

Virtual training course on the identification and handling of vulnerable species incidentally caught during fishing operations

in the context of



Virtual training course on the identification and handling of vulnerable species incidentally caught during fishing operations

co-organized by the GFCM and RCG Med&BS, in the context of the Medbycatch Project and
the EU Data Collection Framework

February 2022

Objective: Organization of training courses on the identification and handling of vulnerable species incidentally caught in Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries: marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, sharks and rays, macrobenthic invertebrates.

Intended audience: Scientific observers and experts involved in the monitoring and biological sampling of commercial fisheries

Background: The incidental catch of vulnerable species in fisheries (or bycatch) represents an important conservation issue in the Mediterranean and Black Sea for a number of vulnerable species, including marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds, sharks and rays, and macrobenthic invertebrates. Understanding bycatch and adopting effective measures to reduce it are essential steps towards minimizing the incidental catch of vulnerable species and, more generally, conserving the marine ecosystems, as well as ensuring a sustainable fishery sector. Regular and standardized monitoring programmes are therefore crucial to better understand the consequences and regional distribution of incidental catch events in fisheries.

To enable a better and more robust estimation of bycatch during fishing activities, several Mediterranean and Black Sea countries are already carrying out monitoring programmes¹, in line with the publication [“Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea: methodology for data collection”](#).

The monitoring and mitigation of negative interactions between fisheries and vulnerable species are pressing issues currently addressed by the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) in the context of the GFCM 2030 Strategy, by the Regional Coordination Group for the Mediterranean and Black Sea (RCG Med&BS), the MedBycatch project and the Streamline project (MARE/2020/08) and for this reason the GFCM and RCG Med&BS are teaming up in the organization of virtual training courses on bycatch data collection, the identification and the handling of vulnerable species.

¹ among others, bycatch monitoring programmes are being carried out in the context of the project *“Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa ‘bycatch’ of vulnerable species and testing mitigation – a collaborative approach (Medbycatch project)*

Training modality: The training will be divided into 5 courses, one per each taxon, and organized over the course of two weeks. Each course will last one day, with a morning session covering general aspects and an afternoon session delving into species' subregional specificities. The training will be held in English and French, online on the Zoom platform. Participants will receive a certificate of attendance.

Dates: 1 February (marine mammals); 3 February (sea turtles); 7 February (elasmobranchs); 9 February (seabirds); 11 February (macroinvertebrates)

Registration: The training is open to scientific observers and experts from Mediterranean and Black Sea countries as well as relevant partner organizations. Registration will open on the GFCM website (www.fao.org/gfcm) in early January 2022.