



Updated Protocol for alerting and acting in the event of finding a dead, sick or injured strictly protected marine animal

12/2021

Part of the activity C6 Mitigate the impact of site users in the areas of seabird colonies through influencing their behaviour.

Background

Due to numerous threats that seabirds are exposed to, some of them end up dying, being sick or injured. This can happen at the colonies due to predation of rats (or cats), or Yellow-legged Gull on Audouin's Gull, or at sea due to bycatch in the fishing gear or collision with energy infrastructure, etc.

Since 2010, Croatia as a national "[Protocol for alerting and acting in the event of finding a dead, sick or injured strictly protected marine animals](#)". The protocol is implemented for sea turtles, marine mammals and cartilaginous fish, but not for seabirds.

The protocol is set up in a way that the competent Ministry has a contract with several veterinary stations along the Adriatic Coast, who are then obliged to take care of the injured animals, after they receive a call (from emergency no. 112, Ministry or others). Depending on the situation, animal is then transported to the relevant recovery centre (in case of injury of a sea turtle for example) or Croatian Veterinary Institute (in case of a dead sea turtle for example). In the southern Adriatic, which is the most relevant for our project area, there is no veterinary station that is willing to implement the Protocol.



The project received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union. The project is co-financed by The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs. The project is co-financed by The Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund.

Public institutions for the protected areas management were trained by the competent Ministry and the “Falconry Centre – Dubrava” in 2016 on how to handle injured, sick or dead bird species (in particular raptors).

Both Protocol and fishers’ logbooks serve the purpose of registering issues with the strictly protected species. However, everyone who finds dead, sick or injured strictly protected species is obliged to report it to 112.

Protocol

As part of LIFE Artina, the Protocol was updated to the extent that is possible considering the circumstances – primarily that there is no recovery centre in Croatia that can take seabirds (and substantial investments are needed by the Croatian Government in order to adapt existing recovery centre for raptors to be able to take seabirds).

The majority of the Croatian shearwater and Audouin’s gull populations is breeding within the boundaries of the Lastovo Islands Nature Park. Since 2021 in case injured, sick or dead seabird is found, Public Institution Lastovo Islands Nature Park (LIFE Artina project partner) acts as the information point and the first aid centre. The institution has a licenced veterinarian and is planning to build a recovery centre for marine species (the recovery center project is at the very early planning stage).

In case of seabird bycatch by fishers, most of the times the birds can be helped quite easily. Fishers were informed how to handle the bird, i.e. how to help an injured bird (tools and knowledge were provided using the materials produced by the Medbycatch project, such as guides and videos).

In case of a dead bird, they are sent to the Biom Association, which is organizing the analysis on the dead bird (by a veterinarian). Guidelines were produced on how to properly handle, pack and send a dead bird to Biom Association (Figure 1). Primary target audience for the Guidelines are fishers, with whom Guidelines were shared. In addition to the information produced by the LIFE Artina project, Ministry of Agriculture is preparing a Guide for fishers (to be produced in 2022) and Biom Association is contributing to the Guide.

UPUTE KOD SLUČAJNOG ULOVA MORSKIH PTICA I SLANJE NA DIJAGNOSTIČKE PRETRAGE

Ako tijekom ribolova slučajno ulovite morsku pticu koja je uginula, molimo vas da:

1. slikate pticu i ribolovni alat na koji je ulovljena
2. spremite je na led (hladnjak/zamrzivač)
3. nazovete naš kontakt broj,
Sven Kapelj: 091/576-1839, kako bismo se dogovorili oko slanja uginule ptice na dijagnostičku pretragu.

Lešinu ptice možete poslati na ledu ili smrznutu.

Lešinu ptice zapakirajte u nepropusnu, vodootpornu vreću. U posebnu čvrstu plastičnu vreću stavite smravljenog leda pa zatvorite vreću (u nedostatku leda može poslužiti i manja boca sa zaleđenom vodom). Vrlo je važno da je vreća zatvorena i da voda ne može izaći. U Pošti zatražite čvrstu kutiju za transport. U kutiju stavite vreću s lešinom ptice, a do nje vreću s ledom (ili s bocom sa zaleđenom vodom). Zatvorite kutiju pa na njoj napišite svoje ime i adresu. Zatražite u Pošti da trošak slanja ide na primatelja – plaćanje pouzecom
Udruga Biom
Čazmanska 2,
10 000 Zagreb

Slanjem lešina pomognite nam saznati i druge važne informacije o slučajno ulovljenim pticama, primjerice hrane li se plastikom iz mora i u kojoj količini.



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Figure 1. Instructions on seabird bycatch and sending animals for analysis

Recommendations

In addition to the updated Protocol, LIFE Artina projects put together the following recommendations to the government.

LIFE Artina project staff had several meetings with the competent ministry (currently Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, previously Ministry of Environment and Energy) where project staff presented the case for the seabirds. The Ministry is supporting the idea to extend to Protocol to strictly protected seabirds, but there is currently no recovery centre for seabirds and the Ministry lacks funding to upgrade at least one recovery centre to be able to rehabilitate seabirds. Also, the feasibility of the approach with the recovery centre needs to be considered, as there is still not enough relevant data on the injured, sick or dead seabirds. Even though data is being collected by 2 competent ministries – in charge of environment and of fisheries, there is not enough data available, therefore the efforts should be focused on much better data collection.

The “Falconry Centre – Dubrava” specialized for recovery of raptors has been identified as a possible solution for a recovery centre that could take over the injured birds. The centre would be willing to provide care for the birds in case the competent Ministry would secure financial resources to adapt their operation to take over the injured strictly protected seabirds (for example build necessary pools for the recovery of seabirds). The competent Ministry had funding available for the upgrade of the recovery centres as part of the Operational Program on Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014-2020 and there should be funding available in the current Multiannual Financial Framework – 2021-2027, as improvement of recovery centres operations is planned through the Priority Action Framework for Natura 2000 (PAF). Cost-benefit analysis should be a first step, but only after obtaining relevant data in Croatia on the number of injured, sick or dead seabirds.

In case the recovery centre is set up, the existing Protocol has a system to organize transport from the sea, but, depending on the situation, fishers or public institutions could act on it, if there is a need for a transport to the recovery centre.

In addition, other public institutions for the protected areas management, not only Lastovo Islands Nature Park, could act as the first-aid centres to triage and decide if the animal needs to go the recovery centre or not. These public institutions are evenly distributed along the Adriatic coast, but also on 5 Croatian islands / archipelagos, and have been trained on how to handle injured, sick or dead bird species.