

CHAPTER 14

Petroleum and Individual Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons

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CONTENTS

| | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 14.1 | Introduction..... | 342 |
| 14.2 | Composition and Characteristics..... | 342 |
| | 14.2.1 Petroleum..... | 342 |
| | 14.2.2 PAHs..... | 343 |
| 14.3 | Sources..... | 344 |
| | 14.3.1 Petroleum..... | 344 |
| | 14.3.2 PAHs..... | 345 |
| 14.4 | Environmental Fate..... | 346 |
| | 14.4.1 General Considerations..... | 346 |
| | 14.4.2 Physical and Chemical..... | 346 |
| | 14.4.3 Biological..... | 347 |
| | 14.4.4 Residence Time..... | 348 |
| | 14.4.5 Spill Response..... | 349 |
| 14.5 | Effects on Organisms..... | 349 |
| | 14.5.1 General..... | 349 |
| | 14.5.2 Plants and Microbes..... | 350 |
| | 14.5.3 Invertebrates..... | 351 |
| | 14.5.4 Fish..... | 352 |
| | 14.5.5 Reptiles and Amphibians..... | 353 |
| | 14.5.6 Birds..... | 354 |
| | 14.5.7 Mammals..... | 356 |
| | 14.5.8 The <i>Exxon Valdez</i> and Arabian Gulf Oil Spills..... | 357 |
| | 14.5.9 Conclusions..... | 358 |
| 14.6 | Summary..... | 358 |
| | References..... | 360 |

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Crude petroleum, refined petroleum products, and individual polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) contained within petroleum are found throughout the world. Their presence has been detected in living and nonliving components of ecosystems. Petroleum can be an environmental hazard for all organisms. Individual PAHs can be toxic to organisms, but they are most commonly associated with illnesses in humans. Because petroleum is a major environmental source of these PAHs, petroleum and PAHs are jointly presented in this chapter. Composition, sources, environmental fate, and toxic effects on all organisms of aquatic and terrestrial environments are addressed.

Petroleum spills raised some environmental concern during the early twentieth century when ocean transport of large volumes of crude oil began.¹ World War I caused a large number of oil spills that had a noticeably adverse effect on marine birds. The subsequent conversion of the economy of the world from coal to oil, followed by World War II, greatly increased the petroleum threat to marine life. Efforts to deal with a growing number of oil spills and intentional oil discharges at sea continued during the 1950s and 1960s.¹ The wreck of the *Torrey Canyon* off the coast of England in 1967 produced worldwide concern about the consequences of massive oil spills in the marine environment. Research on the environmental fate and biological effects of spilled petroleum increased dramatically during the 1970s. The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, in 1989, and the massive releases of crude oil into the Arabian Gulf during the 1991 Gulf War again captured international attention and resulted in an increase in environmental research. Despite considerable progress in developing methods to clean up spills, the adoption of numerous national and international controls on shipping practices, and high public concern (e.g., passage of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 [33 USCA Sec. 2701-2761] in the United States), petroleum continues to be a widespread environmental hazard.

The association between skin cancer in chimney sweeps and exposure to contaminants in soot was made in England during the late eighteenth century. By the early twentieth century, soot, coal tar, and pitch were all known to be carcinogenic to humans. In 1918 benzo(a)pyrene was identified as a major carcinogenic agent; other PAHs have since been identified as carcinogenic or tumorigenic. Many toxic and carcinogenic effects of PAHs on humans, laboratory animals, and wildlife have been described in numerous reviews.²

14.2 COMPOSITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

14.2.1 Petroleum

Petroleum consists of crude oils and a wide variety of refined oil products. Crude oils vary in chemical composition, color, viscosity, specific gravity, and other physical properties. Color ranges from light yellow-brown to black. Viscosity varies from free flowing to a substance that will barely pour. Specific gravity of most crude oils varies between 0.73 and 0.95.³ Refined oil products most often spilled in large quantities are aviation fuel, gasoline, No. 2 fuel oil (diesel fuel), and No. 6 fuel oil (bunker C). Fuel oils (Nos. 1 to 6) become increasingly dense and viscous and contain increasingly fewer volatile compounds as their numeric classification proceeds from one to six.

Crude oil is a complex mixture of thousands of hydrocarbon and nonhydrocarbon compounds. Hydrocarbons comprise more than 75% of most crude and refined oils; heavy crude oils can contain more than 50% nonhydrocarbons.^{3,4} Hydrocarbons in petroleum are divided into four major classes: (1) straight-chain alkanes (n-alkanes or n-paraffins), (2) branched alkanes (isoparaffins or isoparaffins), (3) cycloalkanes (cycloparaffins), and (4) aromatics (Figure 14.1). Alkenes occur in crude oil, but they are rare. A variety of combinations of the different types of compounds occur. Low-molecular-weight members of each class predominate in crude oils. Aliphatic hydro-

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14.2.2 PAHs

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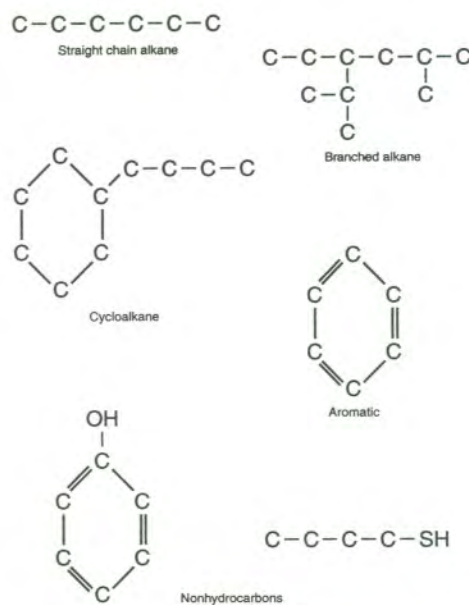


Figure 14.1 Types of molecular structures found in petroleum.³ Hydrogen atoms bonded to carbon atoms are omitted.

carbons have the carbon atoms arranged in an open chain (straight or branched). Aromatic hydrocarbons have the carbon atoms arranged in ring structures (up to six), with each ring containing six carbon atoms with alternating single and double bonds. The aliphatic hydrocarbons (except alkenes) have maximum hydrogen content (saturated), whereas the aromatic hydrocarbons do not have maximum hydrogen content (unsaturated) because of the alternating double bonding between carbon atoms. Nonhydrocarbons in petroleum are compounds containing oxygen (O), sulfur (S), nitrogen (N) (Figures 14.1 and 14.3), or metals, in addition to hydrogen and carbon, and can range from simple open-chain molecules to molecules containing 10 to 20 fused aromatic and cycloalkane carbon rings with aliphatic side chains. The largest and most complex nonhydrocarbons are the resins and asphaltenes.

Crude oils are classified according to physical properties or chemical composition.^{3,5} Specific gravity determines whether oil is classified as light, medium, or heavy. Crude oils also can be partitioned into chemical fractions according to boiling point. The relative amounts of compounds in various categories are sometimes used to classify oil (e.g., paraffinic, napthenic, high or low sulfur).

14.2.2 PAHs

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are aromatic hydrocarbons with two or more fused carbon rings that have hydrogen or an alkyl ($C_n H_{2n+1}$) group attached to each carbon. Compounds range from naphthalene ($C_{10} H_8$, two rings) to coronene ($C_{24} H_{12}$, seven rings) (Figure 14.2). Crude oils contain 0.2 to 7% PAHs, with configurations ranging from two to six rings; PAH content increases with the specific gravity of the oil.⁶⁻⁸ In general, PAHs have low solubility in water, high melting and boiling points, and low vapor pressure. Solubility decreases, melting and boiling points increase, and vapor pressure decreases with increasing molecular volume. Investigators assessing biological effects sometimes group true PAHs with compounds consisting of aromatic and nonaromatic rings, or compounds with N, S, or O within the ring (heterocycle) or substituted for attached hydrogen (Figure 14.3).

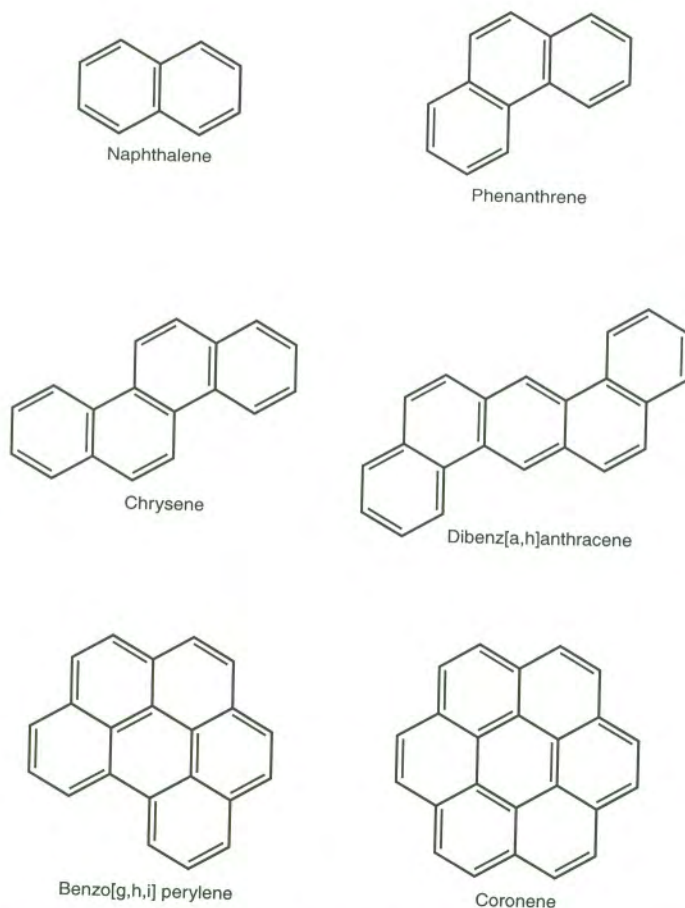


Figure 14.2 Examples of PAH compounds without attached alkyl groups.¹⁶ Hydrogen atoms bonded to carbon atoms are omitted.

14.3 SOURCES

14.3.1 Petroleum

During the early 1970s about 35% of the petroleum hydrocarbons in the marine environment came from spills and discharges related to marine transportation; the remainder came from offshore oil and gas production, industrial and municipal discharges, stormwater discharges, river runoff, atmospheric deposition, and natural seeps^{9,10} (Figure 14.4). Transportation spills and discharges probably accounted for less than 35% of the total oil discharged onto land and freshwater environments.¹⁰ Estimates for the late 1970s indicated that about 45% of the petroleum hydrocarbons in the marine environment came from spills and discharges related to marine transportation.¹¹ In heavily used urban estuaries, the contribution of transportation spills and discharges to total petroleum hydrocarbon input can be 10% or less.^{12,13} By contrast, the largest source of petroleum in coastal or inland areas removed from urban or industrial centers is petroleum transportation. In the 1980s and 1990s, war, terrorism, vandalism, and theft became additional, and sometimes major, causes of petroleum discharges into water and land environments.^{14,15}

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14.3.2 PAHs

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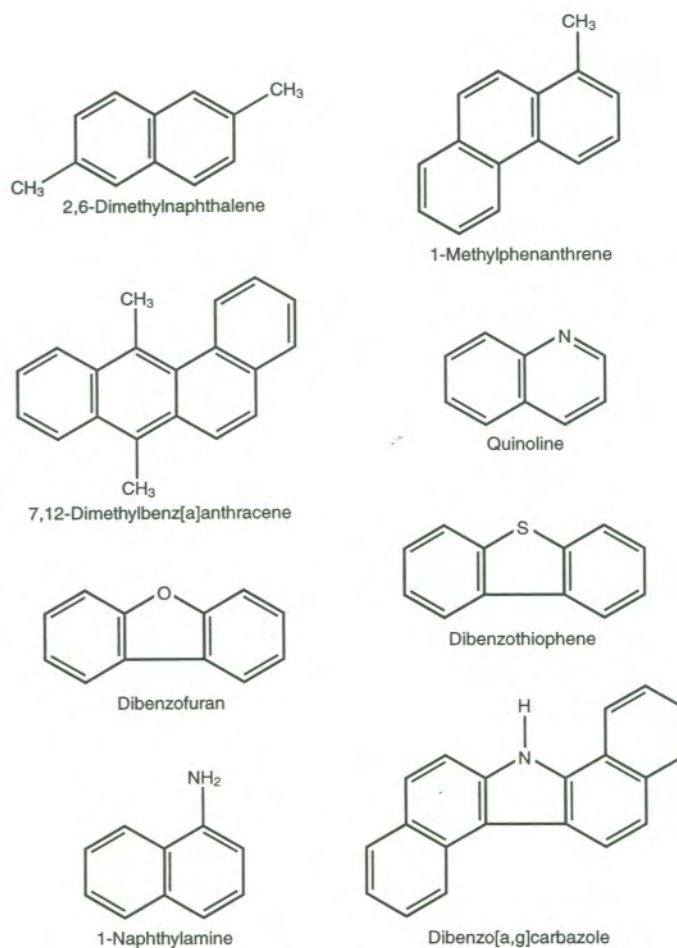
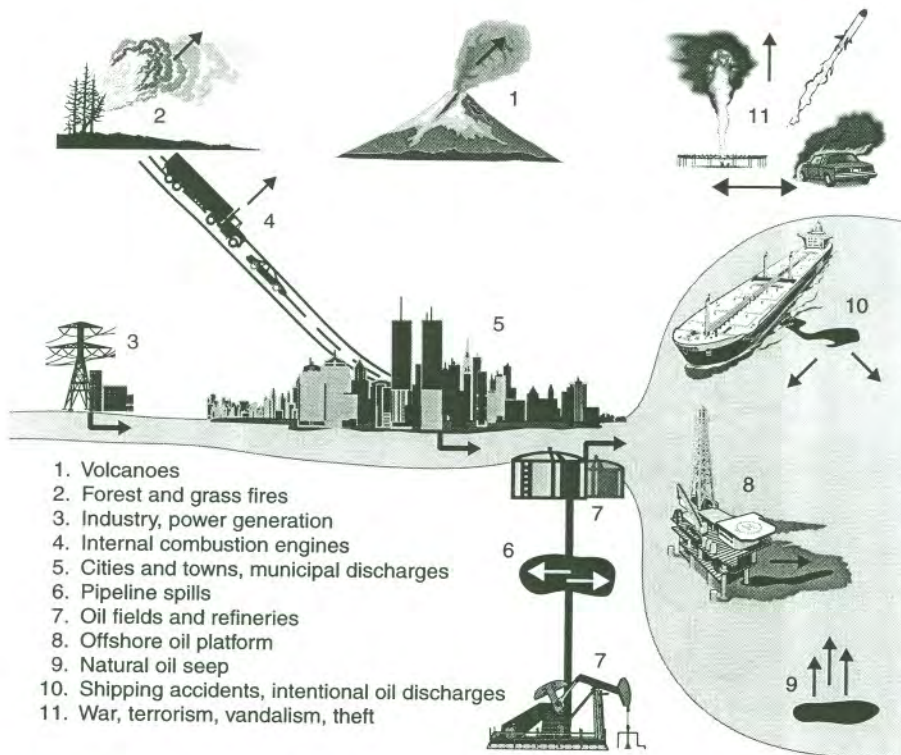


Figure 14.3 Examples of PAH compounds with attached alkyl groups and aromatic compounds with nitrogen, sulfur, or oxygen.⁸ Except for the alkyl groups, hydrogen atoms bonded to carbon atoms are omitted.

14.3.2 PAHs

Most PAHs are formed by a process of thermal decomposition (pyrolysis) and subsequent recombination (pyrosynthesis) of organic molecules.¹⁶ Incomplete combustion of organic matter produces PAHs in a high-temperature (500 to 800°C) environment. All forms of combustion, except flammable gases well mixed with air, produce some PAHs. Subjection of organic material in sediments to a low-temperature (100 to 300°C) environment for long periods of time produces PAHs as coal and oil deposits within sedimentary rock formations (a.k.a. diagenesis).^{7,17} Although the PAH compounds formed by high- and low-temperature processes are similar, the occurrence of alkylated PAHs is greater in the low-temperature process.¹⁴ Biological formation of PAHs occurs in chlorophyllous plants, fungi, and bacteria.^{2,8}

Natural sources of PAHs include forest and grass fires, oil seeps, volcanoes, plants, fungi, and bacteria. Anthropogenic sources of PAHs include petroleum, electric power generation, refuse incineration, and home heating; production of coke, carbon black, coal tar, and asphalt; and internal combustion engines.^{2,7} The primary mechanism for atmospheric contamination by PAHs is incom-



1. Volcanoes
2. Forest and grass fires
3. Industry, power generation
4. Internal combustion engines
5. Cities and towns, municipal discharges
6. Pipeline spills
7. Oil fields and refineries
8. Offshore oil platform
9. Natural oil seep
10. Shipping accidents, intentional oil discharges
11. War, terrorism, vandalism, theft

Figure 14.4 Sources of petroleum and PAHs in the environment. Arrows indicate the initial movement of PAH and petroleum into the air, water, and soil.

plete combustion of organic matter from previously mentioned sources.¹⁵ Aquatic contamination by PAHs is caused by petroleum spills, discharges, and seepages; industrial and municipal wastewater; urban and suburban surface runoff; and atmospheric deposition.² Land contamination by PAHs is caused by petroleum spills and discharges, forest and grass fires, volcanoes, industrial and municipal solid waste, and atmospheric deposition.

14.4 ENVIRONMENTAL FATE

14.4.1 General Considerations

Petroleum is monitored as a liquid composed of a diverse array of thousands of compounds, but PAHs are monitored as a group of individual compounds with similar molecular structures. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons from low- or high-temperature pyrolysis and pyrosynthesis of organic molecules have similar fates in the environment. Whereas PAHs from crude and refined oils and coal originate from a concentrated hydrocarbon source, PAHs produced by high temperature (combustion or industrial processes) are dispersed in the air, scattered on the ground, or included as a component of liquid waste and municipal sewage discharges.

14.4.2 Physical and Chemical

Petroleum discharged on water spreads quickly to cover large areas with a layer of oil varying from micrometers to centimeters thick. Some oils, especially heavy crudes and refined products,

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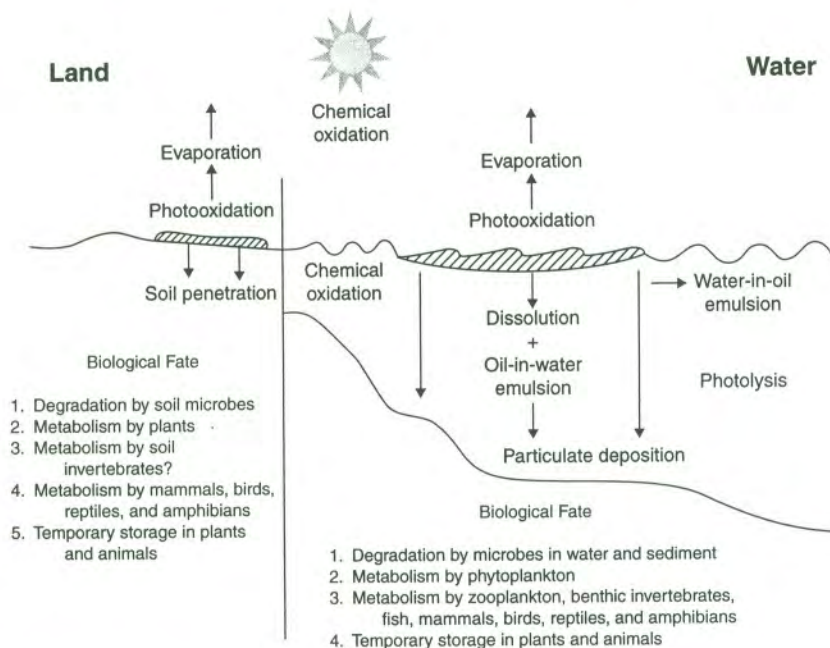


Figure 14.5 Chemical and biological fate of petroleum and PAHs in water and on land.

sink and move below the surface or along the bottom of the water body. Wave action and water currents mix the oil and water and produce either an oil-in-water emulsion or a water-in-oil emulsion. The former increasingly disperses with time, but the latter resists dispersion. Water-in-oil emulsions have 10 to 80% water content; 50 to 80% of emulsions are often described as "chocolate mousse" because of the thick, viscous, brown appearance. Oil remaining on the water eventually forms tar balls or pancake-shaped patches of surface oil that drift ashore or break up into small pieces and sink to the bottom.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons released into the atmosphere have a strong affinity for airborne organic particles and can be moved great distances by air currents. The molecules are eventually transported to earth as wet or dry particulate deposition.¹⁸

Crude and refined oil products begin to change composition on exposure to air, water, or sunlight³ (Figure 14.5). Low-molecular-weight components evaporate readily; the amount of evaporation varies from about 10% of the spilled oil for heavy crudes and refined products (No. 6 fuel oil) to as much as 75% for light crudes and refined products (No. 2 fuel oil, gasoline). Less than 5% of a crude oil or refined product (primarily low-molecular-weight aromatics and polar nonhydrocarbons) dissolves in water. Hydrocarbons exposed to sunlight, in air or water, can be converted to polar oxidized compounds (photooxidation). Degradation of hydrocarbons in water by photolysis occurs when oxygen is insufficient for photooxidation; high-molecular-weight aromatic hydrocarbons are particularly likely to be altered by this mechanism.⁷ Chemical oxidation of aromatic hydrocarbons can result from water and wastewater treatment operations⁷ and chemical reactions in the atmosphere.¹⁸

14.4.3 Biological

The movement of oil from the water surface into the water column by dissolution and emulsion exposes the molecules and particles of oil to degradation and transport by organisms. Microbes

(bacteria, yeast, filamentous fungi) in the water metabolize the light and structurally simple hydrocarbons and nonhydrocarbons.^{3,19} Heavy and complex compounds are more resistant to microbial degradation and eventually move into bottom sediments. Oil particles and individual hydrocarbons (petroleum or recent pyrosynthesis) also adhere to particles (detritus, clay, microbes, phytoplankton) in the water and settle to the bottom, where a variety of microbes metabolize the light and structurally simple compounds. About 40 to 80% of a crude oil can be degraded by microbial action.³

Oil and anthropogenic PAHs are ingested by a variety of invertebrate and vertebrate organisms, in addition to microbes. Mammals, birds, fish, and many invertebrates (crustaceans, polychaetes, echinoderms, insects) metabolize and excrete some of the hydrocarbons ingested during feeding, grooming, and respiration.^{2,20-24} Although bivalve mollusks and some zooplankton are either unable or marginally able to metabolize oil, they can transport and temporarily store it. Terrestrial plants and aquatic algae can assimilate and metabolize hydrocarbons.^{2,25,26} Some soil invertebrates could be capable of metabolizing oil and anthropogenic PAHs, but evidence is absent from the literature.

Accumulation of hydrocarbons is usually inversely related to the ability of the organism to metabolize hydrocarbons.^{2,6} For example, bivalve mollusks have a poorly developed mixed function oxygenase (MFO) capability and accumulate hydrocarbons rapidly. After acute exposure, depuration of light for structurally simple hydrocarbons, especially aliphatic hydrocarbons, is more rapid than for heavy hydrocarbons, especially aromatic hydrocarbons.^{2,8,27,28} Hydrocarbons accumulated by bivalves through chronic exposure are depurated slowly.^{8,29} Organisms, such as fish and some crustaceans, that possess a well-developed MFO system (microsomal monooxygenases) are capable of metabolizing hydrocarbons and only accumulate hydrocarbons in heavily polluted areas.² Aquatic environmental factors that reduce the potential for hydrocarbon uptake and retention include high levels of dissolved or suspended organic material and warm water temperatures. Increases in PAH accumulation have not been observed in the trophic levels of aquatic ecosystems.^{8,30} Aquatic and terrestrial mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians have well-developed MFO systems, but enzyme induction by hydrocarbons in these species is not as well described as in fish and some aquatic invertebrates.³¹ Phytoplankton can accumulate aromatic hydrocarbons from water.² Terrestrial plants are poor accumulators of soil PAHs, presumably because PAHs strongly adsorb to soil organic material. Most of the PAHs detected in terrestrial plants appear to be derived from the atmosphere; PAHs adhere to or are absorbed by plant tissue. Following the death of vegetation, PAHs are deposited into the surface litter of soil.^{2,27,32}

Organisms with high lipid content, a poor MFO system, and that exhibit activity patterns or distributions that coincide with the location of hydrocarbon pollution are most likely to accumulate hydrocarbons.^{2,8} Once assimilated, heavy aromatic hydrocarbons (four or more benzene rings) are the most difficult group of hydrocarbons to excrete, regardless of MFO capability.^{2,33}

14.4.4 Residence Time

Residence time for petroleum in water is usually less than 6 months. Residence time for petroleum deposited on nearshore sediments and intertidal substrate is determined by the characteristics of the sediment and substrate. Oil-retention times for coastal environments range from a few days for rock cliffs to as much as 20 years for cobble beaches, sheltered tidal flats, and wetlands.³⁴⁻³⁸ Microbes in the sediment and on the shoreline metabolize petroleum compounds; microbial degradation is reduced considerably by anaerobic conditions.^{39,40} In cold climates ice, low wave energy, and decreased chemical and biological activity cause oil to remain in sediments or on the shore longer than in temperate or tropical climates; sheltered tidal flats and wetlands can be expected to retain oil for long periods of time.^{41,42} Total petroleum hydrocarbons or individual PAHs in undisturbed estuarine subtidal sediments can remain as identifiable deposits for many decades.⁴³

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14.4.5 Spill Re

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Polycyclic a toxicity is report ciated with the n in animals is the PAHs to bind to lead to mutation PAHs have great of alkyl groups carcinogenic a mutagenic with can be increase plasms have bec cerous neoplasn tivity to PAH-in

Oil spilled on land has little time to change before it penetrates into the soil. Oil spilled on lakes and streams usually has less opportunity to change before drifting ashore than oil spilled on the ocean because the water bodies are smaller. Petroleum spilled directly on land is degraded by evaporation, photooxidation, and microbial action. Residence times for hydrocarbons in terrestrial soils are less well documented than for sediments but are determined by the same conditions (substrate type, oxygen availability, temperature, surface disruption) that determine residence times in intertidal sediments. Total petroleum hydrocarbons and individual PAHs can persist in soils of cold or temperate regions for at least 20 to 40 years; persistence of PAHs increases with increase in the number of benzene rings.^{32,44-46}

14.4.5 Spill Response

Petroleum spills are sometimes left to disperse and degrade naturally,⁴⁷ but cleanup efforts are initiated when economically or biologically important areas are threatened. Oil-response actions include mechanical removal, chemical treatment, enhanced biodegradation, and restoration.^{48,49} The addition of chemicals to floating oil for purposes of gelling, herding, or dispersing the oil can modify the expected effects of the oil. The chemicals themselves often have some toxicity, and in the case of dispersants, movement of oil into the water column is greatly accelerated. Enhanced biodegradation practices are evolving through experimentation, but the most common practice is the stimulation of indigenous microbial populations through application of supplemental nitrogen or phosphorus to oil on land or water. The addition of nitrogen and phosphorus to oiled shorelines in Prince William Sound, Alaska, accelerated biodegradation and did not increase toxicity or environmental effects of the oil.⁵⁰ The literature on oil-spill response procedures, cleanup methods, and restoration methods is extensive; the interested reader is encouraged to consult literature cited in references⁴⁷⁻⁵⁰ and other sources for a more comprehensive treatment of this topic.

14.5 EFFECTS ON ORGANISMS

14.5.1 General

Petroleum can adversely affect organisms by physical action (smothering, reduced light), habitat modification (altered pH, decreased dissolved oxygen, decreased food availability), and toxic action. Large discharges of petroleum are most likely to produce notable effects from physical action and habitat modification. The aromatic fraction of petroleum is considered to be responsible for most of the toxic effects.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons affect organisms through toxic action. The mechanism of toxicity is reported to be interference with cellular membrane function and enzyme systems associated with the membrane.⁷ Although unmetabolized PAHs can have toxic effects, a major concern in animals is the ability of the reactive metabolites, such as epoxides and dihydrodiols, of some PAHs to bind to cellular proteins and DNA. The resulting biochemical disruptions and cell damage lead to mutations, developmental malformations, tumors, and cancer.^{2,6,51} Four-, five-, and six-ring PAHs have greater carcinogenic potential than the two-, three-, and seven-ring PAHs.^{2,7} The addition of alkyl groups to the base PAH structure often produces carcinogenicity or enhances existing carcinogenic activity (e.g., 7,12-dimethylbenz[a]anthracene). Some halogenated PAHs are mutagenic without metabolic activation,⁵² and the toxicity and possibly the carcinogenicity of PAHs can be increased by exposure to solar ultraviolet radiation.^{53,54} Cancerous and precancerous neoplasms have been induced in aquatic organisms in laboratory studies, and cancerous and noncancerous neoplasms have been found in feral fish from heavily polluted sites.^{2,7,55,56} However, sensitivity to PAH-induced carcinogenesis differs substantially among animals.^{2,7}

In water the toxicity of individual PAHs to plants and animals increases as molecular weight (MW) increases up to MW 202 (fluoranthene, pyrene). Beyond MW 202 a rapid decline in solubility reduces PAH concentrations to less than lethal levels, regardless of their intrinsic toxicity. However, sublethal effects can result from exposure to these very low concentrations of high MW compounds.⁷ Except for the vicinity of chemical or petroleum spills, environmental concentrations of PAHs in water are usually several orders of magnitude below levels that are acutely toxic to aquatic organisms. Sediment PAH concentrations can be much higher than water concentrations, but the limited bioavailability of these PAHs greatly reduces their toxic potential.² In general, caution should be employed when assessing the aquatic "toxicity" of biogenic or anthropogenic PAHs because bioavailability (solubility, sediment sequestration, mechanism of exposure) and chemical modification determine how much toxicity is realized.

14.5.2 Plants and Microbes

Reports of the effects of petroleum spills or discharges on plants and microbes contain accounts of injury or death to mangroves,^{57,58} seagrasses,⁵⁹ and large intertidal algae;^{60,61} severe and long-lasting (> 2 years) destruction of salt marsh vegetation^{38,62-64} and freshwater wetland vegetation;^{65,66} enhanced or reduced biomass and photosynthetic activity of phytoplankton communities;^{67,68} genetic effects in mangroves and terrestrial plants;^{69,70} and microbial community changes and increases in numbers of microbes (Table 14.1).⁷¹⁻⁷³ Differences in species sensitivity to petroleum are responsible for the wide variation in community response for phytoplankton and microbes.

Recovery from the effects of oil spills on most local populations of nonwoody plants can require from several weeks to 5 years, depending on the type of oil, circumstances of the spill, and species affected. Mechanical removal of petroleum in wetlands can markedly increase the recovery time.^{74,75} Complete recovery by mangrove forests could require up to 20 years.⁷⁶ Phytoplankton and microbes in the water column of large bodies of water return to prespill conditions faster than phytoplankton and microbes in small bodies of water because of greater pollutant dilution and greater availability of colonizers in nearby waters.⁷⁷ Lethal and sublethal effects are caused by contact with oil or dissolved oil, systemic uptake of oil compounds, blockage of air exchange through surface pores, and possibly by chemical and physical alteration of soil and water, such as depletion of oxygen and nitrogen, pH change, and decreased light penetration.

The effects of petroleum on marine plants, such as mangroves, sea grasses, saltmarsh grasses, and micro- and macroalgae, and microbes have been studied with laboratory bioassays, experimental ecosystems, and field experiments and surveys (Table 14.1).⁷⁸⁻⁸⁷ Petroleum caused death, reduced growth, and impaired reproduction in the large plants. Microalgae were either stimulated or inhibited, depending on the species and the type and amount of oil; response was expressed as changes in biomass, photosynthetic activity, and community structure. In response to petroleum exposure, community composition of indigenous bacteria was altered and total biomass increased.

The effects of petroleum on freshwater phytoplankton, periphyton, and microbes have been studied with laboratory bioassays and field experiments.⁸⁸⁻⁹³ Petroleum induced effects similar to those described for marine microalgae and bacteria. Domestic and wild plants have been exposed to oiled soil in laboratory experiments⁹⁴⁻⁹⁶ and tundra vegetation has been subjected to an experimental spill of crude oil.⁹⁷ Inhibition of seed germination, plant growth, and fungal colonization of roots was demonstrated in the laboratory bioassays. Death of herbaceous and woody plants and long-term community alteration were caused by the experimental tundra spill.

Individual PAHs, mostly two- and three-ring compounds, at low concentrations (5 to 100 ppb) can stimulate or inhibit growth and cell division in aquatic bacteria and algae. At high concentrations (0.2 to 10 ppm) the same PAHs interfere with cell division of bacteria and cell division and photosynthesis of algae and macrophytes; they can also cause death.^{2,7}

Table 14.1

Death
Impaired reproducti
Reduced growth
Altered rate of reproducti
Altered DNA
Malformation
Tumors or le
Cancer
Impaired im
Altered endocrine
Altered behav
Blood disorder
Liver and kidney
Hypothermia
Inflammation
Altered respiration
Impaired survival
Gill hyperplasia
Fin erosion

Local population
Altered community
Biomass change

^a Some effects observed in laboratory

^b Includes a

^c Population in the presence of vertebrates

14.5.3 Invertebrates

Reports of the effects of petroleum on invertebrates include accounts of mortality and sublethal effects for marine coastal invertebrates and of petroleum contact by a variety of invertebrates in a depletion area.

Recovery of invertebrates as a week following petroleum contact. Uncertainty in the timing of mangrove biomass depletion of year, weak recovery from natural hydrocarbon

Table 14.1 Effects of Petroleum or Individual PAHs on Organisms

| Effect ^a | Type of Organism | | | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------|------|----------------------|------|---------------------|
| | Plant or Microbe | Invertebrate | Fish | Reptile or Amphibian | Bird | Mammal ^b |
| Individual Organisms | | | | | | |
| Death | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Impaired reproduction | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Reduced growth and development | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Altered rate of photosynthesis | X | | | | | |
| Altered DNA | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Malformations | | | X | | X | |
| Tumors or lesions | | X | X | X | | X |
| Cancer | | | X | X | | X |
| Impaired immune system | | | X | | X | X |
| Altered endocrine function | | | X | | X | |
| Altered behavior | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Blood disorders | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Liver and kidney disorders | | | X | | X | X |
| Hypothermia | | | | | X | X |
| Inflammation of epithelial tissue | | | | X | X | X |
| Altered respiration or heart rate | | X | X | X | | |
| Impaired salt gland function | | | | X | X | |
| Gill hyperplasia | | | X | | | |
| Fin erosion | | | X | | | |
| Groups of Organisms^c | | | | | | |
| Local population change | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Altered community structure | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Biomass change | X | X | X | | | |

^a Some effects have been observed in the wild and in the laboratory, whereas others have only been induced in laboratory experiments or are population changes estimated from measures of reproduction and survival.
^b Includes a sampling of literature involving laboratory and domestic animals.
^c Populations of microalgae, microbes, soil invertebrates, and parasitic invertebrates can increase or decrease in the presence of petroleum, whereas populations of other plants and invertebrates and populations of vertebrates decrease.

14.5.3 Invertebrates

Reports of the effects of aquatic oil spills or discharges and oil-based drill cuttings often contain accounts of temporary debilitation, death, population change, or invertebrate community change for marine water column,^{98,99} deepwater benthic,^{100,101} nearshore subtidal,¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵ intertidal,^{64,106,107} coastal mangrove organisms,^{102,108} and stream^{109,110} and lake¹¹¹ organisms. For a review of the effects of petroleum on marine invertebrates, see Suchanek.¹¹² Observed effects are caused by smothering; contact by adults, juveniles, larvae, eggs, and sperm with whole or dissolved oil; ingestion of whole oil or individual compounds; and possibly by chemical changes in the water, including oxygen depletion and pH change. Accounts of the effects of petroleum spills or discharges on terrestrial invertebrates have not been published.

Recovery from the effects of oil spills on local populations of invertebrates can require as little as a week for pelagic zooplankton or as much as 10 years, or more, for nearshore subtidal meiofauna. Uncertainty of recovery time is particularly evident for intertidal, nearshore subtidal, and coastal mangrove biota; the prognosis for recovery is a function of the size of the spill, type of oil, season of year, weather, characteristics of affected habitat, and species affected. Chronic input of petroleum from natural seeps or anthropogenic sources produces communities of biota that are adapted to the hydrocarbon challenge; preexisting or continuing chronic input can complicate estimates of inver-

tebrate recovery from ephemeral input. Aggressive cleaning of shorelines can retard recovery.¹¹³ Zooplankton in large bodies of water return to prespill conditions faster than zooplankton in small bodies of water (isolated estuaries, lakes, stream headwaters) because of greater pollutant dilution and greater availability of colonizers in nearby waters.⁷⁷

Much work has been done on the effects of petroleum on marine invertebrates with laboratory bioassays, mesocosms, enclosed ecosystems, and field experiments and surveys.^{82,114-124} Less work has been conducted on freshwater invertebrates with laboratory bioassays and field experiments.^{88,125-129} Among the effects reported are reduced survival, altered physiological function, soft-tissue abnormalities, inhibited reproduction, altered behavior, and changes in species populations and community composition.

Soil contaminated with petrochemicals has been associated with a reduced number of species and reduced species abundance of rodent parasites.¹³⁰ In contrast, petrochemical contamination of soil increased the abundance of isopods,¹³¹ and chronic exposure to low concentrations of PAHs appeared to stimulate populations of several groups of soil invertebrates.¹³² In soil remediation studies earthworms have been found to be a sensitive indicator of soil quality.¹³³

In short-term exposure trials (24 to 96 h) on selected aquatic invertebrates, individual PAH compounds had LC₅₀ values in water ranging from 0.1 to 5.6 ppm.^{2,7} Eggs and larvae are more sensitive than juveniles or adults to dissolved PAHs. Larvae with a high tissue burden of PAHs from maternal transfer are likely to be at risk for increased toxicity from ultraviolet radiation.¹³⁴ Sublethal effects include reduced reproduction, inhibited development of embryos and larvae, delayed larval emergence, decreased respiration and heart rate, abnormal blood chemistry, and lesions.^{2,7}

14.5.4 Fish

Adult and juvenile fish, larvae, and eggs are exposed to petroleum through contact with whole oil, dissolved hydrocarbons, particles of oil dispersed in the water column, or ingestion of contaminated food and water.^{135,136}

Death of fish in natural habitat usually requires a heavy exposure to petroleum. Consequently, it is unlikely that large numbers of adult fish inhabiting large bodies of water would be killed by the toxic effects of petroleum. Fish kills usually are caused by large amounts of oil moving rapidly into shallow waters.^{137,138} However, fresh and weathered crude oils and refined products vary considerably in their composition and toxicity, and the sensitivity of fish to petroleum differs among species. Petroleum concentrations (total petroleum hydrocarbons) in water of less than 0.5 ppm during long-term exposure¹³⁹ or higher concentrations (several to more than 100 ppm) in moderate- or short-term exposures can be lethal.¹⁴⁰⁻¹⁴³ Sublethal effects begin at concentrations of less than 0.5 ppm and include changes in heart and respiratory rates, gill structural damage, enlarged liver, reduced growth, fin erosion, corticosteroid stress response, immunosuppression, impaired reproduction, increased external and decreased internal parasite burdens, behavioral responses, and a variety of biochemical, blood, and cellular changes.^{136,142,144-154}

Eggs and larvae can suffer adverse effects, including death, when exposed to concentrations of petroleum in water ranging from less than 1 ppb (total PAHs) up to 500 ppb (total PAHs or total petroleum hydrocarbons).¹⁵⁵⁻¹⁵⁸ Eggs, larvae, and early juveniles are generally more vulnerable than adults to oil spills and discharges because they have limited or no ability to avoid the oil, and they reside in locations that receive the most severe exposures (near the water surface or in shallow nearshore areas and streams). Effects of oil on eggs and larvae include death of embryos and larvae, abnormal development, reduced growth, premature and delayed hatching of eggs, DNA alterations, and other cellular abnormalities.^{136,156-161} Evidence of continued adverse effects on the viability of pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) embryos for 4 years after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, presented the possibility of gametic damage to exposed fish.¹⁶²

Assessing the effect of petroleum spills and discharges on fish populations has been attempted with a variety of approaches, including taking fish samples from oiled and control areas after a

spill,¹⁶³ monitor after spill even using a life-history community composition of deleterious lation change.

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spill,¹⁶³ monitoring postspill fish harvest and recruitment,¹³⁸ aerial surveys of fish stocks before and after spill events,¹⁶⁴ translating abundance of benthic prey into estimates of demersal fish biomass,¹⁰⁴ using a life-history model to estimate effects on a species,¹⁶⁵ measuring differences in fish community composition above and below a discharge site on a stream,¹⁴⁹ and evaluating the potential of deleterious heritable mutations induced by a one-time spill event to produce measurable population change.¹⁶⁶ Several of these attempts revealed likely effects of petroleum on fish populations.

Also, the potential effects of oil spills on regional pelagic fish populations were evaluated with an extensive modeling effort of the Georges Bank fishery off the northeastern coast of the United States.^{167,168} Unfortunately, normal variation in natural mortality of eggs and larvae for such species as Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*), haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*), and Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*) is often larger than mortality estimates for the largest of spills. Consequently, direct field observations would not be able to distinguish the effect of a major oil spill on a single year class from natural variation in recruitment. The authors concluded that a comprehensive recruitment model was needed to separate the effect of spilled oil from expected natural mortality.

In general, it is difficult to determine the effect of an ephemeral petroleum discharge on fish populations in large bodies of water. It is beneficial to have before-and-after data, and some modeling appears necessary to identify effects that are difficult to measure. Also, time and geographic scale are important considerations in any population assessment.

In short-term exposure trials (24 to 96 h) on selected species of fish, individual PAH compounds had LC₅₀ values in water ranging from 1.3 to 3400 ppb.² The primary target organ for toxic action is the liver. Sublethal effects on eggs, larvae, juveniles, and adult fish² are generally similar to those previously described for exposure to fresh or weathered petroleum and separate aromatic fractions but with greater emphasis on neoplasm induction and DNA alteration.

Induction of precancerous cellular changes in laboratory studies with PAHs and high frequencies of lesions and cancerous and noncancerous neoplasms in bottom-dwelling fish from areas contaminated with PAHs provide support for a causal relation between PAHs in sediment and the presence of cancer in several species of bottom-dwelling marine fish.^{7,33,55,56,169-171} Fish from Puget Sound, Washington,¹⁷² tributaries of southern Lake Erie, Ohio,^{55,173,174} and the Elizabeth River, Virginia,¹⁷⁵ had cancerous and noncancerous skin and liver neoplasms, fin erosion, and a variety of other external abnormalities. Concentrations of total PAHs in the sediment were sometimes > 100 ppm and 50 to 10,000 times greater than in reference areas.^{2,55,173,175}

There is evidence that exposure to high concentrations of PAHs can affect fish populations and communities. Lesion frequency, overall health assessment, and population age structure were useful biological measures for differentiating a population of brown bullheads (*Ameiurus nebulosus*) in an industrialized urban river (Schuylkill River, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) from a population in a nonindustrialized suburban pond (Haddonfield, New Jersey).¹⁷⁶ Analysis of fish community structure revealed lower species diversity for contaminated Lake Erie tributaries (Black and Cuyahoga Rivers, Ohio) than for a reference stream (Huron River, Ohio).¹⁷⁴

Metabolism of PAHs by feral fish in areas chronically contaminated with multiple pollutants is poorly studied; studies such as van der Oost¹⁷⁷ are rare. Also lacking is information on dose-effect and temporal aspects of *in situ* exposure to carcinogens.^{33,55} Species differences in PAH metabolism and incidence of neoplasms, even among closely related species,³³ further complicate efforts to generalize about findings from individual studies.

14.5.5 Reptiles and Amphibians

The response of reptiles and amphibians to petroleum exposure is not well characterized. Various species of reptiles and amphibians were killed by a spill of bunker C fuel oil in the St. Lawrence River (E.S. Smith, New York Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany, NY, unpublished report). Sea snakes were presumed to have been killed by crude oil in the Arabian Gulf.¹⁷⁸ Petroleum could have been a contributing factor in the deaths of sea turtles off the coast of Florida,¹⁷⁹ in the

Gulf of Mexico following the *Ixtoc I* oil spill,¹⁸⁰ and in the Arabian Gulf after the Gulf War oil spills,¹⁸¹ but the cause of death was not determined. Ingestion of oil and plastic objects has been reported for green (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), and Atlantic Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempi*) turtles.^{179,180,182}

Experimental exposure of juvenile loggerhead turtles to crude oil slicks revealed effects on respiration, skin, blood characteristics and chemistry, and salt gland function.¹⁸³ Juvenile loggerhead turtles were exposed to artificially weathered crude oil for 4 days followed by an 18-day recovery period; blood abnormalities and severe skin and mucosal changes from exposure were reversed during the recovery period.¹⁸⁴ Atlantic Ridley and loggerhead embryos died or developed abnormally when the eggs were exposed to oiled sand; weathered oil was less harmful to the embryos than fresh oil (T.H. Fritts and M.A. McGehee, Fish and Wildlife Service, Denver Wildlife Research Center, Denver, CO, unpublished report).

Bullfrog tadpoles (*Rana catesbeiana*) were exposed to amounts of No. 6 fuel oil that could be expected in shallow waters following oil spills; death was most common in tadpoles that were in the late stages of development, and sublethal effects included grossly inflated lungs, fatty livers, and abnormal behavior.¹⁸⁵ Larvae of the wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*), the spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*), and two species of fish were exposed to several fuel oils and crude oils in static and flow-through tests; sensitivity of the amphibian larvae to oil was slightly less than that of the two species of fish.¹⁴⁰ Exposure of green treefrog (*Hyla cinerea*) embryos and larvae and larval mole salamanders (*Ambystoma opacum* and *A. tigrinum*) to used motor oil in natural ponds, field enclosures, or laboratory containers caused reduced growth or reduced food (algae) densities and prevented metamorphosis of green frogs at high exposure.^{186,187}

The injection or implantation in amphibians of perylene or crystals of benzo(a)pyrene and 3-methylcholanthrene induced cancerous and noncancerous tissue changes.² It has been suggested that amphibians are more resistant to PAH carcinogenesis than mammals because of the demonstrated inability of the hepatic microsomes of the tiger salamander (*A. tigrinum*) to produce mutagenic metabolites.¹⁸⁸ The toxicity and genotoxicity of benzo(a)pyrene and refinery effluent to larval newts (*Pleurodeles waltlii*), in the presence and absence of ultraviolet radiation, was established in a series of experiments by Fernandez and l'Haridon.¹⁸⁹

14.5.6 Birds

Birds can be affected by petroleum through external oiling, ingestion, egg oiling, and habitat changes. External oiling disrupts feather structure, causes matting of feathers, and produces eye and skin irritation. Death often results from hypothermia and drowning.^{1,190-192} Bird losses in excess of 5000 individuals are common for moderate to large petroleum spills. Birds that spend much of their time in the water, such as alcids (*Alcidae*), waterfowl (*Anatidae*), and penguins (*Spheniscidae*), are the most vulnerable to surface oil.

Petroleum can be ingested through feather preening, consumption of contaminated food or water, and inhalation of fumes from evaporating oil. Ingestion of oil is seldom lethal, but it can cause many debilitating sublethal effects that promote death from other causes, including starvation, disease, and predation. Effects include gastrointestinal irritation, pneumonia, dehydration, red blood cell damage, impaired osmoregulation, immune system suppression, hormonal imbalance, inhibited reproduction, retarded growth, and abnormal parental behavior.¹⁹²⁻²⁰³

Bird embryos are highly sensitive to petroleum. Contaminated nest material and oiled plumage are mechanisms for transferring oil to the shell surface. Small quantities (1 to 20 μ L) of some types of oil (light fuel oils, certain crude oils) are sufficient to cause death, particularly during the early stages of incubation.^{204,205} Eggshell applications of petroleum weathered for several weeks or longer are less toxic to bird embryos than fresh or slightly weathered petroleum.^{206,207}

Petroleum spilled in avian habitats can have immediate and long-term effects on birds. Fumes from evaporating oil, a shortage of food, and cleanup activities can reduce use of an affected area.^{208,209}

Long-term effects are likely to be

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Long-term effects are more difficult to document, but severely oiled wetlands and tidal mud flats are likely to have altered plant and animal communities for many years after a major spill.^{62,82}

The direct and indirect effects of oil spills are difficult to quantify at the regional or species level. Death from natural causes and activities of humans (e.g., commercial fishing), weather, food availability, and movement of birds within the region can obscure the effects of a single or periodic catastrophic event. Regional population assessments in the northern Gulf of Alaska for bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and common murre (*Uria aalge*) after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in March 1989 failed to identify population changes attributable to the spill.²¹⁰⁻²¹² During the last 50 years seabird populations of western Europe have increased or decreased without apparent relation to losses from oil spills.^{213,214}

Effects of oil spills are most likely to be detected at the level of local populations. Also, measures of survival, reproduction, and habitat use of numerous individual birds can be extrapolated to local or regional populations. The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska caused the loss of an estimated 250,000 to 375,000 birds.^{215,216} Adverse effects of this spill have been described for individuals of several species of seabirds or wintering waterfowl in Prince William Sound and extrapolated to populations.²¹⁷⁻²²⁰ Wiens et al.²¹⁸ also combined the species effects into assessments of avian community composition. Marine bird population declines have also been reported after the 1996 *Sea Empress* spill off the coast of England²²¹ and the 1991 Arabian Gulf oil spill.²²² Most of the changes in performance measures or local population size were no longer detectable by 2 years after the spill; exceptions were described by Wiens et al.,²¹⁸ Esler et al.,²²¹ and Symens and Suhaibani.²²²

The consequences of direct and indirect effects of oil spills on seabird populations have also been estimated with simulation models.²²³⁻²²⁶ Models have shown that (1) an occasional decrease in survival of breeding adults will have a greater effect on seabird populations than an occasional decrease in reproductive success, (2) long-lived seabirds with low reproductive potential will have the most difficulty recovering from a catastrophic oil spill, and (3) recovery of a seriously depleted population of long-lived seabirds will be greatly hindered if adult survival and reproduction show small, but sustained, decreases. The overall recovery potential for a species depends on the reproductive potential of the survivors and the immigration potential from surrounding areas.^{227,228}

Much of the available information on effects of PAHs on birds was produced by studies of the effects of petroleum on eggs. Experiments have shown that the PAH fraction of crude and refined oils is responsible for the lethal and sublethal effects on bird embryos caused by eggshell oiling.²⁰⁵ Further, the toxicity of PAHs to bird embryos is a function of the quantity and molecular structure of the PAHs.²²⁹ Brunstrom et al.²³⁰ injected a mixture of 18 PAHs (2.0 mg/kg of egg) into eggs of the chicken (*Gallus domesticus*), turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), domestic mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and common eider (*Somateria mollissima*) and found the mallard to be the most sensitive species and benzo[k]fluoranthene (four rings) and indeno[1,2,3-cd]pyrene (five rings) to be the most toxic of the PAHs tested. The most toxic PAHs were found to have additive effects on death of embryos, and the cause of toxicity was proposed to be a mechanism controlled by the Ah receptor.²³¹ Naf et al.²³² injected a mixture of 16 PAHs (0.2 mg/kg of egg) into chicken and common eider eggs and reported that > 90% was metabolized by day 18 of incubation (chicken), with the greatest concentration of PAHs in the gall bladder of both species. Mayura et al.²³³ injected fractionated PAH mixtures from coal tar (0.0625 to 2.0 mg/kg of egg) into the yolk of chicken eggs and found that death, liver lesions and discoloration, and edema increased as the proportion of five- and > five-ring aromatics, compared to the proportion of two- to four-ring aromatics, increased in the mixture.

Studies with adults and nestlings revealed a variety of sublethal toxic effects induced by PAHs. Male mallard ducks fed 6000 ppm of a mixture of 10 PAHs combined with 4000 ppm of a mixture of 10 alkanes for 7 months in a chronic ingestion study had greater hepatic stress responses and higher testes weights than male mallards fed 10,000 ppm of the alkane mixture.²³⁴ Nestling herring gulls (*Larus argentatus*) were administered single doses (0.2 or 1.0 mL) of crude oils, their aromatic

or aliphatic fractions, or a mixture of crude oil and dispersant.^{235,236} Retardation of nestling weight gain and increased adrenal and nasal gland weights was attributed to the PAHs with four or more rings. Immune function and mixed-function oxidase activity of adult European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were altered by subcutaneous injections (25 mg/kg body weight) of 7,12-dimethylbenz[a]anthracene, a four-ring PAH, every other day for 10 days.²³⁷ Oral doses in adult birds (25 mg/kg body weight) and nestlings (20 mg/kg body weight) also altered immune function. The coefficient of variation of nuclear DNA volume of red blood cells from wild lesser scaup (*Athya affinis*) was positively correlated with the concentration of total PAHs in scaup carcasses.²³⁸

14.5.7 Mammals

Marine mammals that rely primarily on fur for insulation, such as the sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*), polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*), Alaska fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*), and newborn hair seal pups (*Phocidae*), are the most likely to die after contact with spilled oil.^{22,239,240} Oiled fur becomes matted and loses its ability to trap air or water, resulting in hypothermia. Adult hair seals, sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*, *Zalophus californianus*), and cetaceans (whales, porpoises, dolphins) depend primarily on layers of fat for insulation; thus, oiling causes much less heat loss. However, skin and eye irritation and interference with normal swimming can occur. Skin absorption of oil has been reported for seals and polar bears.

Oil ingested in large quantities can have acute effects on marine mammals. However, marine mammals, such as seals and cetaceans, are capable of rapid hydrocarbon metabolism and renal clearance.²³⁹ Ingested oil can cause gastrointestinal tract hemorrhaging in the European otter (*Lutra lutra*);²⁴¹ renal failure, anemia, and dehydration in the polar bear;²⁴² pulmonary emphysema, centrilobular hepatic necrosis, hepatic and renal lipidosis, increased nuclear DNA mass, altered blood chemistry, and possible gastric erosion and hemorrhage in sea otters,²⁴³⁻²⁴⁵ and altered blood chemistry and reduced body weight in river otters (*Lontra canadensis*).²⁴⁶ Inhalation of evaporating oil is a potential respiratory problem for mammals near or in contact with large quantities of unweathered oil.^{239,247} Some of the previously described disorders are thought to be caused by hypothermia, shock, and stress rather than direct toxic action; distinguishing between the two types of causes can be difficult.²⁴⁸

Effects of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill on populations of sea otter, harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), Stellar sea lions, killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), and humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in Prince William Sound, Alaska, are summarized in the overview provided by Loughlin et al.²⁴⁵ Sea otters and harbor seals were the most affected, with loss estimates in the thousands for otters and in the hundreds for seals. Age distributions of dead sea otters systematically collected from oiled areas of western Prince William Sound between 1976 and 1998 revealed a reduction in the survival rate of otters during the 9 years after the spill (1990-1998).²⁴⁹ Aerial counts of harbor seals at seven sites affected by the oil spill and 18 unaffected sites in central and eastern Prince William Sound revealed a 28% population reduction during the period 1990-1997; however, harbor seal populations on the survey route were declining prior to the 1989 spill.²⁵⁰ Effects of the Gulf War oil spills on cetaceans in the Arabian Gulf were thought to be minimal.²⁵¹ Overall, the consequences of local effects (acute, chronic, and indirect) of catastrophic oil spills on regional populations of marine mammals have proven difficult to determine because of a lack of prespill population information, movement of animals within the region, and natural fluctuations in survival and reproduction.

Documentation of the effects of oil spills on wild nonmarine mammals is less than for marine mammals. Large numbers of muskrats (*Ondatra zibethica*) were killed by a spill of bunker C fuel oil in the St. Lawrence River (E.S. Smith, New York Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany, NY, unpublished report). Giant kangaroo rats (*Dipodomys ingens*) in California were found dead after being oiled,²⁵² beaver (*Castor canadensis*) and muskrats were killed by an aviation kerosene spill in a Virginia river,²⁵³ and rice rats (*Oryzomys palustris*) in a laboratory experiment

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died after swimming through oil-covered water.²⁵⁴ Oil field pollution in wooded areas in Russia affected blood characteristics, organ indices, species composition, relative abundance, and population age and sex structure of small mammals.²⁵⁵ Cotton rats occupying old petrochemical sites were characterized by increased cell apoptosis in the ovary and thymus,²⁵⁶ and rodent populations and assemblages on the same types of sites were altered compared to nearby reference sites.²⁵⁷ The literature on effects of crude or refined petroleum on laboratory and domestic animals is substantial; recent examples are Lee and Talaska (DNA adduct formation in mouse skin),²⁵⁸ Feuston et al. (systemic effects of dermal application in rats),²⁵⁹ Khan et al. (clinical and metabolic effects in dosed cattle),²⁶⁰ and Mattie et al. (pathology and biochemistry of dosed rats).²⁶¹

The effects of major oil spills on the environment of mammals could include food reduction, an altered diet, and changed use of habitat.^{262,263} These effects could be short- or long-term and would be most serious during the breeding season, when movement of females and young is restricted.

The metabolism and effects of some PAHs have been well documented in laboratory rodents and domestic mammals but poorly documented in wild mammals. Acute oral LD₅₀ values for selected PAHs in laboratory rodents range from 50 to 2000 mg/kg body weight.² Target organs for PAH toxic action are skin, small intestine, kidney, and mammary gland; tissues of the hematopoietic, lymphoid, and immune systems; and gametic tissue. Nonalkylated PAHs are rapidly metabolized; hence, accumulation is less likely than for alkylated PAHs.² Partially aromatic PAHs, alkylated fully and partially aromatic PAHs, and metabolites of nonalkylated, fully aromatic PAHs have the greatest potential to alter DNA and induce cancerous and noncancerous neoplasms in epithelial tissues of laboratory and domestic mammals.² Species differences in sensitivity to carcinogenesis appears to be a function of differences in levels of mixed-function oxidase activities. Background exposure concentrations of PAHs and studies on mixtures of PAHs in mammals are needed to accurately assess the potential hazard of exposure to multiple PAHs in polluted environments.²

Although PAHs can produce systemic effects, DNA alterations, and cancer, concerns about the carcinogenic and mutagenic potential predominate, especially for human health. Consequently, PAHs that are carcinogenic or mutagenic are most studied.² With regard to wild mammals, a few investigations have documented the presence of PAH adducts on DNA of marine mammals,²⁶⁴⁻²⁶⁶ and participants of a recent workshop on marine mammals and persistent ocean contaminants²⁶⁷ described PAHs as a "less widely recognized" contaminant that should be further studied because of potential mutagenic and genotoxic effects.

14.5.8 The Exxon Valdez and Arabian Gulf Oil Spills

The 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill (EVOS) in Prince William Sound, Alaska and the Gulf War oil spills (GWOS) in the Arabian Gulf in 1991 are worthy of special comment. Each was significant for different reasons, and reports of the fate and effects of these spills dominated the petroleum pollution literature during the 1990s.

The EVOS consisted of 36,000 metric tons of crude oil released in just a few days into a high-latitude, relatively pristine marine ecosystem. Although many times smaller than the Gulf War oil discharges, the scientific and societal response was immediate and intense. The spill resulted in a massive oil-removal effort,²⁶⁸ a thorough crude oil mass balance determination spanning the period 3/24/89 to 10/1/92²⁶⁹ and the largest wildlife rescue and rehabilitation effort ever attempted (at a cost of \$45 million).²⁷⁰

In the United States, the Clean Water Act and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act determined the response requirements for trustees (federal, state, tribal) of affected natural resources. Trustees initiated research that sought evidence of "injury" to natural resources, and Exxon Corporation initiated research that sought to demonstrate minimal injury and subsequent restoration of affected resources. This adversarial legal process discouraged cooperation among scientists and delayed public access to the results of the studies for several years.²⁶⁸ Two books containing studies sponsored mostly by Exxon²⁷¹ and Trustees²⁷² provide many

examples of conflicting interpretations of the effects of the spill; Wiens²⁷³ provides a discussion of the effects of advocacy on investigations of the effects of the spill on birds. The EVOS is rapidly becoming the most studied oil spill in history; a stream of scientific reports continues to be generated by scientists assessing the biological consequences.

The GWOS consisted of 240 million metric tons of crude oil released into the northern Arabian Gulf over a 6-month period; the Gulf had a previous history of petroleum pollution from oil production activities and warfare. The spillage was caused by acts of war, and scientific coverage of the progression of the spill and its biological effects was delayed until hostilities ended and munitions were cleared from areas affected by discharged oil. Investigators from a number of countries performed assessments of the effects of the oil, which appear to have been less severe on plants and animals of aquatic and coastal environments than the effects reported for the EVOS. In contrast, the contamination of terrestrial environments caused by destruction of oil wells and pipelines was severe and is likely to affect terrestrial plants and animals for many years to come.^{274,275}

14.5.9 Conclusions

The effects of petroleum on organisms are as varied as the composition of petroleum and the environmental conditions accompanying its appearance. Petroleum can cause environmental harm by toxic action, physical contact, chemical and physical changes within the soil or water medium, and habitat alteration. Oil spills have caused major changes in local plant and invertebrate populations lasting from several weeks to many years. Effects of oil spills on populations of mobile vertebrate species, such as fish, birds, and mammals, have been difficult to determine beyond an accounting of immediate losses and short-term changes in local populations. Reptiles and amphibians need further study. Knowledge of the biological effects of petroleum in freshwater environments continues to increase but still lags behind comparable information for saltwater environments.

Concentrations of individual PAHs in air, soil, and water are usually insufficient to be acutely toxic, but numerous sublethal effects can be produced. The induction of lesions and neoplasms in laboratory animals by metabolites of PAHs and observations of lesions and neoplasms in fish from PAH-contaminated sites indicate potential health problems for animals with a strong MFO system capable of metabolizing PAHs. Although evidence linking environmental PAHs to the incidence of cancerous neoplasms in wild vertebrates is primarily limited to fish, the growing quantities of PAHs entering our environment are a cause for concern.

14.6 SUMMARY

Petroleum and individual PAHs from anthropogenic sources are found throughout the world in all components of ecosystems. Crude and refined oils are highly variable in composition and physical characteristics and consist of thousands of hydrocarbon and nonhydrocarbon compounds. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are aromatic hydrocarbons with two to seven fused benzene rings that can have alkyl groups attached to the rings. Less than half of the petroleum in the environment comes from spills and discharges associated with petroleum transportation. Most of the petroleum comes from industrial, municipal, and household discharges; motorized vehicles; natural oil seeps; and acts of war, terrorism, vandalism, and theft. Most PAHs are formed by a process of thermal decomposition and subsequent recombination of organic molecules (pyrolysis and pyrosynthesis). Low-temperature processes produce the PAHs in coal and oil. High-temperature processes can occur naturally (forest and grass fires, volcanoes) or can be caused by anthropogenic activities (oil, coal, and wood combustion; refuse incineration; industrial activity). Most high-temperature PAHs enter the environment as combustion emissions or components of liquid waste effluents from industrial sites and municipal sewage plants.

Crude and refined oils are highly variable in composition and physical characteristics and consist of thousands of hydrocarbon and nonhydrocarbon compounds. Crude oil is rapidly degraded by microorganisms and chemical oxidation.

Organisms with high lipid content in the location of the spill tend to accumulate hydrocarbons. Residence time of organisms in the spill area can retain hydrocarbons. Type of substrate and duration of exposure can persist for long periods.

Petroleum spills require cleanup. Wetland plants and animals can induce positive effects. Cleanup can lead to death.

Oil spills often require a week to clean up. A diverse amount of organisms, including invertebrates, have mortality effects. Low concentrations of oil can be lethal.

Eggs, larvae, and juveniles are limited or not abundant. A large quantity of oil has been documented. Determine because of metabolism and imply that PAHs. Uncertainties about inadequate knowledge of organisms complicates the problem.

Adult reptiles and amphibians are sublethally affected. Sensitivity to petroleum is high.

Birds are often the most affected. That spend much time on the water. Oil can cause mortality of local populations. Investigators of Population models have the most information. Function of the site. Experiments revealed a variety of effects attributable to petroleum.

Mammals are likely to die from oil. Infrequently killed.

Crude and refined petroleum spreads rapidly on water and begins to change composition upon exposure to air, water, or sunlight. Anthropogenic aromatic hydrocarbons are dispersed by air currents and movement of waters receiving wastewater effluents. Hydrocarbons are primarily degraded by microbial metabolism; mammals, birds, fish, and many macroinvertebrates can also metabolize ingested hydrocarbons. Hydrocarbons are also degraded by photooxidation, photolysis, and chemical oxidation.

Organisms with high lipid content, activity patterns or distributions that coincide with the location of the hydrocarbon source, and a poor mixed-function oxygenase system are most likely to accumulate hydrocarbons. Trophic-level increases in accumulation have not been observed. Residence time for petroleum in the water column is usually less than 6 months. Coastal environments can retain oil from several days to 20 years, depending on the configuration of the shoreline, type of substrate, and climate. High-molecular-weight hydrocarbons, particularly aromatics, can persist for long periods of time (> 20 years) in sediments and terrestrial soils.

Petroleum can have lethal or sublethal effects in plants and microbes. Recovery from the effects of oil spills requires as little as a few weeks for water column microalgae up to 5 years for most wetland plants; mangroves could require up to 20 years. Individual PAHs at low concentrations can induce positive or negative sublethal effects in aquatic bacteria and algae; high concentrations can lead to death.

Oil spills often have pronounced effects on local populations of invertebrates; recovery could require a week for zooplankton or 10 years for intertidal populations of mollusks. A large and diverse amount of experimental and survey research, performed with saltwater and freshwater invertebrates, has demonstrated lethal and many sublethal effects as well as population and community effects. Individual PAHs can be lethal at high concentrations and cause sublethal effects at low concentrations.

Eggs, larvae, and early juvenile stages of fish are more vulnerable to oil because they have limited or no ability to avoid it. Large losses of adult fish are usually limited to situations where a large quantity of oil rapidly moves into shallow water. Many sublethal effects of oil on fish have been documented. Effects of oil spills on fish populations in large bodies of water are difficult to determine because of large natural variation in annual recruitment. Laboratory studies of PAH metabolism and lesions and tumors in fish collected from areas heavily contaminated with PAHs imply that PAH exposure can cause cancerous and noncancerous tissue changes in feral fish. Uncertainties about the interactive effects of multiple pollutants at heavily contaminated sites and inadequate knowledge of dose-effect responses and temporal aspects of *in situ* exposure to carcinogens complicate efforts to link environmental PAHs to neoplasms or local population changes.

Adult reptiles and amphibians can be killed and their eggs and amphibian larvae killed or sublethally affected by petroleum. However, available information is inadequate to compare their sensitivity to petroleum or individual PAHs to that of other vertebrates.

Birds are often killed by oil spills, primarily because of plumage oiling and oil ingestion. Birds that spend much of their time on the water surface are the most vulnerable to spilled oil. Ingested oil can cause many sublethal effects. Effects of oil spills are more likely to be detected at the level of local populations than at the regional or species level. When the quantity of data is large, investigators often extrapolate responses of individual birds to local and regional populations. Population modeling studies have shown that long-lived birds with low reproductive success will have the most difficulty recovering from a major oil spill. Recovery potential for a species is a function of the reproductive potential of the survivors and the immigration potential at the spill site. Experiments with individual or groups of PAHs and bird eggs, nestlings, and adults have revealed a variety of toxic responses and shown that PAHs are responsible for most of the toxic effects attributed to petroleum exposure.

Mammals that rely on fur for insulation (polar bear, otters, fur seals, muskrat) are the most likely to die from oiling. Mammals that rely on layers of fat for insulation (seals, cetaceans) are infrequently killed by oil. Ingested oil is rapidly metabolized and cleared, but it can cause many

sublethal effects. Effects of spilled oil on local and regional populations of marine mammals have proven difficult to determine because of a lack of prespill population information, movement of animals within the region, and natural fluctuations in survival and reproduction. Laboratory mammals, but not wild mammals, have been extensively used to study the toxic and carcinogenic potential of individual PAHs. Partially aromatic PAHs, alkylated, fully and partially aromatic PAHs, and metabolites of nonalkylated, fully aromatic PAHs have the greatest potential to cause neoplasms in tissues of laboratory and domestic mammals. Investigations involving mixtures of PAHs are especially needed.

In general, petroleum negatively affects living organisms through physical contact, toxic action, and habitat modification, whereas individual PAHs have toxic effects. Partially metabolized and alkylated PAHs can induce genetic damage, developmental abnormalities, and cancerous and noncancerous tissue changes. Evidence linking environmental concentrations of PAHs to induction of cancer in wild animals is strongest for fish. Although concentrations of individual PAHs in aquatic environments are usually much lower than concentrations that are acutely toxic to aquatic organisms, sublethal effects can be produced. Effects of spills on populations of mobile species have been difficult to determine beyond an accounting of immediate losses and, sometimes, short-term changes in local populations.

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