



Short Activity
Ages 6–8
25–30 minutes

Oil Spill: Global Clean-Up

Description

Participants will learn about the impact of oil spills on animals around the world and try to clean up a simulated oil spill.

Number of participants

For one or more participants

Space considerations

An indoor or outdoor space with space for a water- and oil-based activity.

Competencies

- Environmental awareness
- Hand-eye coordination
- Observation and recording
- Critical thinking
- Fine motor skills
- Comparing and contrasting

Materials

- Deep trays or other similar containers (aluminum baking trays, plastic bins)
- Water
- Oil (e.g., baby oil or vegetable oil)
- Craft feathers (at least six per participant)
- Sponges (can cut a larger sponge into several smaller pieces)
- Cotton balls or rounds
- Cotton swabs
- Toothbrushes or small brushes
- Popsicle sticks
- Plastic spoons
- Liquid soap (dish soap, hand soap) or bar soap

- Measuring cups/spoons
- Blue food colouring (optional)
- Rubber gloves (optional)
- Aprons or smocks (optional)
- Paper towels
- Cups (reusable or plastic/paper)
- Book display of titles related to conservation, environmental protection, water pollution, animal habitats, etc.

Preparation

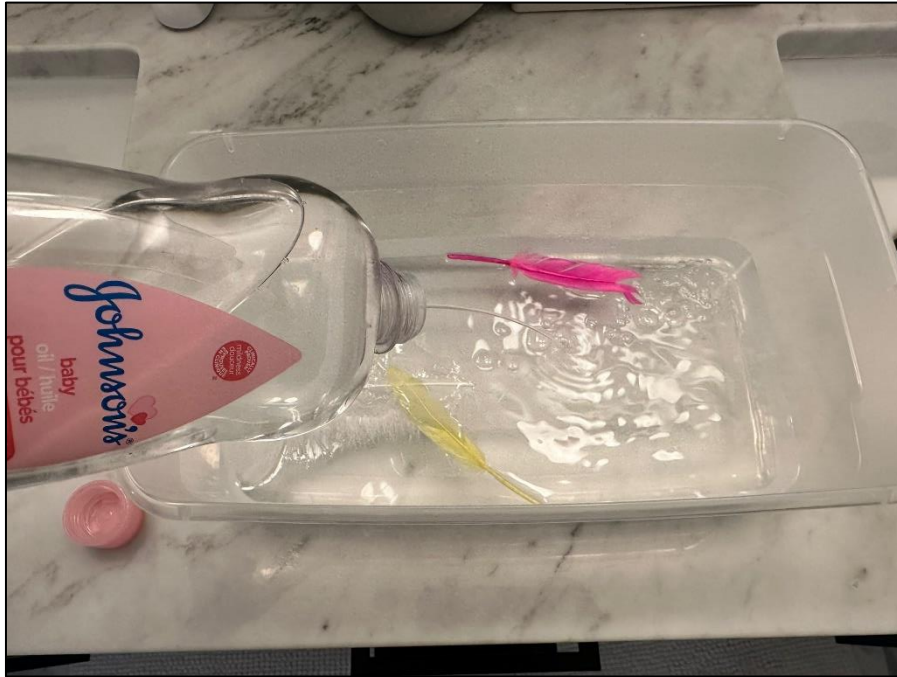
- Prepare the room for a program that uses water and oil (e.g., cover work areas with tablecloths).
- Encourage participants to dress for mess as oil can stain. Provide aprons or smocks if available.
- Prepare stations for participants. If using larger trays, two participants may share.



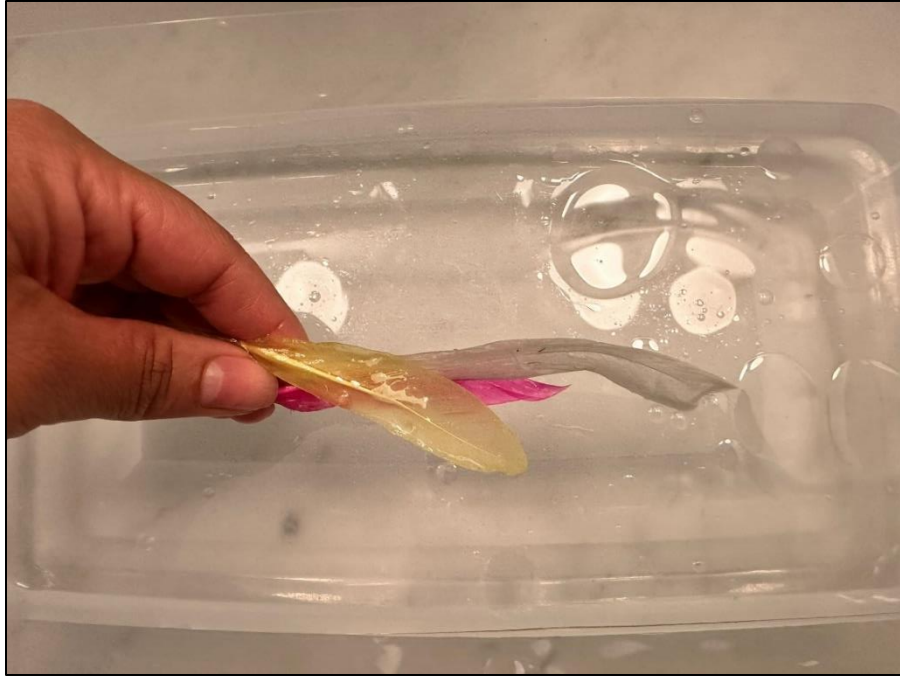
Implementation

1. Ask participants what they may already know about oil spills. Some guiding questions include:
 - a. What can cause oil spills?
 - b. Who and what can be impacted by spills? (worksheet)
 - c. How can we help?
2. Explain that each tray of water will represent a body of water in the real world, like an ocean or lake, and the feathers will represent animals (birds).
3. Add feathers into trays.

4. Pour a small amount of oil into the trays. It does not have to be an exact amount, but aim for a 1:4 ratio of oil to water. The blue food colouring can also be added now if wanted.



5. Stir oil and water together with spoon.
6. Observe the mixture. Some guiding questions include:
 - a. What happens to the water when the oil is added?
 - b. What did the feathers look like before the oil?
 - c. What do the feathers look like now?



7. Once the feathers have been covered in oil, remove the feathers onto a paper towel and clean them as much as possible. Use liquid soap on cleaning tools (not in the water) or scrub tools onto bar soap.

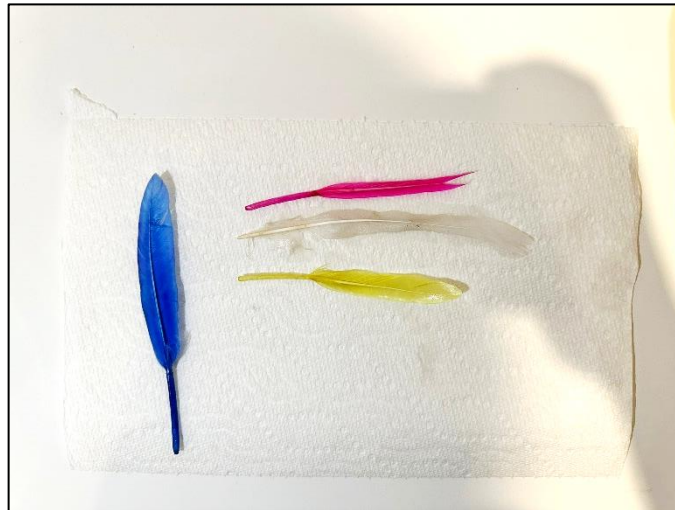


8. Using the worksheet, note which tools work best.

Oil Spill Clean Up: What Works Best?	
	Feathers
Hands	
Sponge	
Brush	
Cotton balls or rounds	
Popicle sticks	
Cotton swabs	

Record the technique used and how well it worked with each tool on each oily feather.

9. Lay out all the oil-spill affected feathers on a paper towel and observe what they look like compared to a feather that was never in the tray.



Accessibility considerations

- Walk through directions, explaining each step: "I'm pouring oil into the tray of water."
- Encourage participants to use their hands to feel the feathers, dip their fingers into the water, etc.
- Offer larger trays and scale up cleaning tools to make them easier to grab.
- To increase the sensory element and to extend this activity, consider including other items in the tray to be affected by the "oil spill": small rocks, twigs, bits of fabric, pompoms, etc.

Book suggestions

- **Endangered Animals Atlas: A Journey Across the World and Into the Wild** by Tom Jackson and Sam Caldwell
- **One Home: Eighteen Stories of Hope from Young *Activists*** by Hiba Noor Khan and Rachael Dean
- **Tate's Wild Rescue** by Jenny Turnbull and Izzy Burton

Download links

- Oil Spill—Full Activity PDF
- Oil Spill—Worksheet

Oil Spill: Global Clean-Up

Participant Worksheet

What is an oil spill?



An oil spill is a form of pollution that happens when crude oil is released into water or onto land.


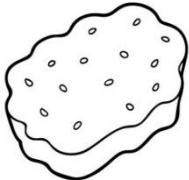

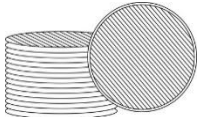
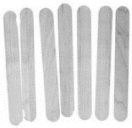
Large oil tankers or trucks transporting oil are big factors in oil spills.

Oil spills can have disastrous impacts.

Can you think of some of the ways an oil spill might affect people, animals and land?

	Ocean animals	Land animals	People	Environment
Impact				
How can we help?				

Oil Spill Clean-Up: What Works Best?

	Feathers
Hands 	
Sponge 	
Brush 	
Cotton balls or rounds 	
Popsicle sticks 	
Cotton Swabs 