

Abstract

The “Full City” Bird Rehabilitation Response Story, Summer 2009

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Just after midnight on July 31 2009, the bulk carrier Full City stranded during a storm on the skerries of Såstein outside Langesund in southern Norway. The carrier had about 1000 tons crude oil onboard, much of which spilled into the sea.

The coastline affected by the spill is one of the most popular recreation and holiday places in the Norway. Needless to say, the media was all over it.

In the vicinity of the stranding, there are more than 70 protected reservoirs for seabirds. It did not take long before the first pictures of oiled birds were published in every media known to man.

A lot of experts voiced their opinions, arguing that all birds should be clubbed to death, shot or collected for rehab. The order was given to start shooting.

The newly formed network, Norwegian Oiled Wildlife was in for its first big trial. Incorporation of rehabilitation into the national oil spill response was NOW's ultimate goal. But so far we were hardly more than a paper organization.

But we did have a few aces up our sleeve. One of the members, Friends of the Earth, had built up a first response package we could put into action. We had 5 people that had been to IBRRC's headquarters and received training there. And we had Sea Alarm, with their members who could mobilize in a day. And, last but not least, for the first time all the major NGOs in Norway stood shoulder by shoulder, demanding that the wildlife response should take place. All were members of NOW.

We got the authorities attention, and our first demand to stop shooting the birds and start collecting them for care was heard. A generous budget for us to start the response also came into place. For the first time ever in Norway, we were working with the authorities saving birds as a respected part of the response to a spill. It felt great, but the work had only just begun.

This presentation will show how NOW built up the response, carried out the rehabilitation and how we are preparing for the next spill. Not least will it contain lessons learned in those hectic days!