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# US Group Comes to the Rescue of Penguins Stranded Off Brazil's Coast

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Over 1000 young penguins have washed-up either dead or dying along the Brazilian coast and as far north as Natal in Rio Grande do Norte, 3000 km ((1864 miles) north of São Paulo. Even though the occurrence is not that unusual, the number of dead birds is.

US-based IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) deployed a team of penguin rehabilitation experts to assist Brazilian animal centers that are handling penguins for the first time.

"This event appears to be a natural occurrence and has been seen 2 or 3 times in the last 20 years, resulting in the death of thousands of birds. What really took us by surprise this time is the huge increase in numbers," said Valeria Ruoppolo of IFAW.

The Magellanic penguins (*Spheniscus magellanicus*), the kind that is showing up off the Brazilian coast, breed in large colonies in southern Argentina and Chile and migrate north as far as Southwest Brazil between March and September.

According to experts, there is a flow of warmer water (1C higher than normal), which has caused the juvenile penguins to keep going north, past their usual range, where they are unable to find adequate food. Almost all of the penguins being found on beaches in northeastern Brazil have been juveniles and since they are starving, they come into care in an extremely debilitated state.

IFAW's team of experts are working with Instituto Mamíferos Aquáticos in Salvador, Bahia and Instituto ORCA in Vitória, in the state of Espírito Santo, to help save as many penguins as possible. The Brazilian Institute for Environment and Renewable Resources (IBAMA) welcomed IFAW's expertise for the rehabilitation of these stranded penguins.

Penguins in rehabilitation are individually checked for their treatment evolution, fed fish supplemented with vitamins, and spend time swimming to recover the strength and approve health requirements needed to be released back to their ocean home.

IFAW's staff is working closely with the authorities at IBAMA to advise on bird release criteria and suitable locations to release these birds, ensuring they have fish available to survive.

IFAW's experience in rehabilitation has saved the lives of tens of thousands of penguins. In 2000, IFAW helped save an entire species -rehabilitating and releasing 19,000 African Penguins caught in the Treasure oil spill off South Africa.

Founded in 1969, IFAW works around the globe to protect animals and habitats, promoting practical solutions for animals and people.

Service

IFAW - International Fund for Animal Welfare

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