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Oil spill spreads to Chek Jawa and Changi Beach

By Joanne Chan

The oil spill caused by the collision of two vessels at sea on Tuesday has spread to Chek Jawa, a wetland off Changi Point.

Oil patches have also been spotted along a 700-metre stretch of Changi Beach between car parks 6 and 7.

Clean up operations are still underway at East Coast Park, amid concerns on the damage on coastal wildlife.

The sand at Changi Beach was coated with oil as cleanup operations continue for a fourth day.

Singapore's Chek Jawa, which is popular with nature lovers, has also been hit.

As of Friday afternoon, oil patches were spotted along a 150-metre stretch of its coastal boardwalk.

The mudflat on Pulau Ubin boasts of several different ecosystems, as well as plants and animals that are no longer common in Singapore.

Contractors and officers have been sent to Chek Jawa, as well as Changi Beach to clear the affected sand and remove the oil.

Environmental groups are concerned that the oil slick will hurt Singapore's precious coastal wildlife.

Some of the oil has made its way to the shoreline, coating the sand and the rocks.

Since Thursday, animal protection group ACRES (Animal Concerns Research and Education Society) has been hard at work - rescuing animals and releasing them back into the wild.

ACRES said it found 20 dead crabs on Thursday. It managed to rescue another three, which were cleaned and released back into the wild at Sembawang Park.

Louis Ng, executive director of ACRES said: "We've seen a lot of dead animals, especially the inter-tidal species. Those are the animals that live on the shoreline. They really have nowhere else to run to. So we're trying to rescue these animals and release them at another site.

"Again, we didn't expect it this bad as well. We thought it was something far out in the ocean, that it won't really hit the shoreline."

As with any oil slick, some damage on the environment can be expected.

Andrew Tan, CEO of National Environment Agency said: "Thus far, the environmental impact has

been minimal. We hope it will stay that way. I understand the concerns of the environmental groups. On our part right now, the first priority we have is to make sure that the areas affected by the oil patches are cleaned up so that the public can continue to make use of these places.

"So our first priority is of course public safety, and public use of these areas, because these are very popular recreational areas."

The National Environment Agency said it will conduct a study on the environmental impact of the oil spill once the cleanup is completed.

As for East Coast Parkway, the National Environment Agency said the situation has stabilised.

It said large patches of oil have been removed by dispersants.