



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



General Fisheries Commission  
for the Mediterranean  
Commission générale des pêches  
pour la Méditerranée



# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR THE HANDLING OF SEABIRDS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN MEDITERRANEAN PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERIES

In collaboration with



Financed by



# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 1 - SEABIRD SPECIES MOST AFFECTED BY MEDITERRANEAN PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERIES (1/2)

European shag  
(*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*)



Short crest  
Slightly-hooked beak  
Black plumage with a green tinge

Audouin's gull  
(*Larus audouinii*)



Dark red beak with a black  
bar near the tip  
Dark gray-green legs

Yelkouan shearwater  
(*Puffinus yelkouan*)



Wings with pale-gray edging  
Legs protrude from the tail in flight  
White breast and darker belly

Mediterranean gull  
(*Larus melanocephalus*)



Black hood  
Uniformly-gray wings

# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 1 - SEABIRD SPECIES MOST AFFECTED BY MEDITERRANEAN PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERIES (2/2)

Balearic shearwater  
(*Puffinus mauretanicus*)



Long thin beak  
Brown underwing covert  
Grayish-beige belly and pink legs

Scopoli's shearwater  
(*Calonectris diomedea*)



Yellowish, hooked beak  
Pure white underwing covert  
with darker edging  
White chest and throat

European storm petrel  
(*Hydrobates pelagicus*)



Black plumage  
White rump  
Small dark beak

# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 2 - RELEASING SEABIRDS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERIES (1/2)

1

Have the correct equipment:

A towel/blanket

A knife

A net

A box/tray with a lid

Pliers/bolt cutters

Gloves

Protective glasses

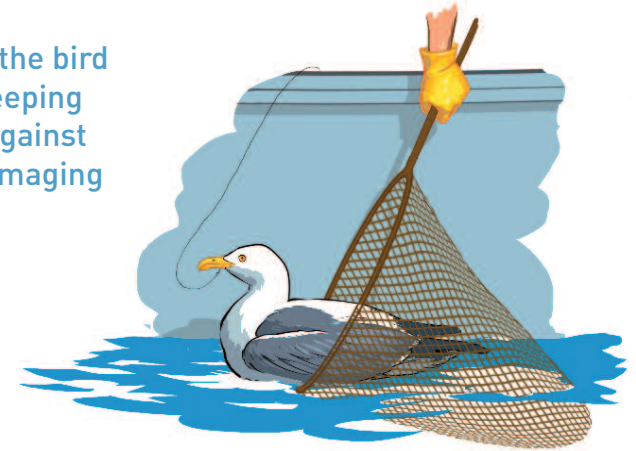


Pull the line

2

With the engine in neutral, use the net to lift the seabird on board.

Alternatively, grab the bird with both hands, keeping its wings pressed against its body to avoid damaging its feathers.



Do not:



Grab the seabird by the neck

# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 2 – RELEASING SEABIRDS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERIES (2/2)

3

## Restraining the bird

Slowly bring the bird on board and gently fold its wings against its body. Wrap it in a towel/blanket (not too tightly) and, if possible, cover its eyes. Hold its beak gently shut but do not cover its nostrils. Make sure that it does not come into contact with oil on the deck.



4

## Holding the bird firmly

Hold the bird firmly between your legs without squeezing. Keep its wings against its body to avoid any risk of dislocation or fracture.



5

## Removing the hook

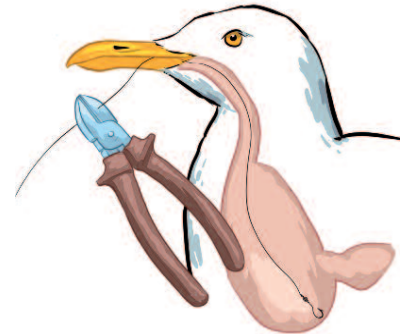
*If the hook is visible and can be removed*

Cut the hook using the pliers (or the bolt cutters for thicker hooks) and extract separately the two parts of the hook. **Do not pull the hook in the opposite direction as the barb could further injure the bird.** If you can see it, flatten the barb first with the pliers.



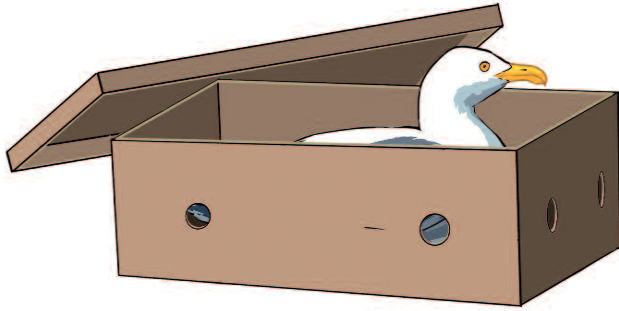
*If hook removal is not possible*

Because removing the hook might further injure the bird or the hook has been ingested, cut the line as close to the beak as possible and leave the hook in the bird. Follow the guidelines provided in Technical Sheet 3.



# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 3 - ASSESSING THE BIRD'S CONDITION

## LET THE BIRD REST



Place the bird in a ventilated box or tray in a quiet, dry, shaded place. Make sure that it is kept away from oil. Do not try to feed it. Wait for an hour or two.

If the bird has ingested the hook or is in bad shape, keep it on board and contact the relevant national authorities as indicated in Technical Sheet 4.

If the hook has been removed, the bird's feathers are dry, and the bird is alert and able to stand, it can be released.

## RELEASING THE BIRD



*Small vessels*

Slowly lower the bird onto the water. The bird may remain on the water for some time after release.



*Large vessels*

Lift the bird and release it into the wind from the vessel deck.

# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 4 - REPORTING INCIDENTAL CATCH

## CONTACT THE NATIONAL AUTHORITIES



Contact the relevant national authorities to report each incidental seabird catch.

Describe the seabird's condition, especially whether it is in good shape and has been released or it has swallowed the hook and/or is in poor shape and has been kept on board.

Organise with the authorities any follow-up care that will be necessary on return to port.

## FOR THE CATCH OF ANY SEABIRDS, RECORD THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THE LOGBOOK:



*Date*



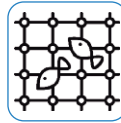
*GPS Position*

*Geographical subregion*



*Type of vessel (Fleet segment)*

*Fishing gear*



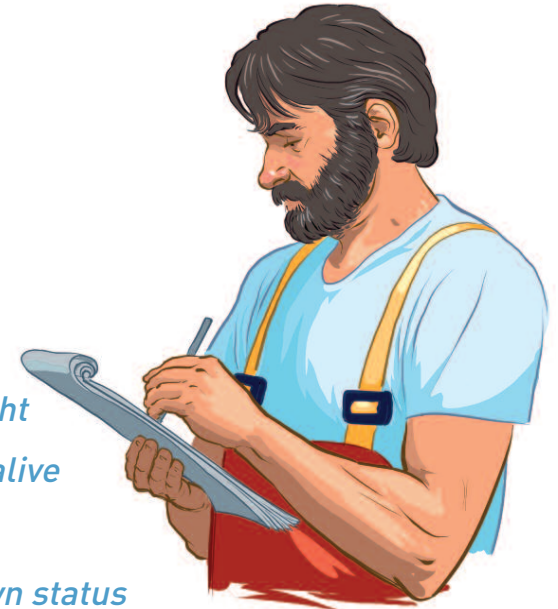
*Species caught*

*Total number of specimens caught*

*Number of specimens released alive*

*Number of dead specimens*

*Number of specimens in unknown status*



**And if possible...**



*Take photos of the seabird(s). If a bird is ringed, note the ring number.*

**The information above is extremely important! Please submit it, as soon as possible, to the relevant national authorities. If in doubt, ask for their help.**

# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR THE HANDLING OF SEABIRDS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN MEDITERRANEAN PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERIES

This guide was developed within the framework of a project which aimed to mitigate the negative interactions between endangered marine species and fishing activities. This project was implemented by the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and by the Secretariat of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), in collaboration with the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC). The main objective of the project was to enhance the conservation of endangered marine species (cetaceans, sea turtles and seabirds, etc.) by promoting responsible fishing practices in the Mediterranean.

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## Main bibliographic references

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