

The Experts' Views

A Catastrophe for Wildlife

By Scott Thurber

In the brief period since Monday's tanker collision, volunteers in the Bay Area have picked up more oil-spilled seabirds than were rescued in the two months following the Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969.

The oil is still on local waters. If it coats beaches, mudflats and tidepools in local wildlife areas, it could kill off substantial food sources of the surviving seabirds. These foods include ghost shrimp, clams, mud-worms, and other small water organisms.

Bay Area wildlife experts and spokesmen for the still largely uncoordinated wildlife rescue and protection effort offered some discouraging statistics yesterday.

• So far, about 2600 birds — admittedly a rough estimate — have been collected in shoreline areas and taken to various special centers for cleaning and protected treatment. The two-month figure in the Santa Barbara area was 1600, sources there said yesterday.

• Although there have been relatively few deaths among the seabirds collected, cleaned, and treated in the Bay Area, many — perhaps most — may die before the treatment is ended in the Santa Barbara area, less than five per cent survived.

• Nobody has made any attempt to count dead seabirds along the lagoon affected bay and ocean-front



Mike Vardas of Daly City cleaned a duck at Stinson.

Areas. More than 3000 dead waterbirds were found in the Santa Barbara area.

The major wildlife area still threatened — and it was recurringly threatened with each high tide — was Bolinas lagoon, one of the major seabird sanctuaries on the Pacific Flyway.

A combination of suspended "booms" across the channel entrance — interspersed with thick layers of absorbent straw — kept oil-intrusion into the lagoon at high tide periods to a minimum early

yesterday morning and again yesterday afternoon.

Clerin Zumwalt, a lagoon expert who serves as naturalist for the nearby Auobon Canyon Ranch, said he spotted only a few small patches of thin oil on the lagoon surface near its south seaward side yesterday.

He happily reported no traces of oil on the lagoon's beaches — or oily birds along its shores.

"So far, so good," he said hopefully. Inside the Bay, there ap-

peared no imminent threat to the most valuable areas initially threatened — in the Richardson Bay section, barring a return of the main oil slick.

Norman McIntosh, curator of the Audobon Society's big Richardson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, said he was taking no chances.

Beaches around the sanctuary were covered with straw at low tides — to absorb any oil which might drift in at the high tides.

If the beach and mudflat areas should become coated with oil, he said, "in essence it would pave the beach and rocks just as though you put down heavy asphalt for a road."

He said it would cut off air to the "little creatures" in that habitat couldn't breathe.

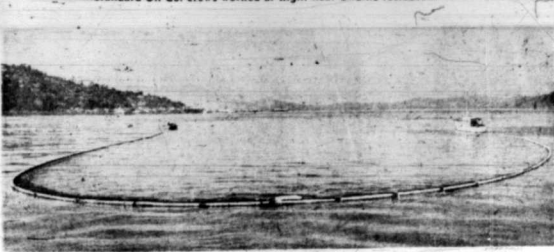
Zumwalt said the oil spill posed little danger to fish. Most fish in the Bay Area, he said, are deep-feeders — and only surface-feeders, he said, there are a few of these, mostly carp, in the bay itself; would be threatened by the surface oil.

Dr. Lawrence Binford, ornithologist, and assistant curator of the California Academy of Sciences said treated birds must be kept in captivity and under special care for months before they are released — "until they moult."

It takes them that long to regain the natural oils in their feathers which insulate them and enable them to float, he said.



Standard Oil Co. crews worked at night near Ondine restaurant



Boats picked up oil off Richardson Bay using a boom

Work Around the Clock

The oil cleanup went on day and night in Richardson Bay. At 2 a.m. yesterday floodlights gleamed on Bridgeway in Sausalito as workmen put a boom in the water, watched

silently by groups of people on the street. Later in the day, boatmen on each end of the boom swept the surface trying to clear the harbor.

'Corner-Cutting'

Sierra Club Leader Blames Industry

By Maitland Zane

The president of the Sierra Club said indignantly yesterday that the Standard Oil Co. should be fined \$1 million a day for "gross negligence" in the big Bay oil spill.

Sausalito Session On Preventing Oil Spill Crashes

A meeting will be held today in Sausalito to explore ways to guard against the kind of ship collision that created Monday's disastrous oil spill.

Mayor Alexander Imlay sent telegrams to numerous Federal, State and local officials and agencies, as well as to eight oil companies, asking them to send representatives to the meeting.

The meeting will be at noon in Campbell Hall, across the street from Christ Church on San Carlos avenue.

East Bay Suits Over Oil Spills

District Attorney William A. O'Malley of Contra Costa county announced yesterday that five criminal complaints arising from commercial oil spills in waters bordering the county have been filed in various courts.

They are not connected with the current major spill. One complaint said 14,000 gallons of fuel oil were spilled from the Hoegh Belmar, operated by Antomar Incorporated of San Francisco, on January 8 at Pittsburg.

A complaint against the Standard Oil Co. of California said fuel oil from a pipeline break spilled into Rodeo Creek January 16.

Other incidents cited a barge of Bovey Lines Company at San Francisco ripped a loading pipe at the Union Oil Company dock at Rodeo, spilling 2000 gallons, the Point Star, operated by Hen International of San Francisco, spilled 100 gallons of diesel fuel at the Union dock in Rodeo; the jet Golden Eagle, of the Shumby Pacific Marine, spilled 150 gallons of light fuel oil at Richmond.

Phillip Berry, an Oakland lawyer who heads the Nation's largest conservation group, said he fears that the Bay disaster will be worse than Santa Barbara's two years ago.

"And doubly bad because it occurred in an estuary where there will probably be more severe damage to life," he said.

Berry said the two tankers "had no business" being where they were in a narrow channel, in a flood tide, in dense fog and without Bay pilots at night.

BLAME

He blamed the accident on "corner-cutting" policies of the oil industry, which he branded the number one "threat to the environment."

Glumly predicting the death of 97 per cent of the water birds affected, Berry told newsmen.

"We're trying to arouse the public so we won't have another disaster like this one. We need to change the laws and to police the oil companies, and we're intervening through our attorneys in the Coast Guard hearing on the spill."

VOTING

Berry also attacked the "dismal" voting record on conservation of Rogers C.B. Morton, President Nixon's nominee to succeed Walter Hekkel, that man Mr. Nixon fired as Secretary of the Interior.

Berry said Morton's recent job as Republican National Chairman would have made Morton beholden to the oil lobby, because as chairman he would have doubtless solicited campaign contributions.

RECORD

"Berry said the Maryland Congressman is thus hardly the man to decide whether to permit the building of the controversial Alaska oil pipeline or to allow new oil drilling leases in the Santa Barbara Channel.

Citing Morton's votes against Clean Air Acts and for the supersonic transport bill in the Grand Canyon, Berry said Morton is likely to be much worse than his predecessor.

"Hekkel may have been a hero to some people, but he was not a hero to us. He was better than we feared, but far from perfect," Berry said.

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