

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. The majority of carcasses are expected to be birds, but some marine mammals may also be collected using these protocols.

On June 11, 2010 OLE and NRDA moved from using both a **Birds Collected Form** and the **Bird Search Effort and Birds Collected Data Form (Birds Collected Form)** to a single form for carcass data collection. This update provides guidance for using the single form (the **Birds Collected Form**). It will no longer be necessary to complete a **Birds Collected Form**. 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.

Carcass search and collection of birds, marine mammals and other wildlife 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 personnel. At least one member of the team must have previous carcass search and collection experience.
- 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 Evidence Seizure Tag and Birds Collected Form.

Collection Procedure:

- Begin each new search location by filling out the top portion of a **Birds Collected Form** (attached to this protocol). Information on individual carcasses will be added as they are found. Also, at this time, assign a white **Evidence Seizure Tag (Form 3-487)** to this new 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.
- When a carcass is located, complete a blue **Evidence Identification Tag (Form 3-2052)**. 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 Birds Collected 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 tie 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 width of the search area on the Birds Collected 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 collected within a defined search location (shoreline segment or single point). After the search of a specific location has been completed and carcasses have been appropriately tagged and bagged, the accompanying Evidence Seizure Tag should be filled in to include: the stop 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 carcass 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 the bird is collected from, then the collector should receive guidance and assistance from the Regional Spill Response Coordinator regarding appropriate transfer procedures to a designated FWS official.

Carcass Custodian

- The carcass 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 carcass 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 carcass custodian should compile the number and species of oiled carcasses collected and logged, and transmit that information back to the Service's Regional Response Coordinator at the Incident Command Center.

Carcass Photographs

- Photographs from each day's collection should be downloaded onto a disk and presented with the original copy of the carcass collection forms to the carcass custodian or to a designated Law Enforcement official.
- 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 custodian should describe how it will be delivered on the chain-of-custody form. All shipments must be sealed (preferably, using evidence tape) at each of the seams of the container and signed across the tape 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.
- **Birds Collected 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.
- If time permits, Birds Collected Forms should be completed (as completely as possible) by the collector.
- All carcasses collected should remain with the collector, as appropriate.

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 carcass 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.

Carcass Custodian

- Upon receipt of carcasses collected by non-FWS personnel, the carcass 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 carcass custodian or FWS official should also prepare a Birds Collected 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.

Date and military time

Check appropriate box.
List city and state,
transect and/or
Lat/Long in decimal
degrees and Datum

List species (preferred)
or species code,
number of animals, and
if label if oiled.

Collector's name (Does
not have to be Law
Enforcement)

EVIDENCE SEIZURE TAG	
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	SEIZURE TAG NO. 902641
DATE, TIME OF SEIZURE: 5/29/2010 1300	FILE NO. INV.
<input type="checkbox"/> TAKEN FROM: (PERSON AND/OR LOCATION) <input type="checkbox"/> RECEIVED FROM: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOUND AT: Gulfport, MS MS-24-02 30.235343 86.432243 WGS84	
DESCRIPTION OF EVIDENCE: 001) NOGA 1 Oiled 002) Unknown bird 1 003) Laughing Gull 1	
SPECIAL AGENT/INSPECTOR Collector's Name	BADGE NO.

FORM 3-487 (Rev. 7/81) U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 2003-731-071

SEIZED PROPERTY RECEIPT	
DATE, TIME OF SEIZURE:	SEIZURE TAG NO. 902641
DESCRIPTION: Leave Blank and attached	
SPECIAL AGENT/INSPECTOR:	BADGE NO.

Second person in the
chain of custody or
Evidence Custodian

Leave the INV block
blank. Evidence
Custodians will fill in the
INV number.

No more than 10 Evidence
Identification Tags
on 1 Evidence Seizure Tag

Leave blank unless LE.

CHAIN OF CUSTODY: Listed Item(s) transferred from custody of officer listed on reverse side of this tag to:		
DATE: 5/29/10	PRINTED NAME: Second Person	INITIALS:
5/31/10	Third Person	
RETURN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I hereby acknowledge that the article(s) listed on the reverse side of this tag have been returned to me in as good a condition as when they were seized by the indicated officer.		
RECEIPT SIGNATURE:		DATE:

WARNING: the material to which this tag is affixed is in the custody of the United States Government and must not be tampered with under penalty of law: 18 USC 2232.

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Blue Evidence Tag:

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

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

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FORM 3-2052

Beach Segment Name
If known

Date collected

Collector's Initials

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)
Birds Collected 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)
Birds Collected Forms
Chain-of-Custody Forms
Tape
Nitrile gloves
Flagging (for marking marine mammal carcass locations)