Hello Everyone,

It has been an incredibly intense, fast-paced month for the OCN team, and we wanted to bring you right into the loop of what's been happening on the ground (and on the beaches) here in Namibia.

First, let's look at the numbers from our June seal rescues:

Total seal rescues for June: 145 seals
Total seal rescues for 2026 so far: 265 seals

The sad news: We also discovered one entangled pup who had already passed away before we could reach them.

When it comes to the plastic and trash we are cutting off these animals, the culprits remain frustratingly familiar. Our top three entanglement causes for 2026 continue to be packaging straps and recreational and commercial fishing line. No major shifts there, just the same persistent hazards our ocean wildlife faces daily.

World Ocean Week: A Busy and Hopeful Blur

June also brought World Ocean Week, and to be completely honest, we were absolutely amazed by the sheer volume of engagement we received. Up until the very last moment, schools, local businesses, and various organisations were reaching out, wanting us to come and speak to them, or join community clean up missions.

Balancing all of these talks on top of an already exhausting and busy peak rescue season was incredibly challenging for our small team. However, we appreciate this massive focus on marine conservation so much. Historically, there has been a massive gap between conservation efforts on land versus conservation at sea here in Namibia. But the last few weeks have given us a genuine sense of hope. It feels like the tide might finally be turning, and the focus is shifting toward our oceans, a change that is long overdue.

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The Growing Threat of Avian Influenza

While we celebrate the community's growing marine awareness, we are also facing a looming shadow that has our team deeply concerned. Besides confirmed rabies cases, we are currently watching the global situation regarding Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) with a lot of anxiety.

Naude represented OCN at an international seal conference Cape Town in June to discuss the very real threat of this virus spreading heavily to the seal populations right here in Namibia. Avian influenza is no longer just a bird problem. It has mutated to cross over into mammals with devastating speed. We have seen horrific case studies from South America, where outbreaks caused mass mortalities in pinnipeds, wiping out thousands of sea lions and elephant seal pups. The potential for a full-scale cross-over situation in our dense Namibian Cape Fur Seal colonies is a terrifying prospect.

If the virus takes hold in our colonies, the ecological fallout could be catastrophic, not just locally but globally, as these marine mammals interact across vast coastal distances. Because our seals and seabirds share the exact same tight spaces, the risk of transmission is incredibly high. We are talking about a highly contagious, airborne, and fluid-borne virus that could decimate entire generations of marine life. It is a frightening reality that conservationists worldwide are scrambling to monitor.

The thought of bird flu ripping through Pelican Point or Cape Cross is genuinely scary, and we are on high alert every single day. We desperately hope to avoid the tragic scenes witnessed on South American beaches. Increased surveillance and rapid reporting are our only real shields right now. The world is watching how this virus behaves in marine mammals, and Namibia is right on the frontline of this worry.
And yes - an HPAI outbreak would absolutely prevent us from doing seal rescues.

25th & 26th
JUNE 2026

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Important Advisory: Weak and Disoriented Cormorants

On a related note, there have been numerous reports of weak, down, and disoriented Cape Cormorants all along the coastal towns of Namibia recently.

⚠️ Please Note: Bird flu has NOT been officially confirmed as the cause for these specific cormorants, and there are other potential environmental factors that could be making them sick.

However, given the current global climate, we must practice extreme caution. Please understand that OCN is unfortunately not able to deal with or take in these weak or sick cormorants. We operate a very small bird rehab station that we must keep strictly open and safe for potential African Penguin rehab cases. With so few penguins left to save the species, our absolute priority at this stage has to be the African Penguin. We simply cannot risk the accidental introduction of Avian Influenza to our facility, as a single infection could be fatal for the penguins in our care.

Please do not touch or pick up any birds you think might be affected or in distress. Keep your pets away from them on the beaches, and if you spot a sick or deceased bird, please contact the state veterinarian immediately so proper, safe protocols can be followed.

Thank you for being a vital part of our community. Your generosity and kindness keeps us motivated.

The Ocean Conservation Namibia Team

www.ocnamibia.org
Ocean Conservation International (501(c)3)

8 The Green, STE A
Dover, DE 19901

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