

## Protocols Reporting Wildlife Disturbance Incidents

This form can be used to quantify, describe and report wildlife disturbance incidents at seabird breeding and roosting sites, and at marine mammal haul-outs along the northern California coast, and on off-shore islands and rocks. Complete this form to report wildlife disturbance incidents.

Not all incidents will result in prosecution. Some incidents may not warrant law enforcement involvement, however; documentation of these incidents is important. The Seabird Protection Network (Network) and partnering agencies use the collected information for: 1) educational purposes, 2) tracking repeat offenders, and 3) illustrating the need for more enforcement.

### Defining a wildlife disturbance

**For the purposes of the Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form, a disturbance incident is defined as any human-related harassment, flushing, displacement, harm and/or agitation to wildlife, which includes but is not limited to operating a vessel or aircraft or to do any other act that results in the disturbance or molestation of nesting seabirds or resting marine mammals.**

### Seabird Disturbance

A seabird disturbance incident can be defined as any event that results in the following actions:

1. Birds flushing (birds flying off the rock) or displacing (moving from their nest, resting site or rafting area).
2. Any event which causes eggs or chicks to be exposed (adult moves away from the egg or chick), displaced (egg or chick moves from nest site), or taken (egg/chick is depredated).
3. An event that causes birds to be visibly agitated or alerted, including "head-bobbing" in Common Murre (birds moving their heads up and down) and alert postures in cormorants (e.g., heads up and alert, wing-flapping).

It may not be necessary to complete the Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form for an incident that results in only head-bobbing. Head-bobbing behavior in Common Murre indicates agitation and a certain level of disturbance. However, it is difficult and unnecessary to record every event in which head-bobbing occurs.

### Marine Mammal Disturbance

A marine mammal disturbance can be defined as any event that results in the following actions:

1. **Head-alert** is defined as a pinniped raising its head from a resting position. The animal will turn its head in the direction of potential danger.
2. **Flushing** behavior constitutes the animal moving towards or into the water. The animal is flushed from the resting position.

### Sea Turtles

The laws and regulations that prevent disturbance to marine mammals and birds may also include sea turtles. This form can be used to record sea turtle disturbance incidents as well.

## Reporting a Wildlife Disturbance Incident

### WITNESSES SHOULD NOT APPROACH OR CONTACT ANYONE SUSPECTED OF CAUSING A WILDLIFE DISTURBANCE

An incident must be reported in a **timely** manner in order for law enforcement authorities to respond and successfully prosecute potential wildlife disturbance incidents. Specific information is essential and must be accurately documented and reported to authorities.

Reporting a wildlife disturbance incident is a multi-step process. The incident must be described in detail on the **Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form (PDF)**. Secondly, a description of the incident must be phoned into the responsible agency (see below).

### Obtaining & Completing the Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form (PDF)

#### Step 1:

Download the **Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form (PDF)** from the Seabird Protection Network website: [http://farallones.noaa.gov/eco/seabird/seabird\\_report.html](http://farallones.noaa.gov/eco/seabird/seabird_report.html) - Save the form to your desktop.

Suggested software:

**Adobe Acrobat Professional** is required to electronically complete, save and send the form via email.

**Adobe Reader** can be used, but will require additional steps. Complete the form. Save the form as text (File menu – Save as Text). Print the form. Email the Text file. Send the completed form via snail mail.

#### Step 2:

Follow the suggested guidelines for reporting the wildlife disturbance incident. All **SECTIONS** will **NOT** pertain to the specific incident. Complete the form as best as possible.

#### Step 3:

Attach and email the completed **Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form (PDF)** to [California.Seabirds@noaa.gov](mailto:California.Seabirds@noaa.gov). Please follow the formats described below. The subject of the email needs to read as follows: "Date (YYYY-MM-DD)" – "Location of Disturbance" – "Time (24hr)." On the attachment file, please label the form and map-photo files (see example below).

To: [California.Seabirds@noaa.gov](mailto:California.Seabirds@noaa.gov)

Subject: 2012-05-02 – DSR – 1324

Attachments: FORM – 2012-05-02 – VESSEL – DSR – 1324; MAP-PHOTOS – 2012-05-02 – VESSEL – DSR – 1324

OR

Complete the **Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form (PDF)**, save the form as text (File menu – Save as Text). Print the form. Email the Text file to [California.Seabirds@noaa.gov](mailto:California.Seabirds@noaa.gov). Send the completed form to Seabird Protection Network: via mail to 991 Marine Dr., The Presidio, San Francisco, 94129; or via fax 415-561-6626. If sending via fax or mail, write Attn: Sage Tezak.

## Phoning Law Enforcement

Phoning law enforcement is secondary to completing the **Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form** (PDF). In areas of no cell phone reception, call in the incident as soon as possible. The following information needs to be described to law enforcement: **1)** Type of incident; **2)** Date of incident; **3)** Time of incident; **4)** Location of incident; **5)** Vessel or aircraft characteristics; **6)** Identification/license numbers; **7)** Last known direction; **8)** Behavior of any animals affected prior to, during and after incident; **9)** Description of incident and/or comments.

In addition to sending information to [California.Seabirds@noaa.gov](mailto:California.Seabirds@noaa.gov) (i.e., form and attachments), report the incident via phone according to your location and type of activity that caused the incident.

### **Point Reyes National Seashore:**

Vessel: If incident involves a marine protected area or Special Closure, call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP

### **Bird Rock, GGNRA:**

Vessel: Call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP (Note: not a 24-hour dispatch service)

### **Point Bonita, GGNRA:**

Vessel: Call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP (Note: not a 24-hour dispatch service)

### **Alcatraz, GGNRA:**

Vessel: Call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP (Note: not a 24-hour dispatch service)

### **South Farallon Islands:**

Vessel: If incident involves a marine protected area or Special Closure, call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP

### **Devil's Slide Rock:**

Vessel: If incident involves a marine protected area or Special Closure, call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP

### **Fitzgerald Marine Reserve:**

Vessel: If incident involves a marine protected area or Special Closure, call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP

Aircraft: If San Mateo County Ranger is not witness, contact the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve: (650) 728-3584

### **California State Beach (including Año Nuevo):**

Vessel: If incident involves a marine protected area or Special Closure, call 1-888-DFG-CALTIP

### **Castle/Hurricane Rock:**

Vessel: Call the NOAA Enforcement Hotline 1-800-853-1964; Enforcement Officer, Robert Yerena

## Commonly Asked Questions

### When should wildlife disturbances be reported?

Incidents that result in a wildlife disturbance from humans should be reported. Wildlife disturbance incidents have the highest probability of enforcement action if you are able to obtain full identification numbers from the aircraft or vessel. Aircraft tail numbers, or vessel name and CF numbers are critical for following up with an incident. Without tail numbers, vessel name and description or CF numbers, officers may not be able to respond in the limited time-frame. If after returning from the field, the full identification of the aircraft or vessel cannot be obtained, the incident can still be used to show a need for education and outreach.

### Who is responsible for follow up?

The Network and Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary will follow-up with the appropriate education (letters, phone calls and presentations) and work with law enforcement as needed. The Network is responsible for coordinating with law enforcement as needed.

### When should one or more forms be completed?

In the event of a wildlife disturbance incident from one anthropogenic source, complete only one form. If an incident occurs and involves two separate sources, complete two Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Forms. If more than one colony/sub-colony was disturbed from one source in the same timeframe, fill out only one form for the entire incident. For example if a vessel is traveling north and causes birds to flush from two areas on Devil's Slide Rock, you should fill out 1 form, and specify the two areas where birds were disturbed. Or if a helicopter flies north and passes over the colony and then turns around and flies over again, complete one form for the entire overflight.

### **EXAMPLE:**

At 14:20 a helicopter heading south flies over sub-colony A at 400 ft. and flushes ~20 murre. At 14:23 the same helicopter circles around and flies over sub-colony B at 350 ft. causing 15 large BRCO chicks to stampede up towards the crest of sub-colony B. The helicopter continues flying south. At 15:19 the same helicopter returns flying north over sub-colony C and sub-colony D at 300 ft flushing ~60 murre from sub-colony C and 30 from sub-colony D.

**Complete only one Wildlife Disturbance Reporting Form:** Time observed-14:20 – 14:23, Area affected-sub-colony A and sub-colony B, Source-Helicopter, Direction-S, Direction-C, Activity-Circle, Altitude-400, Altitude-350; COMU flushed-20; Notes-helicopter circled around and flew over sub-colony B. The BRCO displaced were large chicks. Time observed-15:19, Area affected- sub-colony C, sub-colony D, Source-Helicopter, Direction-N, Activity-Trans, Altitude-300, COMU flushed-60, COMU flushed-30; Notes-Same helicopter as 14:20 and 14:23.