



NEWS MEDIA ADVISORY : (Phone Number Correction) 17-20

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## **Unified Command and Tri-State continue to release rehabilitated wildlife**

By MC2 Jacob S. Richardson for Wolfsnare Creek Response Unified Command

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA -- Yesterday, May 24, 2017, wildlife and natural resource experts from Unified Command and Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, Inc. (Tri-State). released three rehabilitated animals affected by the Wolfsnare Creek fuel spill. The animals, which were cleaned, rehabilitated, and deemed healthy by Tri-State, were released back into their local habitat, on Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana, away from affected areas.

"It is an exciting moment to be able to release a wild animal back into their natural habitat after having been through the contamination and decontamination processes," said Michael Wright, Navy natural resource specialist. "We have already released a red-jointed fiddler crab, a snapping turtle and an amphiuma. Today we will release another snapping turtle, an eastern box turtle, and a rough green snake. We hope to release additional animals next week."

Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research has been responding to wildlife involved in oil spills since 1976. Tri-State has a trained, dedicated staff on call 24-hours-a-day to respond to wildlife contaminated by oil spills anywhere in the world.

"With the assistance of Virginia Department of Environment Quality (DEQ) and the information provided in the Virginia Area Contingency Plan, we requested the assistance of Tri-State and began coordinating efforts with them," said Wright. "Their experience, professionalism and proven ability to coordinate with multiple agencies makes them a top-rated choice among the possible agencies that could assist in a spill situation."

"Rehabilitation of oiled wildlife is a complex, crisis-oriented endeavor," said Danene Birtell, oil programs director of the Oiled Wildlife Response Program at Tri-State "Tri-State takes a teamwork approach to oil spill training and response, stressing the need for regulatory agencies, responsible parties, state and federal wildlife professionals, colleagues in wildlife care, and concerned citizens to work together both in preparations for and response to oil spills."

According to Birtell, the rehabilitation process includes rescuing and stabilizing the animal in the field and then transporting the animal to a specialized facility in Delaware to undergo medical examination. A veterinarian then provides a medical examination, and based on the findings, determines a course of treatment to include a washing or decontamination process.

"We transport the affected wildlife to Delaware, because that's where we can best meet the needs of wildlife that are impacted by contaminant," said Birtell. "This facility provides the best possible care for the animals and for the safety of the humans working with the animals."

While a number of animals have been recovered from affected areas, an effort being lead with the assistance of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), each animal is evaluated and only released when deemed fully rehabilitated by a knowledgeable veterinarian.

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"There are pre-established criteria for releasing animals into the wild," said Birtell. "These are based on species, behavior, and medical treatment. Some things to consider are historical facts of captivity, behavior of the animal, if the animal is eating on their own, if the animal is still taking medicine, or still recovering from injury."

After an animal is deemed ready for release, Specialists with Tri-State and Unified Command work to find a release location that meets the needs of the animal.

"Release is based on whether the location is a safe environment and part of their home range," said Birtell. "Upon release we generally allow them to exit the carrier on their own and let them get their bearing."

"These releases would not be happening if it were not for the dedicated team of agencies supporting this effort," said Wright. "The animals we are releasing today have been cared for by members of the USDA APHIS-Wildlife Services, Tri-State, Virginia Beach Police Department Animal Care & Adoption Center and the U.S. Navy. This team has also been in coordination with members of Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to help ensure we are providing appropriate care to these animals by permitted individuals and are releasing them into suitable habitats."

For updated info about the rehabilitated wildlife, please call (757) 433-2162

Additional information can be found at the Naval Air Station Oceana Fuel Spill website at:  
[www.cnic.navy.mil/oceanafuelspill](http://www.cnic.navy.mil/oceanafuelspill)

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Media can download b-roll or video w/VO directly at:

B-Roll (small): <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1FGADhDhpJfQjVFX2tzTHBILXc>

B-Roll (large): <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1FGADhDhpJfRHpoT09iMUgzMms>

Full video w/ voiceover (small):

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1FGADhDhpJfZU95bTNvRFIxbTQ>

Full video w/ voiceover (large):

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1FGADhDhpJfeXJrQ2hjSDgydUE>

170524-N-JE250-001 VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (May 24, 2017) Wildlife affected during the Naval Air Station Oceana fuel spill are released back into their habitats at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Animals were recovered by U.S. Department of Agriculture and were rehabilitated by Tri-State veterinarians at a specialized facility in Delaware. (U.S. Navy video by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darby Dillon/released)