlife.

3. Programme

Key experts in oiled wildlife response as well as all countries' representatives were invited to lecture. A detailed programme is contained in **Annex 2** to the Report. The lectures are published on <http://training.sea-alarm.org> (Password: Gdynia2012)

4. Results

Baltic preparedness for oiled wildlife incidents

Each country presented an overview of the current status of oiled wildlife response and preparedness. Based on these presentations the following conclusions could be drawn with regards to the preparedness level in different countries or regions.



Drivers for OWR development

It appeared from the presentations that an enhanced development of oiled wildlife response capacity is depending on some clear drivers. Firstly, past spills in the region (be it in the country in question or in a neighbouring country) have generally kick-started activities. In Estonia such development took place rapidly after two spill incidents in 2006 and 2008. Secondly, a legislative obligation for countries to develop a response plan and adequate capacity is needed. HELCOM recommendation 31E/6 is recognised among NGO's to be an important guide for wildlife planning, but it is not well known and should be acted upon more strongly.

Furthermore, there needs to be an active authority with a clearly defined mandate, and preferably also (if authority resources are not adequate) a working relationship between NGO's and said authority.

Different types and levels of response preparedness

From the presentations and the discussions it appeared that there are different types and levels of preparedness in Baltic countries, by which the countries could be grouped as follows:

Region 1: Estonia, Finland, Sweden:

This region has allocated resources into oiled wildlife response development, and has in many respects come far in preparedness for oiled wildlife incidents. The main strategy for all these countries is to rehabilitate as many birds as possible. Organizations (NGO's) have been identified who are working together with authorities to increase preparedness. The existing cooperation and identified responders does not, however, mean that this region is adequately prepared for a large-scale oiled wildlife incident. The lack of experience from previous large-scale incidents requiring a tier-2 or tier-3 response makes especially management issues a critical issue. Also there are funding constraints and problems with regional availability of staff, volunteers and material resources. Other issues waiting to be solved are post-release survival and environmental monitoring efforts, the need for developing strategies for mass euthanasia in cases where animals cannot be caught or resources are exhausted, and the need to train specialists (veterinarians, ornithologists, specialized volunteers etc.).

Region 2: Denmark, Schleswig-Holstein:

In this region the decision has been made to focus on euthanasia as a primary oiled wildlife response strategy. However, there may be situations where exceptions from the mass euthanasia strategy need to be made, e.g. when species of high conservation value are involved. Denmark is in the process of reassessing/updating their wildlife response objectives. For Schleswig-Holstein there are problems in the cooperation between authorities and NGO's. The fact that Germany does not have a coherent strategy for oiled wildlife response also poses its own challenges.

Region 3 Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Russia:

In this region there are a number of issues which have remained unsolved regarding oiled wildlife response. In some countries, no authority responsible for oiled wildlife response has been identified, which makes response operations difficult or impossible also for other organizations. There are in some countries NGO's which would be willing to take on a role in rehabilitation and response work, but defining roles and responsibilities and finding funding for this development are key issues.

Group discussions

On the second day the meeting was broken down into four discussion groups. Each group had a representation of different countries. Each group discussed the following questions one by one:

1. What will we take home from this workshop?



2. What are we going to do about it?
3. What would go wrong if a spill happened tomorrow?
4. How could Baltic NGOs assist each other (tomorrow vs 5 years from now)?
5. Recommendations to HELCOM RESPONSE?

The results are presented in **Annex 3**.

5. Conclusions and recommendations to HELCOM RESPONSE

There is a lot of development work ongoing in different Baltic countries. It would be important that countries with different strategies (euthanasia vs. rehabilitation) would exchange experience and knowledge with each other, as there may be situations where countries need to reconsider their strategy or utilise different strategies for different species or coastal areas.

- Identifying the responsible authorities in each country.
- Setting up a tiered response and indentifying tier-1, tier-2 and tier-3 response capacities
- A need for national workshops or meetings towards authority-NGO cooperation (e.g. Poland, Lithuania), discussions on national development possibilities
- Agreeing on international minimum standards for oiled wildlife response
- Implementing the HELCOM recommendation at national level – define roles, coordination mechanism and more concrete authority-NGO cooperation (e.g. organized structures of volunteers)
- Creating a platform for regularly exchanging information on chronic oiling and oiled wildlife incidents (oiled wildlife response authorities not necessarily represented at HELCOM Response meetings)
- Creating an oiled wildlife response fund for funding response, equipment, training and exchange trips for NGO's, scientists and authorities to visit exercises, real incidents etc.
- An annual Baltic regional oiled wildlife responders meeting should be established (possibly in February with inter sessional work in between) - important to create a network with regular exchange.
- Developing HELCOM's oiled wildlife response website, including a database on oiled wildlife incidents and collecting data on chronic oiling, database of volunteers with their skills described etc.
- Raising general awareness about oiled wildlife among local people, communities and organizations.
- Promoting new post release survival studies.
- Organizing an annual oiled wildlife response exercise.



ANNEX 1

OILED WILDLIFE RESPONDERS EXCHANGE MEETING

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS		
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ANNEX 2

16.03.2012

OILED WILDLIFE RESPONDERS EXCHANGE MEETING

PROGRAMME

Monday 16.04.2012

Day chair: Monika Laskawska, WWF Poland

12.00 – 13.00	Registration and coffee	
13.00 – 13.10	Opening and welcome	Ms. Vanessa Klötzer, WWF Finland
13.10 – 13.40	Oiled wildlife response: Concepts and backgrounds	Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm
13.40 – 14.00	Oil-affected seabird species in the Polish part of the Gulf of Gdansk	Mr. Wlodzimierz Meissner, Gdansk University
14.00 – 14.30	Wildlife response in Poland	Ms. Agnieszka Czujkowska, Wild Bird Rehabilitation Centre Warsaw
14.30 – 15.00	Coffee/tea	
15.00 – 15.30	Recent wildlife incidents in Sweden	KFV
15.30 – 17.30	Inventory of national issues: presentation of the current situation in each country	Participants; one report per country
17.30 – 18.00	Conclusions: listing of solutions and bottlenecks in different countries	Ms. Saskia Sessions, Sea Alarm
18.00 – 18.15	Close of the first day	Ms. Monika Laskawska, WWF Poland
19.00 – 23.00	Sponsored dinner and evening get-together	All



Tuesday 17.04.2012

Day chair: Ms. Monika Laskawska, WWF Poland

09.00 – 09.15	Opening day two: wrap-up of yesterday	Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm
09.15 – 09.45	The Baltic Sea Area: Challenges and opportunities	Ms. Vanessa Klötzer, WWF Finland
09.45 – 10.15	EnSaCo project: results and follow-up	Ms. Agni Kaldma, ELF
10.15 – 10.45	Minimum strategies for oiled wildlife preparedness in countries without an agreed plan	Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm
10.45 – 11.15	Coffee/tea	
11.15 – 11.45	European Response Team, membership, training and accreditation	Ms. Saskia Sessions, Sea Alarm
11.45 – 12.15	Case histories involving a coordinated international response	Sascha Regmann, PRO Bird Germany
12.15 – 13.30	Lunch	
13.30 – 13.50	Helsinki Convention and its international instruments and programme for oiled wildlife response	Mr. Hermanni Backer, HELCOM
13.50 – 14.40	Baltic response cooperation: How can Baltic responders regularly meet and train together? Baltic EnSaCo project?	All
14.40 – 15.10	Coffee/tea	
15.10 – 16.00	Revisiting the list of solutions and bottlenecks: Which recommendations can be made to HELCOM RESPONSE?	All
16.00 – 16.15	Conclusions of the meeting and follow-up	Vanessa Klötzer, WWF Finland



ANNEX 3

Results of the group discussions

Group 1

Question 1 – what will we take home from this workshop?

- Many countries not prepared but they are not alone – not uniform level of preparedness across the region.
- Create an East European network of NGOs (as this meeting). This group should meet at least once a year to see progress in each country and learn from neighbours, some specific themes/topics could also be covered in more detail at each meeting.
- National preparedness needs attention first before detailed regional activities can take place. Training needs to be nationally focussed at first.
- Was the first time for many people looking at this topic in detail – good learning experience.
- Joint NGO-authority meeting in the future.
- NGO members of this group now know more places to find help and guidance.
- Meetings provide an opportunity for volunteers to link into a wildlife response system.

Question 2 – what are we going to do about it?

- Poland – has clear ideas to take home in terms of response organisation and defining roles and responsibilities, define training needs of a core team and begin to address weak points in the system. A volunteer database should be created.
- Lithuania – start common campaign with other NGOs, work towards agreement with authorities.
- Sweden – keep the volunteer training under EnSaCo going, write down their protocols and procedures (much practical experience but not on paper). Younger people need to be recruited.

Question 3 – how would you fail if a spill happened tomorrow?

- Sweden – south of the country is covered, but there would be problems to respond in the north – then would need assistance from international experts (incl. Finland) – for dealing with animals but also for volunteer management. Only 2 people available in the south (from KfV) that could be mobilised for a spill in the north.
- Lithuania – no defined wildlife response strategy, a wildlife response would start but would be uncoordinated and chaotic.
- Poland – it is unsure sure who is responsible for what (including within government ministries) so there would be long discussions and a lack of coordination. Also lacking equipment. Possible problem during a spill of euthanising protected species – this needs permission from authorities which is not pre-agreed.

Question 4 – how could Baltic NGOs assist each other?

- Now - possible joint workshop or joint activities between Lithuania and Latvia as they have a similar level of preparedness and have some common issues and problems. System for calling each other for help in spills has started now from this meeting – circulate the contacts list.
- In 5 years – work with each other in spills in a more formal way, publicise wildlife response events which are of interest (trainings, events, conferences) in a central place (website?) Work towards getting a few people in each EU country trained to a basic level. Build up wildlife response capacity to avoid burnout, replace people who leave/retire/take maternity leave etc.
- Can Sea Alarm work out a mechanism for spill training in international spills?
- Can the European wildlife response team allow for spill training for responders from other countries?

Question 5 – recommendations for HELCOM

- Implement the HELCOM recommendation at national level – define roles, define coordination mechanism and more concrete authority-NGO cooperation.
- Group countries according to their level of preparedness and plan activities around that (EU funding and local authority funding for joint training and exercises).
- This Baltic NGO exchange group should meet at least once a year to see progress in other countries and explore some specific (technical or operational) themes /topics in more detail.
- Lack of consistent data for effects of chronic oiling on wildlife – data gathering is not consistent between countries, or not always recent/up to date.



Group 2

Question I: What did we learn from this meeting?

- Proven good practices and minimum strategies are valuable.
- For those countries which are not prepared the tips (from H. Nijkamp PP.) for unprepared countries was very valuable. The presentation of HN. should be made available through the internet. Good practices from other countries should be made available. Some of these are available from oiledwildlife.org.
- Practical experience in oiled wildlife response is very important. Oil spills should be also used to educate responders.
- Baltic Sea meetings face-to-face are important in helping to create a network. One meeting a year, possibly in February, should be arranged to keep up the good cooperation.
- A targeted website should be developed for [Baltic] wildlife responders.
- New national contacts were created in Poland. By rotating hosting this national networking should be possible also elsewhere.
- Not enough studies showing real results of post release survival. This makes argumentation for OWR difficult if authorities negative.

Question II: What will you do when you come home?

- Poland will have a dialogue with the national authorities (response as well as wildlife authorities). New proposal for an EU project includes training of Polish volunteers in Finland (2013).
- Many group members will consider applying for funding to support this Baltic oiled wildlife response cooperation. But it is still an open question which would be the suitable source and what would be the exact content of such an application? It could be a follow up and widening of EnSaCo to a Baltic wide project (budget perhaps ca. 1 Me and more).

Question III. What would go wrong if an accident would take place today?

- In many countries including Germany, Poland, Russia the problem is to have the permission to do wildlife response (no legislation)
- In many countries including Russia, Poland too few trained volunteers. In Russia the border with EU creates possibly problems with visas of foreign personnel/trained volunteers. The time factor is critical issue in oiled wildlife response.
- In some countries contact with authorities and responder NGOs is not there.
- In some countries designated authority is unclear/not well defined.
- In Russia hardware like mobile response units are not existing and presently the only rehabilitation sites are zoos.

Question IV: What can you do to help each other?

- Today the less experienced countries, NGOs etc. know where to ask for help. Start making contacts in all levels. We have started to create a network.
- In a 5 year perspective:
 - Equipment stockpile (start-up kits).
 - Organizing courses, but possibly also create a joint volunteer database including experience level, and possible tasks. This should include if possible also carpenters, plumbers etc.
 - Joint projects with external funding
 - Inform veterinary schools on oiled wildlife response

V. Recommendations to HELCOM RESPONSE

- An annual Baltic regional oiled wildlife forum/group should be established. One face-to-face meeting in February, with inter sessional work in between.
- Possible tasks:
 - Create equipment stockpile (start-up kits).
 - Organizing courses, but possibly also to create a joint volunteer database including experience level, and possible tasks. This should include if possible also carpenters, plumbers etc.
 - Joint projects with external funding
 - Inform veterinary schools on oiled wildlife response.
 - Cost securing
 - Baltic NGO cost sharing (regional NGO trust) with fundraising.



- Baltic governmental cost sharing (Baltic Fund)
- Russia-EU visa issues work
- Sort out legal issues around permissions
- Promote new post release survival studies
- Website
- Define regional good practices and minimum strategies
- Reporting form for OWR events
- Post hoc assessment/evaluation of response action.

Group 3

1. Most important things to take home from the workshop?
 - Poland: Practical side of the OWR, learning about the process.
 - Lithuania: No information in country. Need for cooperation of NGO-s, umbrella organisation. No accidents, no problem so far.
 - Russia: To see what other countries in connection to the volunteer work.
 - Estonia: Cooperation is most important. Need to find funding possibilities to meet face to face.
 - Latvia: No experience of accidents and oiled wildlife in the country. Experience from other countries how to start with planning. No active NGO in Latvia. No accidents – no problem.
 - Sweden: How to standardise the treatment and rehabilitation. Some mutual rules and regulations needed. Mutual meetings and trainings.
2. What are you going to do about that?
 - Poland: Speak with the bosses of the university to build a rehab centre for birds, no such thing on the coastal area. University funding project. Determined that this is needed.
 - Lithuania: Talk with colleagues, meetings with other NGO-s. Take together and talk to government. Must meet and come to one point of view to talk to government that there is a problem.
 - Russia: Already talked with Nord Stream about new project for volunteer leaders. To work together – mutual knowledge exchange project with Est and Fin.
 - Estonia: Take contacts from this meeting and keep in touch for future cooperation. Already got some things to share with other interested parties.
 - Latvia: Start discussions within authority to start talking with other authorities and NGO-s. Get knowledge of the planning process. To make authority realize that there is a problem unaddressed.
 - Sweden: Inform the board about the situation in the neighbouring countries and about HELCOM work. Try to export our plan to neighbouring countries.
3. Where do you feel you might fail if a spill with 500-1000 birds happens tomorrow?
 - Poland: No idea. There are small local groups, probably no problem with mobilizing them, but biggest problem will be that there is no such organisation who takes the lead. There is WWF but we do not know how it works. No facility.
 - Lithuania: Call Germans right away – have no idea what to do, no skills, no whatsoever. No background.
 - Russia: No equipment for treatment. There are people and vets but no equipment.
 - Estonia and Sweden: probably no equipment or facility setup for such a large-scaled spill. Need help from international organisations.
 - Latvia: There is Civil Protection Plan and institutions to remove oil. No idea what to do with the birds.
4. How could Baltic NGO-s assist each other today and in 5 years?
 - Poland: Mutual project of sharing experience, should be open to other countries.
 - Latvia: Today: share information, we do not have any. In 5 years – cannot predict.
 - Russia: Today: share information. In 5 years: be partners from different countries for funding, possibilities for big mutual projects.
 - Latvia: NGO-s in Latvia are not active in this field.
 - Estonia, Sweden: Today: share information, keep the contacts, support each other. In 5 years we can probably talk the same language if we carry on the work started. Webinars, web-based tools should be improved to share information, training materials. Oiledwildlife.eu can be put in better use with the access to different materials.
5. Recommendations for HELCOM Response.
 - Include OWR into Balex Delta exercise and include NGO-s from Baltic countries to the exercise.
 - Introduce the experience of countries in this field in the response meetings.
 - Develop funding possibilities.



- Trainings for Response manual annually.
- Collect data of OW incidents in the website and make it available. Create some sort of report form to be filled.

Group 4

Question 1

- The oiled wildlife manual and oiled wildlife recommendation of Helcom should be discussed in more detail in all countries. Poland has had no experience with oiled wildlife in the past 15 years.
- In Poland, oiled wildlife response contingency planning could and should be added to the existing oil spill response plans of harbors.
- It is important to raise general awareness about oiled wildlife among local people, communities and organizations
- There should be cross-border shoreline and oiled wildlife response cooperation between for ex. Poland and Germany
- In some countries (Lithuania in this case) there is no infrastructure, no specialists and after this meeting there is a need for national workshop or meetings towards authority/NGO cooperation
- NGO's are key players in OWR, but there needs to be increased knowledge and coordination and networking regarding policy, lobbying and cooperation
- Euthanasia planning problem should be dealt with in all countries (although euthanasia is a "curse word" in rehabilitating countries). We need joint guidelines on euthanasia. But also need for initializing discussions with Danish about policy change
- Leadership/management issues in OWR need to be dealt with, and it is clear that problems in different countries vary
- Generally unclear who is responsible for financing of OWR

Question 2

- SAR, WWF Poland and Warsaw Zoo are going to initialize discussions on national development possibilities
- Russia will renew oil spill legislation and oiled wildlife should be added into this. WWF will advocate for this and the HELCOM recommendation should be highlighted to the politicians.
- Lithuanian Fund for Nature will enter discussions with Society for Animal protection. LFfN could take care of the political lobby work and SfAP the hands-on response development?
- General problem in identifying the responsible authority in these countries!
- WWF Finland will continue developing regional response and work on specialized volunteers and stabilization teams. Increased vet and ornithologist cooperation
- European team is needed for "certifying" volunteers for certain tasks
- There is a general need in a lot of countries for educational projects about oiled wildlife response for authorities, and possibilities to look for volunteers among universities and NGO's
- Russia will be looking into oiled wildlife response in the Arctic

Question 3

- In Lithuania, Russia and Poland an oiled wildlife incident would be a big problem and a big failure
- In Lithuania and Poland there would probably not be a lack of ready volunteers, but there would be no organization to support or train them, and no skilled vets or management
- In Poland there is also no regional equipment for shoreline response
- At least now NGO's know who to call in case of an incident!
- In Finland the problem is also a regional one – some regions know for ex. where to place BCU and have a lot of volunteers, in other regions it is less known and especially in the north very few volunteers. Finland also has management issues because there is no experience of large-scale incidents.

Question 4

- Today: It would be useful to have a joint project in Rus, Lat, Lithuania and Poland on training for management and volunteers. There is need for an alliance of NGO's for lobbying and sharing knowledge. There needs to be an expert network which can move across borders very fast (visa issue for Russia!)



- In five years: An ideal situation would be national teams working side-by-side in an international response, and Baltic OWR equipment which can be mobilized over the whole region

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identifying the responsible authorities in each country, which is a prerequisite for annual reporting within Helcom about oiled wildlife incidents and developments.
- Annual regional training courses for veterinarians, ornithologists and other experts.
- Creating an oiled wildlife response fund for funding response, equipment, training and exchange trips for NGO's, scientists and authorities to visit exercises, real incidents etc.
- Develop Helcom's oiled wildlife response web pages, including a database on oiled wildlife incidents and collecting data on chronic oiling.
- Creating a regional wildlife response evaluation team.