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de la faune

BIRD CLEANING CENTRES ALONG THE ST LAWRENCE



The St Lawrence corridor is a major crossroads for many hundreds of thousands of waterfowl and nearly 10,000 ships movements per year; among the latter are tankers capable of transporting up to 100,000 tonnes of oil. Navigation is tricky, and accidents are relatively common, causing oil spills of varying proportions. In order to reduce mortality among birds affected by an oil spill, the Canadian Wildlife Service, in co-operation with other agencies, has established bird cleaning centres.

Historically, thousands of birds have already been oiled by spills in our waters. Since 1972, nearly 20 major spills have been reported, involving many thousands of litres of oil; the most dramatic case occurred in the Magdalen Islands in December 1981, when 1,200 alcids died as a result of a tanker accident. Recently, the incident involving the CZANTORIA in May 1988 required immense efforts to prevent the contamination of thousands of geese and ducks by the resulting oil slick. Despite these efforts, some birds became contaminated and had to be captured and cleaned.

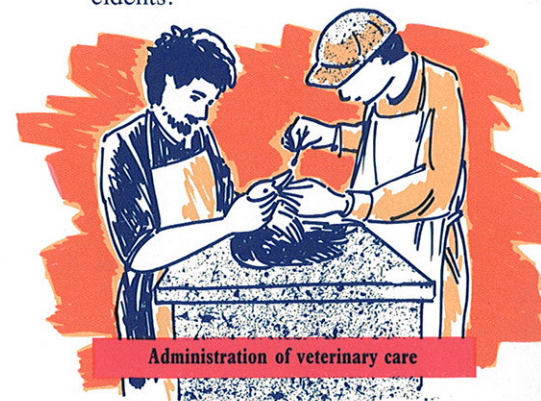


Recovery of birds in trouble

It is estimated that more than a million waterfowl gather along the St Lawrence at the peak of the spring and fall migrations, while half a million breed and a quarter of a million winter there.

This negative ecological picture demonstrates the need for an intervention plan to deal with such incidents.

Some species found in our coastal waters are considered to be highly vulnerable to oil; this is particularly true of those that spend most of the day on the water, for example marine ducks (oldsquaw, scoter and eider) and alcids (murre).



Administration of veterinary care

Six Bird Cleaning Centres in Québec

In Québec, there are already six cleaning centres, located at the most sensitive points along the River, its estuary and the Gulf. We intend to complete the network with the addition of two other centres located at Mingan and the Magdalen Islands.



Cleaning

MacDonald College

This centre is located in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue and is operated by McGill University. It was established because of the presence of about 75,000 diving ducks, mostly scaup, on the large lakes of south-western Québec (des Deux-Montagnes, Saint-François and Saint-Louis) during the fall migration.

Trois-Rivières

The Trois-Rivières centre is housed in the premises of the ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche. It was established to minimize risks to the 100,000 Canada and Snow Geese that flock to the flood plain of Lake Saint-Pierre in spring and the 60,000 or

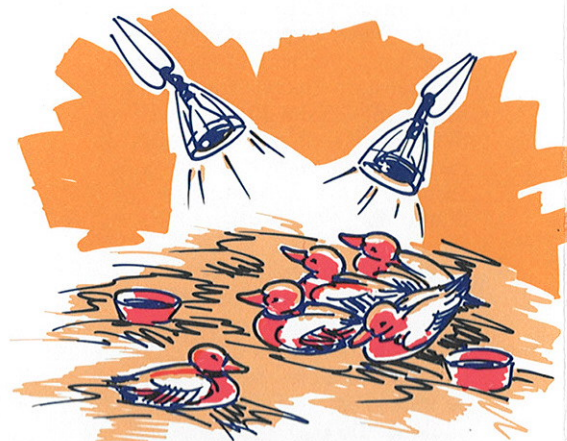
so diving ducks — goldeneye and scaup — which gather in the middle of this vast body of water in the fall.

Cap Tourmente

This centre is housed in the office of the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area, providing a base of operations which is more than adequate and is close to migratory stopover points frequented by several hundreds of thousands of Greater Snow Geese.

Baie-Comeau

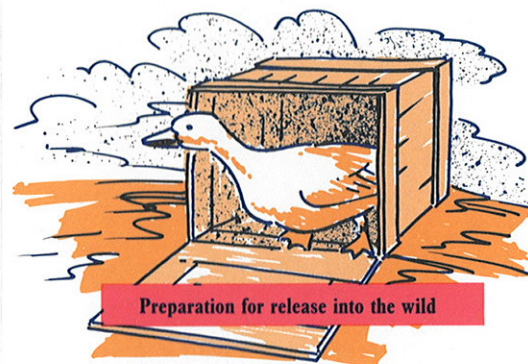
In Baie-Comeau, the cleaning centre is located in the office of the ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche. It covers the marine duck (oldsquaw and scoter) population along the north shore of the estuary, totalling between 30,000 and 40,000 individuals in fall and winter.



Feeding of convalescing birds

Rimouski

The Rimouski centre is located in the Jardins de Métis and is also administered by the ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche. It covers the south shore of the saltwater estuary of the St Lawrence and the western portion of the Gaspé Peninsula. This is the favoured haunt of the eider, which can be seen in large flocks all along this coast in summer and late into the fall.



Preparation for release into the wild

Forillon

This cleaning centre is run by the Canadian Parks Service and is housed in the offices of Forillon National Park. It will be able to handle birds in difficulty found in the sector between Grande Vallée and the head of Baie des Chaleurs. The most vulnerable species in this region are scoters, whose numbers in spring are estimated at about 10,000, and various other seabird species.

Objectives of the Cleaning Centres

These six cleaning centres have been established to deal with birds in difficulty following an oil spill in the St Lawrence. Their main operations will be as follows:

recovery of birds in trouble;

administration of veterinary care;

cleaning of oiled birds;

feeding of convalescing birds;

preparation for release into the wild.

All the centres are provided with basic equipment, like work tables, a dozen or so holding pens, sinks, a hot water supply, cleaning detergent and an electrical system designed to accommodate heat lamps. In addition, supplementary equipment is stored at the Cap Tourmente centre, whence it can be quickly dispatched to any other centre called into operation; this material includes capture nets, miniature pools, cleaning basins, coveralls and protective goggles. Lastly, each centre has special scaring equipment, such as propane bangers and crackers, that can be rapidly deployed to scare waterfowl away from oil slicks.

Partners

The establishment of the Canadian Wildlife Service's emergency intervention plan, including the cleaning centres, required the setting up of a large-scale network of partners and the provision of training for them. The leaflet entitled 'Le Mazouté' provides network members with useful information and is issued by the Canadian Wildlife Service approximately twice a year.

In addition to the administrative services provided by the Canadian Wildlife Service, the ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche, the Canadian Parks Service and MacDonald College, the cleaning centres enjoy the support of some 30 organizations. Some, such as Ultramar and the Québec Society for the Protection of Birds, provided financial support for the creation of the network; others, such as the Fondation des Oiseleurs, the Québec City Zoo, some veterinary clinics, bird-watching clubs, fish and game associations and environmental groups, provide the manpower for some of the actual clean-up jobs. Lastly, the emergency services of Environment Canada and Environnement Québec are responsible for co-ordination in the event of such incidents.

Emergency Intervention Plan

Overall responsibility:

Canadian Wildlife Service
1141 Route de l'Église
Post Office Box 10,100
Sainte-Foy, Québec
G1V 4H5
(418) 648-2544

Emergency Services - Environment Canada,
(514) 283-2345
Emergency Services - Environnement Québec,
(418) 643-4595

Partners:

For all Québec regions:
Ultramar Inc.

Montréal region:

Cleaning centre/MacDonald College
Ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche
Club d'observation d'oiseaux Marie-Victorin

Québec Society for the Protection of Birds
Clinique vétérinaire Jean Gauvin

Trois-Rivières region:

Cleaning centre — Ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche
Club des ornithologues de Sorel-Tracy
Association sportive de Batiscan
Société ornithologique du centre du Québec
Société d'ornithologues de Lanaudière
Association des chasseurs et des pêcheurs du comté de Maskinongé
Clinique vétérinaire Michèle Chartier

Québec City region:

Cleaning centre — Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area
Ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche
Fondation des Oiseleurs
Société Duvetnor
Québec City Zoo

North Shore region:

Cleaning centre — Ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Corporation du parc d'interprétation naturelle de Naturam
Pro-faune
Club des ornithologues de la Manicouagan
Baie-Comeau CEGEP
Canadian Parks Service
Corporation de promotion industrielle et touristique de Sept-Îles
Clinique vétérinaire Élisabeth Chenail

Lower St Lawrence region:

Cleaning centre — Ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche
Club des ornithologues du Bas-Saint-Laurent
Société de conservation de la baie de L'Isle-Verte
Musée de la mer
Club radio du Bas-Saint-Laurent
Clinique vétérinaire Suzanne Lecompte

Gaspé region:

Cleaning centre — Forillon National Park
Ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche
Club des ornithologues de la Gaspésie
Clinique vétérinaire André Barville
Clinique vétérinaire Lynda Plourde

Other co-operating organizations:

Club des ornithologues des Îles-de-la-Madeleine
Association de Chasse et Pêche de Havre-Saint-Pierre
Clinique vétérinaire Marc Tuff

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