

**ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION  
OF MEDITERRANEAN SEABIRDS  
AND OTHER BIRD SPECIES UNDER THE BARCELONA CONVENTION**

UPDATE & PROGRESS

*Proceedings of the  
13th Medmaravis Pan-Mediterranean  
Symposium*

Editors

Pierre Yésou - Nicola Baccetti - Joe Sultana



2012

## Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* migration atlas in Apulia (SE Italy)

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**Summary:** Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus*, both young birds born in Apulia and older birds present in June-July, leave the area early. From August, birds ringed in Apulia are controlled in distant localities within their wintering area, mostly in northern Adriatic, but also on the Atlantic coast of France. Birds ringed in Apulia are never controlled in Apulia outside the following breeding seasons, but young birds born in Ukraine, Greece and Hungary are observed in Apulia from August to January.

**Key Words.** Mediterranean Gull, *Larus melanocephalus*, migration, Apulia.

### Introduction

Bird migration atlases have been published recently for Italy and Apulia (a south-eastern Italian region). The Italian Atlas (Spina & Volponi 2008) has been updated up to 2003 but does not take into account reports of birds sporting visual marks, while the Apulian Atlas, updated to 2008, is a local publication which includes the analysis of colour ring sightings databases (La Gioia & Scebba 2009). Results presented here refer to the Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* in Apulia, a region where this species migrates, winters and breeds (La Gioia *et al.* 2009). The most important wintering areas in Apulia are Lake of Varano and Manfredonia Gulf (breeding also occurs at this site), both in the Foggia province, and, particularly in the last few years, localities on the south-west coast of Apulia near Ugento, with an Apulian wintering population ranging from 6000 to 10,000 birds in 2007-2011.

### Methods

In order to identify Mediterranean Gull migration routes in Apulia, we analyzed the ISPRA and SOA databases of colour ring sightings, as well as the “Gruppo Inanellamento Limicoli” (G.I.L., Napoli) database which includes a smaller number of data of birds recovered through various identification ways. We thus compiled 1889 records (Table 1), including recoveries of birds ringed

Type of recapture	Number	“direct” recaptures during	
		autumn migration	spring migration
At the ringing site	94		
Apulia-Apulia	6		
Apulia-Italy	782	56	
Apulia-abroad	374	27	
Italy-Apulia	77		
Outside Apulia, but concerning specimen with recapture Italy-Apulia	346	28	2
Abroad-Apulia	146	48	
Outside Apulia, but concerning specimen with recapture abroad-Apulia	64	14	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1889</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>2</b>

**Table 1. Composition of recapture database for Mediterranean Gull in Apulia.**

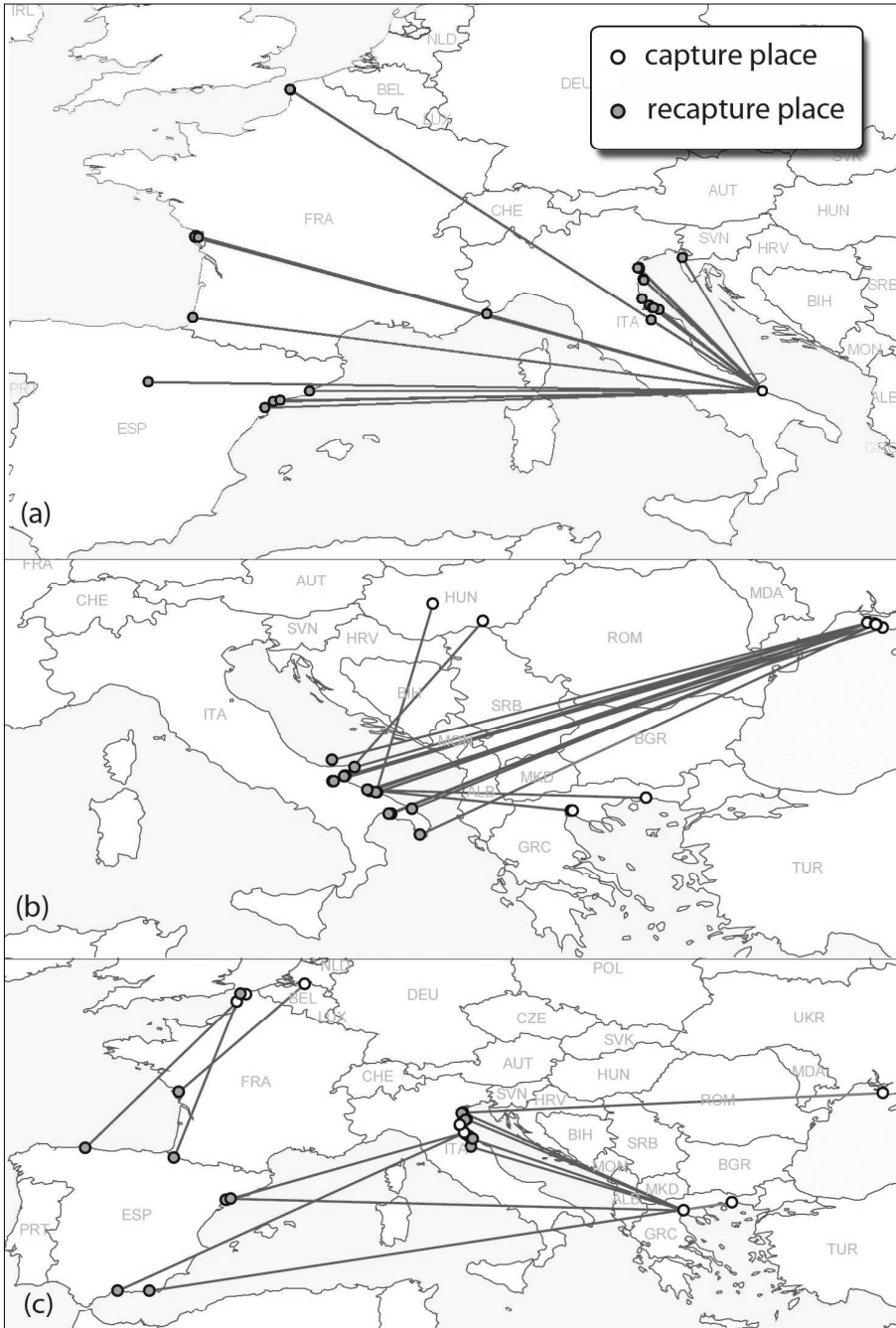
in Apulia and recaptured either in other Italian regions (782 records) or abroad (374 records). There are 133 “direct” recoveries, between the capture and recovery sites without any intermediate control, all bar two referring to movements from breeding sites.

**Results**

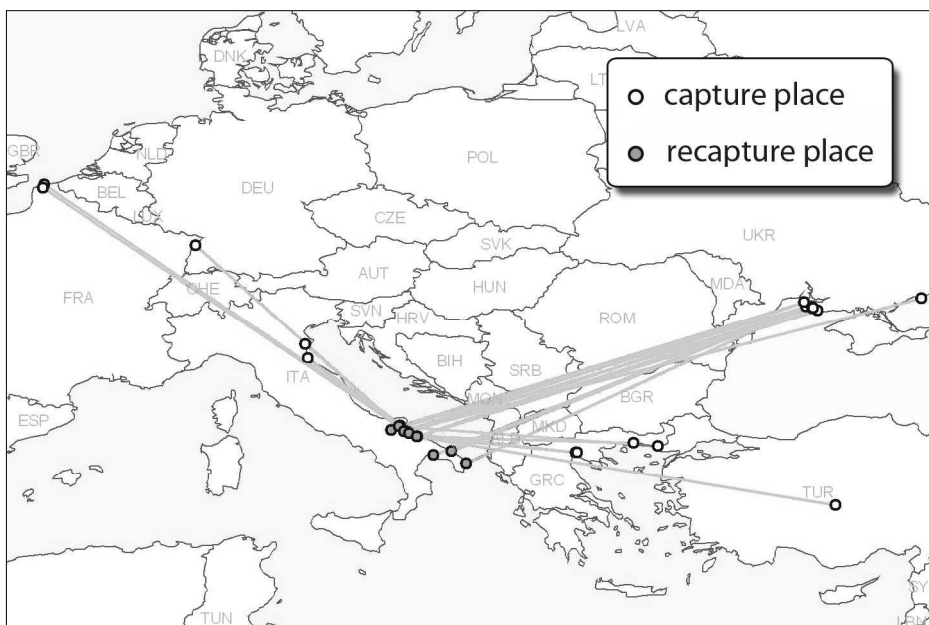
Young Mediterranean Gulls ringed in Apulia leave the region very soon, from August onwards, in conformity with the Italian situation (Brichetti & Fracasso 2006, Spina & Volponi 2009). Early recaptures are from the more remote parts of the Apulian population wintering areas, mainly in northern Adriatic, but also on the Atlantic coast of France (Figure 1a). None of these birds have ever been found in Apulia outside the following breeding seasons, even though Apulia hosts a large number of migrating and wintering Mediterranean Gulls coming from other areas (Figure 2). Mediterranean Gulls wintering in Apulia exclusively are from eastern populations (Figure 1b), but not from the northern Adriatic where Apulian Mediterranean Gulls winter.

The “direct” recoveries of young birds ringed outside Apulia concern specimens born in Ukraine, Greece and Hungary (Figure 1b-c), which move to more western wintering areas than those born in Apulia. These birds are present in Apulia from August to January, their controls decrease in February as noted by Spina & Volponi (2008) for the whole of Italy.

There are no “direct” recovery in Apulia of juveniles born in either northern Adriatic or Atlantic coasts. On the other hand, specimens from most areas within the Mediterranean Gull range are recaptured in Apulia throughout the year, either during migration, wintering or breeding periods, including long displacements with a maximum of 3 200 km (Figure 2).



**Figure 1. Migration of Mediterranean Gull in Apulia. (a) Dispersal of birds born in Apulia (“direct” recoveries). (b) Winter records in Apulia of birds of eastern origin (“direct” recoveries). (c) Long distance movements, outside Apulia, of birds which have been controlled in Apulia in another part of their life**



**Figure 2. Long distance movements of Mediterranean Gull controlled in Apulia**

**Acknowledgements.** I would like to thank Nicola Baccetti and Adriano Talamelli for making the ISPRA colour ring sightings database available to me, Sergio Scebba for the GIL database, and all those who contributed to the Or.Me. database, particularly Angelo Nitti, Cristiano Liuzzi, Giuseppe Fiorella. I am grateful to Francesco De Matteis and Ottavio Leo for their help in the translation into English.

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CITATION: The editors recommend that for references to this work the following citation should be used:

**La Gioia, G.** 2012. Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* migration atlas in Apulia (SE Italy). (Pp.131-134). In **Yésou, P., Baccetti, N. & Sultana, J.** (Eds.), *Ecology and Conservation of Mediterranean Seabirds and other bird species under the Barcelona Convention - Proceedings of the 13th Medmaravis Pan-Mediterranean Symposium*. Alghero (Sardinia) 14-17 Oct. 2011. Medmaravis, Alghero.