

CARCASS COLLECTION PROTOCOL

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The purpose of this protocol is to describe the methods and materials required to collect wildlife carcasses from the field as part of response and natural resource damage assessment activities during an oil spill incident.

These procedures are considered standard operating guidelines which may be edited and refined to meet incident-specific needs. Any changes to these procedures for specific incidents will be made in consultation with the Regional Spill Response Coordinator and a designated Office of Law Enforcement official.

The search and collection efforts for bird, marine mammal and other wildlife carcasses should be conducted by USFWS personnel whenever possible.

Marine mammals have a separate and unique collection protocol as provided under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and should only be collected by a Federal or State agency official, as appropriate.

PROCEDURES FOR USFWS PERSONNEL:

Search & Collection Teams:

- Search and collection teams will consist of at least two members. At least one member of the team should have previous carcass search and collection experience, or have completed standardized training.
- Each collection team will be issued a carcass collection kit (listed at the end of this protocol) and be given search location assignments.

Search Locations & Search Procedure:

- Search locations should be well defined and documented so that they are easily repeatable.
- Search locations may be identified as shoreline segments as defined and provided by the Incident Command Center. If shoreline segments are not provided, then search locations should be described using lat/long from a GPS, or using descriptions of unique geographic features that can be easily relocated.
- Searches should be conducted carefully and as thoroughly as time will allow. Search effort should also be documented by noting the time at the beginning and end of each search on the “**BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORM**” (single form attached to this protocol).

Collection Procedure:

- Begin each new search location by filling out the top portion of a “**BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORM**”. Information on individual carcasses will be added as they are found. If one or more bird carcasses are found at a search location, assign a white **Evidence Seizure Tag (Form 3-487)** for the respective search location. The Evidence Seizure Tag is imprinted with a unique Seizure Tag

Number. **Do not fill in the INV number block.** Evidence Custodians will fill this in at the intake centers. Enter the date and start time; and search location/shoreline segment.

- Complete a blue **Evidence Identification Tag (Form 3-2052)** for each carcass that is located. One blue tag is used to identify a single carcass and should be filled in to include: the Evidence Seizure Tag Number for that search location (shoreline segment); an item number (assigned sequential number, i.e. 01, 02, 03, etc); name of the collector; date and time; and the species (if known).
- Photograph the carcass with the completed blue Evidence Identification Tag visible next to the carcass.
- When handling carcasses, wear nitrile gloves. (A new pair of gloves should be donned at the start of each new search location.)
- Fill in the carcass information on the **BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORM** including: species identification (if known), blue Evidence Identification Tag item number (assigned sequential number); photograph number; and amount/description of oiling. Determinations on carcass condition, scavenging, and emaciation should be made by experienced personnel as time allows.
- Place the carcass in a **paper bag**. It is important that oiled carcasses **do not** touch plastic bags. Also, do not place used gloves in the bag with the carcass. Place the paper-bagged-carcass in a plastic bag and securely attach the completed blue Evidence Identification Tag to the outside of the plastic bag.
- At the end of each search location (shoreline segment), record the stop time and stop GPS location information and estimate the length of the search area on the **BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORM**.
- Complete the white **Evidence Seizure Tag** with information from all of the blue Evidence Identification Tags associated with each carcass found at this location. One white Evidence Seizure Tag should be used to represent (tag) all carcasses (not to exceed 10 carcasses per seizure tag; use additional tags if necessary) collected within a defined search location (shoreline segment). After the search of a specific location has been completed and carcasses have been appropriately bagged and tagged, the accompanying Evidence Seizure Tag should be filled in to include: the stop date/time; number of carcasses collected; blue Evidence Identification Tag item numbers associated with each carcass; and the name of the person collecting the carcasses.
- One member of the collection team should become responsible for that collection and their name should appear on the Evidence Seizure Tag.

Turn in the Carcasses

- At the end of the search day, the carcass collection person whose name appears on the Evidence Seizure Tag should take the carcasses to a pre-established carcass collection facility (should be a secure location) and sign them over to the Evidence Custodian or ship the carcass (es) to the appropriate intake station.
- If circumstances are such that no designated carcass collection facility has been established for the area from which a bird carcass is collected, then the collector should receive guidance and assistance from the Sector Spill Response Coordinator, OLE Case Agent, or NRDA representative regarding appropriate transfer procedures to a designated FWS official.

Evidence Custodian

- Please refer to the **Deepwater Horizon (MC 252) Oil Spill U.S. F.W.S. Procedures for Evidence Custodians Stationed at Bird Intake Centers**
- The Evidence Custodian (if different from the person who collected the carcasses), or designated FWS official, will complete the chain-of-custody on the back of the white Evidence Seizure Tag before logging the carcasses into the **Evidence Storage Log (Form 3-2064)**. The Evidence Custodian will log the carcasses into storage on the Evidence Storage Log including the following information: sequential log number; INV (incident-specific) number; date and time; description of the evidence; Evidence Seizure Tag number; and custodian's signature.
- At the end of each day, the Evidence Custodian should compile the number and species of carcasses collected and logged, and transmit that information to the Service's Response Representative at the Incident Command Center, the OLE Case Agent, and the NRDA Bird Lead.

Carcass Photographs

- Carcass collection photographs taken by Field Teams should be referenced on the original **BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORM** that is provided to the Evidence Custodian or to a designated Law Enforcement official and as soon as possible downloaded from the camera (memory card) to an approved data storage device. *****DO NOT DELETE, OVERWRITE OR OTHERWISE REMOVE OR MANIPULATE DIGITAL DATA (photographs) FROM THE INTERNAL MEMORY OF THE CAMERA OR FROM THE MEMORY CARD.*****
- For personnel working under authorized NRDA protocols, please refer to your study methods for the disposition of photographic documentation.

Chain-of-Custody

- **Anytime carcasses are transferred** from one person to another, a **Chain-of-Custody** must be maintained. The chain-of-custody may be maintained by using the back of the white Evidence Seizure Tag or by using a **Chain-of-Custody Form (Form 3-2063)**. A chain-of-custody form would be filled out for each white Evidence Seizure Tag (i.e. batch of carcasses with blue tags associated with that Evidence Seizure Tag). When there are only small numbers of carcasses, more than one Evidence Seizure Tag may be included on a single chain-of-custody form, so long as all of the listed items are transferred at the same time. The information from the Evidence Seizure Tag(s) should be listed in the appropriate section on the chain-of-custody form, including all associated Evidence Identification Tag item numbers. Information and signatures of both the transferee and the receiver must be included on the form. The chain-of-custody form must remain with the carcasses and transferred to a designated Law Enforcement official, as appropriate.
- If evidence is not transferred in person (i.e. via helicopter, plane or mail), the Evidence Custodian should describe how it was delivered on the Evidence Storage Log and/or Chain of Custody Form. The Evidence Custodian will also maintain a file of receipts (i.e.; Fed-Ex air bill) referencing the Evidence Seizure Tag number(s) that were shipped.

All shipments must be sealed (preferably, using evidence tape) and signed to ensure that the shipment has not been tampered with during transfer.

PROCEDURES FOR NON-USFWS PERSONNEL:

Marine Mammals:

- If a marine mammal carcass is located during spill response activities, non-agency personnel should be directed to mark and document the location and immediately report this information to a Supervisor or the Incident Command Center.

Operations Teams:

- All field operations teams, including live, oiled-bird capture and rescue teams, shoreline protection teams, and clean-up crews, who are unaccompanied by FWS personnel, should be directed to collect bird carcasses when they find them.
- All field operations team leaders should be provided with carcass collection kits and appropriate, incident-specific instructions for collecting carcasses. Instructions should include information on maintaining chain-of custody.
- Team leaders should be directed to designate a single individual as the carcass collector.
- Incident-specific arrangements should be made to ensure appropriate transfer of collected carcasses from the field to the pre-designated carcass collection facility or designated FWS official.
- **BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORMs** should be provided to all field teams and collectors should be directed to complete this information, as appropriate.

Carcass Collection Procedures:

- When handling oiled carcasses, wear appropriate protective gloves.
- When a carcass is found, place the carcass in a paper bag or in foil wrap. It is important that oiled carcasses **do not** touch plastic bags. Also, do not place used gloves in the bag with the carcass.
- Place the paper-bagged or foil-wrapped carcass in a plastic bag and tie securely.
- Tag the plastic bag with the following information: date, time, location, and collector's name.
- **BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORMs** *should be completed by the collector.*
- All carcasses collected should be transferred to an Intake Center Evidence Custodian or other authorized USFWS representative as soon as possible.

Carcass Transfer and Chain-of-Custody

- **Anytime carcasses are transferred** from one person to another, a Chain-of-Custody must be maintained. The chain-of-custody may be maintained by using the **Chain-of-Custody Form** provided in the kit.
- At the end of the day, collectors should be directed to transfer all collected carcasses to the pre-designated carcass collection facility or to a designated FWS official. The Evidence Custodian at the facility, or the designated FWS official, is responsible for ensuring that a chain-of-custody is established and maintained when carcasses are transferred.

Evidence Custodian

- Upon receipt of carcasses collected by non-FWS personnel, the Evidence Custodian or FWS official will tag each carcass with a blue **Evidence Identification Tag** and enter each individual's collection onto an **Evidence Seizure Tag** as described above. It should be noted on the Evidence Seizure Tag that the carcasses were received from a non-FWS collector. The Evidence Custodian or FWS official should also prepare a **BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORM** (if this has not been completed by the collector) to include all information provided by the non-FWS collector with a time and date of receipt.

Blue Evidence Tag:

EVIDENCE IDENTIFICATION TAG

SEIZURE TAG NO. 902641-001	ITEM NO.	DATE: 5/29/2010
FILE NO. MS-24-02	TAGGED BY (INITIALS) MKH	

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

FORM 3-2062

Seizure Tag No.
This number can be reused for multiple Evidence Identification Tags collected at the same site.

ID# of individual bird from the Beached Bird Search Effort and Birds Collected Form

Date collected

Collector's Initials

Beach Segment Name
If known

Carcass collection kit (USFWS):

Incident-specific maps or shoreline segment maps, if available
Evidence Seizure Tags, Form 3-487 (white)
Evidence Identification Tags, Form 3-2052 (blue)
BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORMs
Chain-of-Custody Forms
Carcass collection protocol
Large paper bags (for otter carcasses)
Paper bags
Small plastic bags
Large plastic bags
Rubber bands or twist ties
Pencil and / or permanent pen (sharpie)
Evidence tape
Nitrile gloves
Flagging (for marking large marine mammal carcasses)

Carcass collection kit (non-USFWS):

Incident-specific carcass collection instructions
Paper bags
Small plastic bags
Large plastic bags
Rubber bands or twist ties
Pencil and / or permanent pen (sharpie)
BIRD SEARCH EFFORT and BIRDS COLLECTED DATA FORMs
Chain-of-Custody Forms
Tape
Nitrile gloves
Flagging (for marking marine mammal carcass locations)

