

IMPACT OF OIL SPILLS OCCURRING ALONG THE VALDEZ ALASKA -
STATE OF WASHINGTON, SUPER TANKER ROUTE ON WILDLIFE

The plight of oil covered birds in coastal and inland waters is one of the most obvious symbols of damage by man to his environment. Their vulnerability to death in such situations is so great that for every 100 birds actually retrieved and, depending upon where the oil spill occurs usually only a small percentage of oil fouled birds are actually retrieved, only three will survive and return to the wild. A spot of oil as small as a fifty cent piece on the breast feathers of alcids is fatal. Death to birds in oil covered waters can be attributed to various causes, such as poisoning due to ingestion of oil, to drowning and to exposure resulting from the removal of the waterproofing capability from body feathers. Unfortunately, there is as yet no method which is completely effective in cleaning and re-waterproofing bird feathers.

The west coast of British Columbia is a major migratory route for ducks, geese and many other types of birds which move south from Alaska. Some of the migrating birds move down the mainland part of North America, but many move down the coastline, the majority using the inside passage between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia, the minority using the west coast of Vancouver Island route.