

COLLECTION OF SEABIRD CARCASSES FOR NECROPSY

Why it is Important/Overview of Study

The Central Coast Marine Bird Health Study (CCMBHS) is research conducted by the California Department of Fish and Game's Marine Wildlife and Veterinary Care and Research Center (MWVCRC), based in Santa Cruz, with collaborators from Moss Landing Marine Laboratories. CCMBHS aims to provide a quantitative demographic assessment of disease and other mortality factors affecting Common Murres and other seabird populations in California. CCMBHS will enhance existing beach survey programs (i.e. Beach COMBERS and Beach Watch), foster collaboration among scientists and rehabilitation centers, and will provide regional information for federal, state, and local resource managers.

It is only through post-mortem examinations (necropsies) that wildlife veterinarians can identify and quantify mortality factors. By monitoring mortality patterns, we can develop better information on what affects (natural and human) our seabird populations, which are important indicators of marine ecosystem health.

Procedure Overview

Birds must be fresh upon collection (eyes intact) and kept refrigerated or chilled (not frozen) and arrive at the laboratory within two days of death. Therefore, birds found on Fridays should not be collected unless specifically directed to do so during mortality events.

Collection:

- Wrap the bird in a plastic bag such as a zip-lock bag or for larger birds use a garbage bag. Please double bag the carcass to prevent any leakage during shipment.
- On a piece of paper with a pencil write: your name, date collected, beach name and number, and species. Place inside the outer plastic bag.
- RECORD the carcass collection on the Dead Vertebrate section of your datasheet.

Contact:

- Contact staff at MWVCRC to let them know that you are Fed Ex-ing a package and when it will arrive. Provide the collection information including the species.
MWVCRC Office Number: (831) 469-1745
Colleen Young: (831) 212-7626
Hannah Nevins: (831) 212-7218
- Call Jan Roletto on the Sanctuary Emergency Phone (415) 987-0412 the same day you have collected a specimen. Provide her with the collection information including the species.

Shipping:

- Package the bird as soon as you complete your survey so the bird will stay fresh for two days. The bird should be placed in a cooler with blue-ice packets on top and underneath it. **DO NOT** place the carcass in the freezer as this will ruin the tissues.
- Triple tape the edges of the lid of the cooler so that no moisture can escape the cooler. **If using a Styrofoam cooler, it needs to be inside a cardboard box**, or FedEx will not deliver. Hard plastic coolers are okay to ship without packaging.

- Ship the bird to:
MWVCRC, CDFG
Seabird Health Study
1451 Shaffer Road
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
- Call Fed Ex, 1-800-GO FEDEX, to pick up the package or find a drop-off location. Complete the Fed Ex shipping label using the GFNMS Fed Ex account number, 2503-2668-8.
- Mail the top copy of the Fed Ex shipping label to Jan Roletto at GFNMS, 991 Marine Drive, The Presidio, San Francisco, CA 94129. The shipping label is important for our accounting system.

What You Should Collect

Collect any species of seabird that is **fresh and not scavenged**. All birds collected for necropsy must be fresh, or the expense of shipping and examination will be wasted.

- Birds should not be scavenged. Birds should have both eyes intact or slightly sunken. Eyes should be clear and not cloudy.
- Birds should not have maggots or be decomposing. Smell the bird, if it smells like it is rotting, then it is not fresh.

When to Collect:

Collection Day

Mon. - Thurs.

Fri.

Sat.

Sun.

Shipping Day

ship same day

do not collect - do not ship

ship same day, will arrive on Mon., don't

ship if Mon. is a holiday

ship on Mon., don't collect and don't ship if

Mon. is a holiday

ALL Marbled Murrelets should be collected regardless of condition. Only fresh MAMU carcasses should be shipped to the CDFG lab. Scavenged, decomposing or mummified MAMU carcasses should be brought to the GFNMS office ASAP.