ACCOBAMS

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GFCM CGPM 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

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

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

1

Have the correct equipment:

A towel/blanket

A knife

A net

A box/tray with a lid
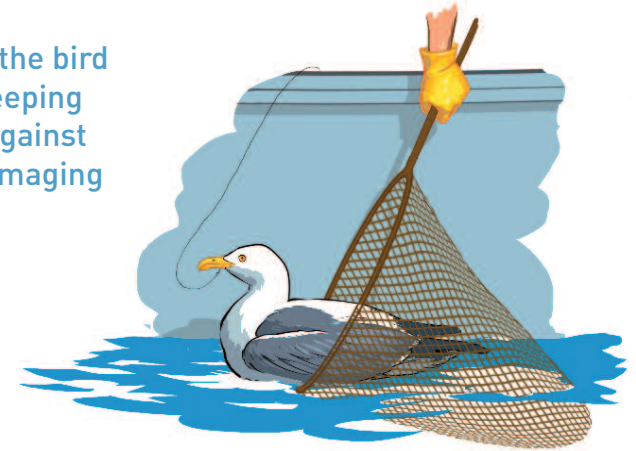
Pliers/bolt cutters

Gloves

Protective glasses

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:

Pull the line

Grab the seabird by the neck

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.
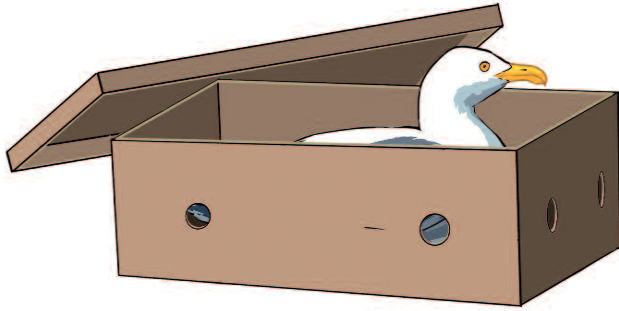
If hook removal is not possible

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.
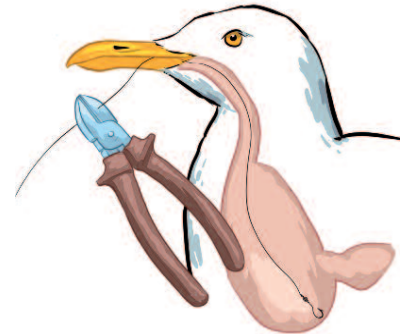
TECHNICAL SHEET N° 3 – ASSESSING THE BIRD'S CONDITION

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

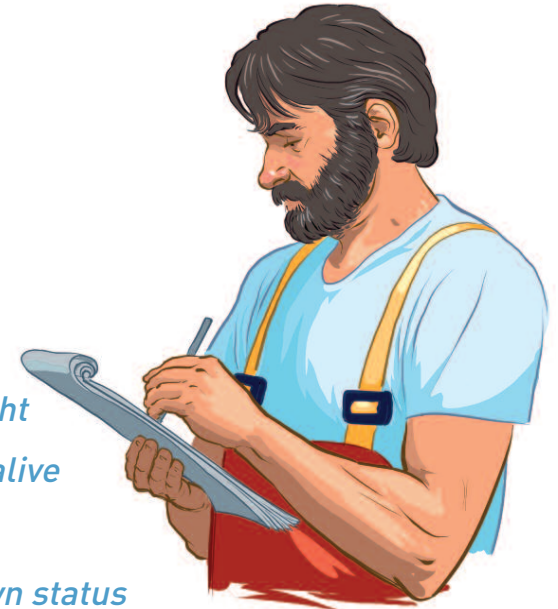*Type of vessel (Fleet segment)*

Fishing gear
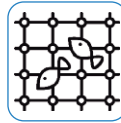
Species caught

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.

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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.

Main bibliographic references

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