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## Oiled Birds From Natural Seep Flood International Bird Rescue

**LOS ANGELES, Calif. (March 2, 2012)** - 97 oiled Murres - penguin-like diving birds that spend most of their lives at sea - have been brought to International Bird Rescue for care over the last two months, and as of yesterday afternoon they are still flooding in. Unlike the birds we hear about during high profile oil spills, these birds are being oiled by a natural oil seep along the Southern California coast, so public awareness is much more limited. The danger, however, to the birds is identical. With no one else to blame but Mother Nature, International Bird Rescue is asking the public take action as these birds' last line of defense.

Oil - whether it is spilled from a tanker or mixed up from the ocean floor - interferes with birds' ability to maintain their body temperature by impairing the natural waterproofing properties of their feathers and consequently their insulation from the elements, often resulting in hypothermia.

These natural oil seeps occur most notably in the Santa Barbara Channel near Coal Oil Point, which emits between 5,280 and 6,600 gallons of oil per day, and when this oil is stirred up each winter it becomes particularly harmful to diving birds, like the Murres currently filling International Bird Rescue's Los Angeles Center.

International Bird Rescue has 40 years of experience cleaning oiled wildlife at more than 200 oil spills as it maintains two year-round aquatic bird rescue centers. Over the last four decades both the scope and the sophistication of International Bird Rescue's clinical work and research have evolved, dramatically increasing survival rates. "We know that when we get birds from a natural seep in time they have a good chance of survival," notes International Bird Rescue Director Emeritus, Jay Holcomb. "Some years we receive even more natural oil seep birds than we do birds from a human-caused oil spill with a responsible party to cover the cost of their care - and, unfortunately, these birds don't come to us with health insurance."

"We have never seen this many oil seep Murres at once." Besides the 97 Murres, International Bird Rescue's patients oiled from this event have included three Common Loons, three Pacific Loons, three Western Grebes, an Eared Grebe, a Surf Scoter, and a Rhinoceros Auklet.

Natural events like oil seeps, algal blooms, and even extreme weather keep staff and volunteers at International Bird Rescue's Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Centers busy at least 10 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### How the Public Can Help

Some of International Bird Rescue's costs for natural seep events are offset by support from California's Oiled Wildlife Care Network through funding by the California Department of Fish and Game, but the nonprofit still bears the brunt of this responsibility every year and is asking for donations at [www.Bird-Rescue.org](http://www.Bird-Rescue.org).

To report oiled wildlife sightings please call (877) UCD-OWCN.

### About International Bird Rescue

International Bird Rescue (Bird Rescue) has been saving seabirds and other aquatic birds around the world since 1971. Bird Rescue's team of specialists operates two year-round aquatic bird rescue centers in California, which care for over 5,000 birds every year, and has led oiled bird rescue efforts in over 200 oil spills in more than a dozen countries. [www.Bird-Rescue.org](http://www.Bird-Rescue.org)