Two bird-rescue centers, the newest facilities in the world's most advanced network of emergency centers for wild animals hurt in oil spills, opened February 20 and March 21.

UC Davis veterinarian and network director Jonna Mazet says she is relieved that the new regional centers, located in Suisun City and San Pedro, were finished before the next large, destructive oil spill occurs in California waters.

“Until we began developing the Oiled Wildlife Care Network in 1994, we were using makeshift facilities.”

Both facilities will be managed by International Bird Rescue Research Center and will be used for wildlife rehabilitation and educational opportunities during non-spill times.

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) is a cooperative system of 24 specialized wildlife care organizations located along the California coast. It is managed by the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center, which is part of the School of Veterinary Medicine. The network is funded by the California Department of Fish and Game’s Office of Spill Prevention and Response. The Fish and Game monies come from interest on the $50 million California

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A sea bird oiled in a 1997 spill is cleaned by OWCN rescue workers at the Marine Wildlife Care Center, Humboldt State University, using liquid detergent and a Water Pik. Petroleum is not only toxic, but also, until it is removed from feathers, prevents animals such as this common murre from being able to stay warm or to fly.

Andrew J. Jones, Humboldt State University