

Wildlife still largely absent from red sludge area: WWF

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Picture taken in 2010 shows cracks on the north side of the reservoir wall of the aluminium plant near Ajka, some 160 kms southwest of Budapest. Wildlife has still not returned to the area in western Hungary that was devastated by the country's worst chemical accident six months ago, the World Wildlife Fund said Wednesday.

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"Wildlife and fishlife were totally devastated or displaced from the area, and six months later, the banks of rivers Marcal and Torna are still red," WWF said in a statement.

Ten people were killed last October when the retaining walls of a

reservoir at the alumina plant in Ajka in western Hungary burst, sending 1.1 million cubic metres (38.8 million cubic feet) of poisonous, stinking red-coloured mud across an area of 40 square kilometres (15 square miles).

The sludge wiped out almost all waterlife in rivers and streams in the immediate vicinity and even spread to the Danube.

Work was continuing to remove the toxic [sediment](#) from river banks in the area, according to the mayor of one of the hardest-hit villages, Devecser.

The authorities initially declared a statement of emergency in the area for a period of six months. But that has now been extended while the clean-up work and repair to the dam walls continues, the authorities said.

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