

ABSTRACT: Lessons learnt – remote wildlife response

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Knowledge of how to successfully manage remote spills has been significantly enhanced through SANCCOB's response to the oiling of more than 4,000 endangered Northern Rockhopper penguins off Tristan da Cunha, the most remote inhabited island in the world. When the MV Oliva sank off Nightingale Island in the South Atlantic in March 2011, SANCCOB (the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds), as the closest responders, were put on high alert and subsequently mounted a response out of Cape Town, South Africa. The team worked with the islanders for a period of 4 weeks to undertake the task of rehabilitating the penguins affected by the spill and left behind human capacity and equipment. As with all wildlife responses, there were unique challenges with the operation, and this paper will address specific challenges encountered as a result of the remoteness of the spill location. Lessons learnt in terms of equipment required, capacity building and training, facilities, and adapting standard operating procedures for species, which have never been rehabilitated on a large scale, will be discussed. In conclusion practical suggestions to ensure a better level of preparedness in remote areas, such as those encountered in the Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic, will be put forward.