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LIFE SEABIL PROJECT  
LIFE20GIE/FR/000114



OCTOBER 2023

# LIFE SEABIL TECHNICAL WORKSHOP - SPAIN

TOOLS FOR STRANDED SEABIRDS MONITORING AND  
COLLECTING DATA

Organized By:  
SEO/BirdLife and UCA

In the context of:  
LIFE SeaBiL Project



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# GENERAL INFO

## TITLE OF THE WORKSHOP

Tools for stranded seabirds monitoring

## DATE

October 4, 2023

## LOCATION

Camping Los Escullos. Paraje Los Escullos s/n Parque Natural Cabo de Gata-Níjar

04118 Níjar. Almería. España

## ORGANIZATION

The workshop was organized by the **Spanish Society of Ornithology** (SEO/BirdLife) and the **University of Cadiz** (UCA) in collaboration with all other partners of the LIFE SeaBiL project.



# ATTENDEES

The event was attended by 48 participants (16 in person, 32 online via Zoom), including representatives from NGOs, universities, research centers, governmental authorities, and other stakeholders from Spain, France and Portugal.

## ORGANIZATIONS

- Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/Birdlife)
- University of Cadiz (UCA)
- Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO)
- Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA)
- LIENSS Laboratory – La Rochelle University
- Agricultural Transformation, Technology and Services (TRAGSATEC) (Spain)
- Network of Andalusian Care Centers (Andalusia Government. Spain)
- Cantabrian Care Center (Cantabria Government. Spain)
- Bizkaian Care Center (Basque Country Government. Spain)
- Marine Environment and Sustainability Department (DGRM, Portuguese Government)
- “Mar a Deriva- Adrift sea” (Portugal)
- Centre for University Extension and Scientific Dissemination of Galicia (CEIDA) (Spain)

# OBJECTIVES

## OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP



### **The importance to collecting data about stranded seabirds during beach clean-ups**

Demonstrate the importance of beach clean-up initiatives to provide information about stranded seabirds.



### **To know and standardize the existing protocols and network**

Present the standardized protocols to be followed during the beach clean-ups in case stranded seabirds are found. What and how type of data should be collected.



### **Transmission of biological material to research laboratories. The importance of Care Centers.**

To create a database and tissue bank, the collaboration between Wildlife Care Centers and researchers is a key point. It's important knowing how Care Centers work in order to create a solid network.

# AGENDA AND SESSIONS

## OPENING AND WELCOME SESSION

- ❖ 10:00h – Guillaume Le Hétet (LPO)
  - LIFE SeaBiL Project

## PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

- ❖ 10:20h – Marga L. Rivas (UCA)
  - Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park as LIFE SeaBiL Project pilot site.
- ❖ 10:30h – Paulo Lago Barreiro (SEO/BirdLife)
  - Monitoring stranded seabirds through ICAO app
- ❖ 11:00h – Lidia Nascimento (Mar à Deriva)
  - Stranded seabirds found while collecting marine litter
- ❖ 11:15h – *Coffee break*
- ❖ 11:45h – Alba García (Tragsatec)
  - Actions for the conservation, improvement of knowledge and protection of marine habitats and species.
- ❖ 12:15h – Isabel Molina (Andalusian Care Centers network)
  - Admissions and care of sea birds in the Andalusian Care Centers network
- ❖ 12:45 am - Discussions with the public
- ❖ 13:15h – *End of the sessions*

# DISCUSSIONS

This first workshop of the project (B7 action) was held in Cabo de Gata pilot site, Almería province (Andalusia region). It was the first time the project was presented in public. One of the main pillars of the project, the creation of a network around stranded seabirds, was addressed and synergies were created between all participants, especially with the CREAS (Care Center network) of Andalusia.

## **1- LIFE SeaBiL Project: overview and objectives - Guillaume Le Hétet (LPO)**

After a quick reminder of the context about the problematic of marine litter, specially plastics, the four objectives of the project were shown.

### ***Objective 1 – Develop citizen science collecting data and support eco-friendly beach clean-ups***

- Adaptation of an application, accessible to all, for monitoring stranded seabirds: the existent ICAO app is being adapted to all partner countries, in conjunction with the MARNOPA app for monitoring marine litter.
- Creation of guidelines and risk maps in order to raise awareness and obtain better coordination amongst every stakeholder of the beaches monitoring ([Guía y mapa - LIFE SeaBiL](#)).
- Trainings with stakeholders will be run for low foot-print beach clean-ups in order to keep safe some coastal species such as the endangered Kentish plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus*).

### ***Objective 2 – Stranded seabirds transnational network***

- Identification of an indicator species for Good Ecological Status.
- Creation of a biological tissue bank
- Training and sharing experience (transnational sharing workshops).

### ***Objective 3 – Identify marine litter sources and work on their reduction***

- Implement a protocol for marine litter monitoring. Macro-waste monitoring in Spain and Portugal; Nano plastic analyses in France by CEDRE; Integrate stranded birds during waste monitoring.
- Carrying out a territorial diagnosis. Co-construction of an action plan to reduce marine litter in source. Implement tidal bins in Spain.

#### **Objective 4 – Education and sensibilisation**

- In the field; On the beaches: stands; challenges; informative boards; involvement of schools (more than 1,000 children involved)
- Media; Through an online communication strategy and paper publications

In order to monitor the impact of the LIFE SeaBiL project, some guidelines have been described:

- Kentish plover monitoring during breeding season
- Seabirds going to Care Centers due to marine litter
- Data collected through ICAO app
- Data collected about marine litter through beach clean-ups and tidal bins (in Spain)
- Socioeconomic impact evaluation

#### **2- The pilot site Cabo de Gata-Níjar N.P.- Marga L. Rivas (UCA)**

Marga gave a presentation of the Natural Park, located in Almería,(Andalusia, Spain). The protected area, created in December 1987, stretches along 63km in the south east mediterranean coast and it's a semi-desert area under a very peculiar climate conditions.

The tourist massification is one of the problems in the N. P. It generates a big amount of waste that in some specific beaches is very difficult to manage due to the complexity of the access both for people and vehicles.

As project partner, UCA is carrying out different actions in Cabo de Gata-Níjar and even in other places in Andalusia, such as ICAO surveys, beach clean ups, awareness-raising actions, and the implementation of tidal bins for instance.

They already have established the contact for a network in Andalusia with the different Care Center in order to gather as much information as possible about stranded seabirds and keep some carcasses for necropsies. In that point Marga emphasized the importance of standardizing protocols between different entities and partners in order to have similar and comparable data.

#### **3- Stranded Seabirds Monitoring App (ICAO) – Paulo Lago (SEO/BirdLife)**

Paulo Lago works in the marine team of SEO/BirdLife and he is in charge of the ICAO app. He started the talk explaining the importance of collecting data about stranded seabirds:

- To know how many birds are dying
- To know the reasons of the deaths



-To know the main threats for seabirds and oceans

In Europe, dead seabirds began to be recorded in the 1920s, and it was, mainly, because of oiled birds. SEO implemented the ICAO program in Spain in the 1980s and in recent years the App was developed.

Currently you can upload data through the app or through the website. Both show you two options: punctual observation or complete ICAO survey, and you choose depending on whether you are going to upload a single observation or you are going to walk along the beach in a regular ICAO monitoring.

In the app, for a complete ICAO monitoring you have to choose the beach in the map (thanks to your mobile phone location) and for that moment on, the track will be saved. Every time you find a stranded seabird you have to upload it, and only a little information is required. The species, the state of the bird and if there is some external evidence indicating the possible cause of death like oil or a fishing line or hook, etc would be enough. You can add much more info, but it is not necessary. And in case you do not know the species of bird, you can only upload some pictures and the managers of the app will check and complete the observation. Photos are always very important.

For a single observation, open the app, choose “Single observation” and follow the same steps for the location and the required bird information.

You can also upload data about stranded seabirds at home, through the ICAO website. The info required is the same as in the app. The main difference is that you have to introduce the distance covered manually.

**WEB:** <https://icao.seo.org/>



<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rearmachine.icao>



<https://apps.apple.com/es/app/icao-seo-birdlife/id1558558890>

#### **4- Stranded seabirds found while collecting marine litter- Lidia Nascimento (Màr a Deriva- Adrift sea)**

Màr a Deriva is not an Association, but a group of people with the same objective, to reduce marine litter and raise awareness about that problem. In 2022 for instance, they carried out around 150 beach clean ups and removed 15.500kg of rubbish.

When they started with this work, they realized they were finding not only waste, but also stranded seabirds. Mår a Deriva made contact with SPEA and some other official bodies in Portugal in order to standardize the collection of data and currently they are a very important part of the stranded seabirds network. If they find an alive bird they contact official entities to care for the birds. And if they find a dead bird they collect data following SPEA forms.

The role played becomes particularly important during the massive mortality events that occurred in winter 2022-2023 for instance. At that winter season hundreds of Atlantic puffins showed up stranded along the Atlantic coast in France, Spain and Portugal and Mår a Deriva (and other associations/organisations organizing beach clean-ups) collaborated in the detection and collection of data about the stranded seabirds. The only thing they need and they ask for is to know the protocols for both collecting data and bird procedures, to establish a useful stranded seabird network.



Lidia Nascimento's talk

## **5- Actions for the conservation, improvement of knowledge and protection of marine habitats and species. – Alba García (Tragsatec-MITECO)**

Alba García works in a project to protect the marine ecosystem in Red Natura2000 in Spain, depending on the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (Spanish government) under the European Directive 2008/56/CE.

What they do is basically:

- Obtain information about these marine protected areas regarding on conservation status of ecosystems and species, human activities/ interactions, main threats they face, etc
- Establish a contact network
- Communication
- Collaboration with existent projects as LIFE SeaBiL

At that point, the Tragsatec teams could collaborate with us in Andalusia, Cantabria and Ebro Delta supporting the ICAO monitoring, transferring birds to the Care Centers, carrying out necropsies, taking samples and also in the monitoring of threatened species as Kentish plovers.



Alba Garcia's talk

## **6- Admissions and care of marine birds in the Andalusian Network of Wildlife Care Centers – Isabel Molina (Coordination of Andalusian care centers CREAs, Andalusian Government)**

The Autonomous Community of Andalusia has 8 provinces. Every of them has a Wildlife Recovery Center and they started working together in 2002, in a coordinated way, under the same protocols, same logo, etc.

In addition to care for the animals, they also do:

- Education, sensibilization and training
- Different research projects
- Supporting existing projects, such as LIFE SeaBiL.
- Epidemiologic surveillance like avian flu in aquatic and marine birds, for instance.
- Training and simulation of different situations, such as an oil spill on the coast.

Regarding the seabirds they receive at the Care Centers, they represent only 5% of all birds they care for. The main reason is weakness. If birds do not eat, they get thinner, weaker and they show up stranded at the beaches. Sadly, the majority of them die despite the efforts to keep them alive. At the Care Centers, in general, the 50% of the animals are recovered, however, in the case of seabirds, the percentage drops to only 17%.

Isabel spoke about avian flu also. This group of birds are the main reservoir for this virus and in a natural way they have it with a low viral load and are often asymptomatic. It is very important to handle seabirds with gloves and other protection because many times you don't know at the beach if the bird is infected. Avian flu in humans is rare, but it can happen.



Isabel Molina's talk

## 7- Main point discussions with the public

After the talks, in this first SeaBiL Workshop some questions were raised from the audience in the room and online.

First, it was related to the ICAO survey and the different ways to register the stranded seabirds. Paulo said that the best option is to carry out an ICAO survey at the beach with the app, better than a single observation or the website. But it is true that some beaches have no internet signal and you can not use the mobile phone app. In that case it is necessary to use the website.

Paulo asked Isabel Molina about the possibility of using a unique ID number for each stranded seabird in order to know and gather information since the bird is found at the beach until it is analysed or necropsied at the Care Center.

She said it will be possible in order to create a strong network regarding stranded seabirds. But to implement it, it will require the implication of all actors involved. Volunteers, rangers, local and government authorities, organizations carrying out ICAO or beach clean-ups.

Alba García was questioned about the network between Tragsatec and the Government. She noticed the importance of networking not only with the Government, but also with different organisations, entities, NGO's or anyone involved in the same matter, in that case the marine litter and the impact on seabirds.

There was also a question about the massive mortality event in December 2022 in the mediterranean coast, affecting mainly to razorbills *Alca torda*. At that time, the only thing we know is that most of the razorbills were juveniles and they arrived in a very poor body condition. Necropsies looking for plastics or other kinds of human waste have not been carried out yet. It will be necessary to do specific analysis and use specific techniques in order to discover small pieces of plastic (micro plastic) of less than 1mm in size.

M<sup>a</sup> Margarida Nunes, from the Portugal Government, pointed out that it should be interesting to disseminate into the general public some details about how to proceed when you find a stranded seabird at the beach. Things like do not touch it or do it with gloves, leaving the bird at the beach and calling 112, which entity you have to call in case the bird was alive etc. One suggestion that we all thought was necessary.



# CONCLUSION



**Stranded Birds Survey.** It is very important to have a tool, such as ICAO, in order to collect and gather as much info as possible about the stranded seabirds event. Seabirds are an indicator about the health of the oceans and the species that inhabit them.

Thanks to new technology we can have an ICAO app in our mobile phone and we can upload information by real time in a common database. And thanks to the application's reviewers all info will be verified and the doubts resolved.



It is necessary to **take into account all actors involved** that can help in the issue of marine litter and its impact on birds. And beach clean-up organizers are one of them. They spend a lot of time at the beach and they find stranded seabirds during waste collection.

Wildlife Care Centers are a key piece of that network. They receive most of the stranded seabirds and are able to carry out external examination and also necropsies in order to know the causes of death.



Once all parts of the network have been identified, the next step is to **standardize protocols**. In this way, each participant, volunteer, NGO, Care Center or any other kind of entity, will collect the information in the same way and it will be possible to use and compare all data. Currently we know we are losing a lot of data because different bodies with different collaborators are using different ways to register the stranded seabirds, for instance.

**Working together is essential for the protection of nature.**

# ANNEX

## LIST OF PEOPLE ATTENDING THE WORKSHOP:

<b>Nombre</b>	<b>Apellido</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Regime</b>
Mónica	Expósito Granados	UCA	Partner	Presencial
Marga	L. Rivas	UCA	Partner	Presencial
Felipe	González	SEO/BirdLife	Partner	Presencial
Ludovico	de Vega	SEO/BirdLife	Partner	Presencial
Paulo	Lago	SEO/BirdLife	Partner	Presencial
Nuno	Oliveira	SPEA	Partner	Presencial
Guillaume	Le Hétet	LPO	Partner	Presencial
Jerome	Fort	La Rochelle University	Partner	On line
Pablo	Morón	Tragsatec	External	Presencial
Alba	García	Tragsatec	External	Presencial
Cristina	Bolumar	Tragsatec	External	Presencial
Juan M.	Gisbert	UAL	External	Presencial
Jose Miguel	García	General public	External	Presencial
Antonio	Fuentes	General public	External	Presencial
Isabel	Molina	Andalusian Government	External	Presencial
Manon	Linker	ELMEN	External	Presencial
Margarida	Nunes	Portuguese Government	External	Presencial
Lidia	Nascimento	Mår a Deriva	External	Presencial
Kiko	Alvarez	SEO/BirdLife	Partner	On line
Lucia	Soliño	SEO/BirdLife	Partner	On line
Gerardo	Carranza	Tragsatec - Cantabria	External	On line
Marinha			External	On line
LARA	ALVAREZ		External	On line
Óscar	Álvarez Losada		External	On line
Charo	Brinquis		External	On line
E.Macarena	Castro Casas	UCA	External	On line
Jose Miguel	Escribano	CRFS- Bizkaia	External	On line
Itziar	Galindez Centeno		External	On line
Bella	García Oliva		External	On line

<b>Nombre</b>	<b>Apellido</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Regime</b>
Eva	García Ortiz		External	On line
Anza	Ibone	CRFS Cantabria	External	On line
Inês	Lacerda	SPEA	Partner	On line
Guillermo	Lopez Torrents	Tragsatec - Cantabria	External	On line
Angela	Loring Salmerón		External	On line
Maria	Macias Gonzalez		External	On line
Ana	Maurer		External	On line
Carmen	Meléndez Díez		External	On line
Jaime	Moreno Aguilar		External	On line
Tânia	Nascimento	SPEA	External	On line
Sergio	París		External	On line
María	Parra Bermejo	Tragsatec - Fuerteventura	External	On line
Gaizka	Peñin	Tragsatec - Cantabria	External	On line
M. Simeón	Pérez Toledo		External	On line
Blanca	Pluja		External	On line
AMP_Canarias	TEC	Areas Marinas Protegidas	External	On line
Eva	-	Tragsatec	External	On line
-	-	Tragsatec- La Palma	External	On line
Yada	Trapletti Lanti	UCA	Partner	On line
Cesca	Viladecans		External	On line
Mireia	Villafafila	UCA	External	On line