

IFAW rescues and rehabilitates hundreds of animals affected by major oil spill in Veracruz, Mexico

(Veracruz, Mexico - 13 January 2005) - A team of wildlife experts from IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare - www.ifaw.org) are currently rescuing and rehabilitating animals affected by a major oil spill near Veracruz Mexico. The spill occurred on December 22 after an explosion at a pumping station spilled approximately five thousand barrels of oil into the Coatzacoalcos River causing widespread damage to marine habitat and wildlife.

"Hundreds of animals, mostly pelicans, are stained with oil and we are attempting to catch and wash them as quickly as possible," said Paul Kelway, Manager of IFAW's Emergency Relief (ER) team.

On the scene, IFAW is working in cooperation with local Mexican government organizations such as CONABIO (National Commission for Biodiversity) and PROFEPA (Federal Department of Environmental Protection) to recruit and train volunteers to handle cleanup and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation work. In addition, IFAW is coordinating efforts with PEMEX, the Mexican-owned oil company responsible for the spill, which has agreed to help the rescue of oiled wildlife.

IFAW has established a rehabilitation center at a location near the spill site, complete with washing pools, pens, cages and oily water waste tanks. To date, 149 animals have been admitted to the center, including: pelicans, seagulls, herons, snakes, box turtles, hawks, kingfishers, iguanas and water turtles. The number of animals affected by the spill is growing on a daily basis and is expected to reach at least 400. To date, 8 animals have been released from the center and the team expects more to be released in the coming days.

IFAW team members will remain on the scene to coordinate the ongoing rescue and rehabilitation efforts for the next few weeks. These efforts include cleaning and feeding injured wildlife and returning them to their natural habitat.

About IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare)

Founded in 1969, IFAW is an international animal welfare and conservation organization that works to protect wild and domestic animals and to broker solutions that benefit both animals and people. With offices in 15 countries around the world, IFAW works to protect whales, elephants, great apes, big cats, dogs and cats, seals, and other animals. To learn how to help IFAW protect animals, please visit www.ifaw.org.