

NEWS

BP Tries to Block Photos of Dead Wildlife

by Laura Goldman · June 05, 2010

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For animal lovers, one of the most heartbreaking aspects of the Gulf spill is the oil-drenched wildlife washing up on shore. If you're too horrified to look at any photos, you're in luck — BP doesn't want you to see them.

As of Friday morning, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's tally of dead animals collected in the Gulf area was 527 birds, 235 sea turtles (six to nine times the average rate), and 30 mammals, including dolphins. Yesterday morning, the spill washed over Queen Bess Island (called "Bird Island" by locals), which is a habitat for Louisiana brown pelicans, the

state bird that was once an endangered species. Forty-one of the birds were coated with oil, and that number is expected to rise.

Have you seen the terrible pictures of all this carnage? Neither have I. And neither has anyone else.

Wonder why? The *New York Daily News* [reported](#) on Wednesday that BP has ordered its contractors not to share pictures or otherwise publicize the scores of dead and injured wildlife.

An unnamed BP contractor gave a reporter a very different tour from the one presented to President Obama during his recent visit. Among the "highlights," if that's what they can be called, was a decomposing dolphin that the worker said had been found filled with oil. The shoreline grass of Queen Bess Island was covered with stricken marine life, some dead and some struggling to breathe. The normally white heads of pelicans were dark with oil.

The worker said BP was insistent it didn't want any photos of the dead animals. "There is a lot of coverup for BP," the worker told the reporter. "They know the ocean will wipe away most of the evidence."

As extra assurance that most of us will never see photographic or any other evidence of the true extent of the carnage, Louisiana residents said BP quickly [whisks off](#) dead and injured wildlife to inaccessible buildings and offshore ships. Out of sight, out of mind ... but forever in locals' memories.

New York Daily News reporters trying to get a closer look at the disaster were escorted from a beach by police who said they were taking orders from BP. Even Louisiana residents have been required to sign [non-disclosures](#).

Really, BP? Did you not get the memo this isn't a police state? You may be able to control politicians by lining their pockets, but your bucks stop there. This disaster is going to affect all of us, and we have every right to see the extent of the damage.

In an encouraging development, this week Charlie Riedel of the *Associated Press* was somehow able to bypass BP's myriad roadblocks and snap some [appalling photos](#). They may make us want to shield our eyes, but it's important we don't bury our heads just as BP would love for us to do.

Photo Credit: [marinephotobank](#)



Laura Goldman is an award-winning writer and longtime animal advocate who lives in the Los Angeles area with two pit bull mix pound pups.