

Monitoring protocol for the field survey in SUPRE

BirdLife Denmark



1. Goal

The SUPRE project aims to document the extent and underlying causes of stranded seabirds along the Danish coastlines. The project engages volunteers in systematic beach surveys, data collection and, for selected participants, the collection of deceased birds for subsequent analysis.

2. Participants and their roles

2.1 Group 1 – Beach walkers

- **Purpose:** To conduct beach surveys along the coastal stretches within the project area through a coordinated annual effort during the last weekend of February, as well as during additional visits throughout the year, with particular emphasis on the winter season.
- **Activities:**
 - To carry out transects (walks) of 1 to 10 kilometers in length to record stranded seabirds. Transects are conducted along the high-tide lines.
 - Transects can be performed at any time during daylight hours.
 - Observations of stranded birds are entered in real time using the DOFbasen data entry app.

2.2 Group 2 – Authorized collectors

- **Purpose:** To collect deceased birds of key species for analysis at Aarhus University (AU).
- **Activities:**
 - To collect and register up to a total of 50 birds per year for each key species.
 - Key species include Common Guillemot, Puffin, Northern Gannet, Great Skua, and Razorbill.
 - Storage of collected birds locally in an approved freezer.

- Coordination with the project management regarding the transport of deceased birds to AU.
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3. Geographical coverage

Transects and observations are conducted in the following coastal areas:

- The west coast of Jutland from the Wadden Sea to Skagen Odde
 - The east coast of Vendsyssel, Himmerland, and Djursland
 - The northern coast of Zealand
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4. Methodology for Beach Surveys

4.1 Planning

- Participants are continuously informed about:
 - The protocol
 - Relevant field updates
 - Important species and current focus points

4.2 Conducting a Transect

- The observer carries out a transect along a route of their choice within the project area. All stranded species are recorded.
- The route is tracked using GPS positions every minute via the DOFbasen data entry app. Start and end times of the transect are recorded automatically.
- The transect is conducted without handling the birds.
- Participants record the following:
 - **Number and species** of stranded birds
 - **Time** of observation for each stranded bird
 - **Condition of the bird:**
 - Dead
 - Weak or injured
 - **Visible signs of injury**

- Oiled
- Entangled in plastic
- Entangled in fishing gear
- Sick/emaciated
- **Carcass condition** (“Recently dead and intact,” “Recently dead and partially scavenged,” or “Dead, older remains”)
- **GPS-position**
- **Photo** of the find recorded in the app (strongly recommended)
- **Number of additional observers**, if any
- **0-observations:** The transect route is recorded even if no stranded birds are found

4.3 Additional

Participants are also encouraged to record the following:

- Relevant observations of the beach environment, such as litter, oil, recent storm surges, etc.
- Other deceased marine mammals, fish, turtles, and similar
- Other live and healthy birds
- Marking of deceased birds to prevent double recording if the participant frequently walks the same route

4.4 Contacts for Other Findings

The Animal Protection Emergency Hotline can be contacted for guidance by calling 1812 in cases of distressed birds and animals.

Findings of ringed birds should be reported to the Ringing Administration at the University of Copenhagen. Participants are encouraged to forward any reply letters to the project team.

In cases of suspected avian influenza, reports should be made to the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration via their app “FugleinfluenzaTip.”

5. Collection of Deceased Birds

5.1 Selected Species

- Only authorized volunteers are allowed to collect deceased birds.
- The focus is on the project's key species: Common Guillemot, Puffin, Northern Gannet, Great Skua, and Razorbill.

5.2 Collection procedures

- Collectors use the provided **safety kit** and follow the supplied **safety instructions**.
- Birds can be collected at any time of the year, although the winter season typically has the highest number of stranded seabirds.
- Each bird is collected in a double plastic bag with a label recording the following:
 - Date
 - Species
 - Location with GPS coordinates
 - Name of the collector

The label is placed in a small zip-lock bag together with the bird to prevent the writing from smudging. The information is then recorded in the provided Excel sheet, which also includes details on the birds' condition (recently dead or decomposed) and the address where the birds are stored.

5.3 Storage and transport

- Birds are stored in a local freezer until collection or delivery to AU.
- The project coordinator should be contacted in the case of a large number of finds.
- A list of collected birds in the Excel sheet is sent to AU.

7. Ethics and Safety

- Local access regulations must be respected, and consideration should be shown for nature, wildlife, and other beach visitors.
- Participants handling deceased birds must follow the provided safety instructions. In the event of disease outbreaks affecting species relevant to the SUPRE project, which result in new or stricter guidelines from the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration or SSI, collectors will be informed by the project team.

- In cases of suspected avian influenza, birds must not be touched. If multiple dead ducks, geese, swans, or gulls are found in one location, or individual dead birds of prey or corvids, this should also be reported to the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration via the app “FugleinfluenzaTip.”
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8. Evaluation and learning

- Experiences from volunteers are collected after each winter season.
 - The protocol is continuously updated to improve methodology and user-friendliness.
 - Questionnaires and interviews are used to gather feedback.
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9. Data

All data from the beach surveys are stored in DOFbasen and sent to AU by DOF in data packages. Data from the bird collections are recorded in Excel and sent continuously to AU and DOF by the participants when the deceased birds are submitted for analysis.

9. Contact and support

Email: havfugl@dof.dk

Project coordinators in DOF-SUPRE:

- Project staff and nature guide Simon S. Christiansen: ssc@dof.dk
 - Biologist Joakim Matthiesen: jm@dof.dk
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10. Overview of Guidelines and Reference Materials

- Map of the project area
- Species list and identification guide for seabirds for beach walkers
- Instructions for beach surveys and the DOFbasen app
- Guide with screenshots for the DOFbasen data entry app
- Species list and identification guide for seabirds for collectors
- Safety instructions for bird collection, including a list of contents in the safety kit

- Template for labels for collected birds
- Excel template for recording collected birds