

SPRFMO-OP EU accreditation

Safe handling of PETS in incidental by-catches

At National Marine Fisheries Research Institute (NMFRI) an internal policy is in force regarding qualifications and safety requirements of the scientific observers. This also includes the safe handling of PETS in incidental by-catches.

Each of the observers at the Institute is instructed on the safety rules when handling birds or mammals that may occur in accidental by-catches. It should be emphasized that at the Institute we have no experience in dealing with marine mammals or turtles potentially present in by-catches, as such cases have not yet occurred in our practice. In this regard, we use e.g. publicly available publications on this topic. Examples of links to such publications:

<https://cmm.wcpfc.int/supplementary-info/supplcmm-2018-03>

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/resources/protected-species-handling-guide-20192.pdf>

https://www.bmis-bycatch.org/system/files/zotero_attachments/library_1/4JBIRWPK%20-%20BI-how-to-handle-a-live-bird.pdf

<https://www.fao.org/3/ca0015en/CA0015EN.pdf>

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2020-10/handling-release-all-fnl-508.pdf?null=>

https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/mm_handling_and_release_placard_final_2007.pdf

https://files.worldwildlife.org/wwfcmprod/files/Publication/file/6nyxkycfqs_SafeHandlingReleaseGuidelinesDigitalPages_002_.pdf

On the occasion of the project on the monitoring of bird bycatch, in cooperation with the Regional Veterinary Inspectorate, in 2014 a new manual was developed for dealing with incidental bycatch of birds on fishing vessels, which the observers were given to get acquainted with and use (a translation of the instructions is attached as an Annex).

In the case of incidental by-catching of protected species of marine organisms, observers are required to take photos each time, with parameters (in terms of exposure and focus) enabling identification to the species. In the case of birds, the following should be included in the photographs: - the bird's head with the beak, - the unfolded wing in a top-down view with the back, - an unfeathered section of the leg with the foot. For marine mammals, the following should be shown: - general view, - side view of the animal, - general ventral view of the body. In the case of fish, two photos should be taken: - a general view, - a close-up of the fish's head.

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ANNEX 1. to “Safe handling of PETS in incidental by-catches”

Instructions for proceeding in the event of an incidental by-catch of birds on fishing vessels

Purpose of the instructions:

The purpose of this manual is to describe the procedures of fishing vessel crew members in the event of incidental catching of birds in fishing nets.

Responsible persons:

fishing vessel crew members.

Procedure:

If a live bird is found in the net:

- A caught bird must be kept away from the face.. Live birds, in a defensive reflex, attack the eyes. It is advisable to use protective glasses when disentangling the animal.
- The bird calms down when its eyes are covered. For this purpose, you can use a non-transparent material fabric (useful help of a second person).
- The animal should be carefully disentangled from the net using protective gloves intended only for this purpose.
- The bird should be disentangled above the water, preventing it from contact with the caught fish, the boat deck and the equipment on it.
- After the animal is disentangled, the bird should be identified to its species using the Guide Book provided by NMFRI. In case of difficulties with species identification, three photographs of the bird should be taken (according to instruction). After performing the above operations, the animal should be released to the wild immediately.
- Protective gloves should be placed in the bag in a place specially designated for this purpose, isolated from fish intended for food purposes. Gloves should be disinfected after returning from the sea.
- By-catch information should be included in the report/logbook: species, number, type of gear, number of gears.

If a dead bird is found in the net:

- The animal should be carefully disentangled from the net using protective gloves intended only for this purpose.
- The bird should be disentangled above the water, preventing it from contact with the caught fish, the deck of the boat and the equipment on it.
- After the animal is disentangled, the bird should be identified to its species using the Guide Book provided by NMFRI. In case of difficulties with species identification, three photographs of the bird should be taken (according to instruction).
- Then we pack the bird into a tight, thick bag with information written on a piece of paper (preferably in pencil):
 - date and time of net hauling in,
 - fishing boat number,
 - place of catch: preferably GPS position, possibly fishing square,

- number, type and time of operation of the gear set out, meshsize of the net and information on target species.

- After inserting the card, tie the bag tightly, taking care that the sharp parts of the animal's body (beak, claws) or the boat do not pierce it.
- Set aside the sealed bag and protect it from damage.
- Protective gloves should be placed in the bag in a place specially designated for this purpose, isolated from fish intended for food purposes. Gloves should be disinfected after returning from the sea.
- By-catch information should be included in the report/logbook: species, number, type of gear, number of gears.