Oil Tanker Runs Aground Off Scotland, Threatens Wildlife

By Stanley Meisel

A British rescue helicopter pulled the 134-member Greek crew of the Braer and 33 livestock aboard Tuesday, after the tanker ran aground in the Shetlands, off northern Scotland.

The spill, which contaminated a pristine spot, could have a significant effect on fish and bird populations. Some experts noted that the spill's impact on the Shetland fishing area was similar to that of the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska in 1989.

Sea ducks winter in the local waters, and the area has been important for salmon and seals. The area has been designated a Marine Protected Area.

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By Marek Zebrowski

Ministers in the United Kingdom and Europe gathered in Brussels Tuesday morning to assess the situation after the Braer ran aground off the Shetlands, an area to which bird species from the rest of the British Isles could migrate.

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A single-hulled, 700-foot tanker carrying almost 2 million gallons of oil ran aground on the Shetland Islands Tuesday, threatening both the local environment and a major environmental disaster in an internationally known wildlife area.

Local fishermen said Braer was carrying almost double the amount of oil that the Exxon Valdez was carrying when it ran aground in Alaska in 1989. The Braer is believed to have been ingested by birds and fish, which could contaminate the area for years to come.

U.S. considering options in wake of Iraqi deployment of missiles

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Tuesday that the administration was "considering options" in the wake of an Iraqi deployment of surface-to-air missiles in the southern part of the country.

The launch of the missiles, which carried 250-pound air-to-air bombs, was a sign of growing concern in the region.

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A document from the National Park Service states that the spill is expected to affect the coast for at least three weeks.

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No bitter (or even normal) January cold is expected this week. Whitewater temperatures for the rest of the week, some freezes are expected in the next two days; additionally, there is a chance of some more snow associated with a cold front passage on Saturday. It seems like this weather will not be unusual for the time of year.

Weekend Ski Report

With the unusually warm weather so far this January, all New England skiers (except Blue Hills locally) report a base of at least 6 inches; in most areas it ranges from 1 to 3 feet. The only areas with new snow this week were Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire's White Mountains, and Killington, Okemo, and Smuggler's Notch.

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