LIBYA

Country Wildlife Response Profiles
A Summary of oiled wildlife response arrangements and resources worldwide

VERSION 05/01/2025

Location

Introduction

The State of Libya is a country in North Africa, bordered by the Mediterean Sea to the north, Egypt to the east, Sudan to the southeast, Chad to the south and Niger to the southwest, Algeria to the west and tunisia to the northwest. It shares maritime borders with Italy, Malta and Greece to the north. The portion of the Mediterranean north of Libya is often referred to as the Libyan Sea. Libya has a coastline 1,770km long. The climate is Mediterranean along the coast, with an extreme dry or desert interior.

Libya's government is in transition.

Regional Seas and Biogeography

Mediterranean Sea
Libyan Sea
Mediterranean Sea LME

Habitats

The country's coastline is composed of sandy beaches (which make up the majority) and sandstone cliffs and there are several important coastal lagoons.

➔ Coral reef distribution is not well documented, but reefs have been recorded historically in the coastal lagoons.
➔ Mangroves are seen in pockets throughout the coast, especially on Farwa island and in lagoons near Daryanah, northeast of Benghazi in the eastern part of the coast.
➔ Seagrasses are found in in Ain Gazala and Farwa and El Burdi lagoons, also in some small pockets on the coast east of Tripoli.
➔ Numerous salt marshes bordered by sabkhas (salt flats) occur along the coast, most are dry during the summer season. One of the larger ones , Abu Kammash salt marsh/sabkha is found in the western part of Libya, along the coastal Libyan-Tunisian highway, near the Tunisian border.
➔ Wetland habitat is found in coastal lagoons near Daryanah northeast of Benghazi and on the coast near to the town of Bomba (Gulf of Bomba) in the eastern part of the country.

Biodiversity Hotspots

➔ **RAMSAR Sites**

Ain Elzarga (part of Kouf National Park) is a small natural sebkha (sandflat), slightly inland but connected to the sea, with mudflats, salt marshes and dune habitats. One of the most important wetlands in the Kouf National Park for migratory waterbirds.

Ain Elshakika (part of Kouf National Park) is a hypersaline coastal sebkha with limestone rock formations, dunes and mudflats. The site has two connections to the sea, and seawater reaches the sebkha at high tide during winter. The area is is an important wetland for migratory and resident waterbirds.

➔ **IBAs**

Karabolli (also a National Park) in the north-west, east of Tripoli, extends up to 7 km inland from the coast. It has 3 rivers, a saline lagoon just behind the beach with sand-dunes, reedbeds and extensive seagrass habitats. Particularly important for Palearctic passage migrants, such as Andouin's gull (VU).

Jabal al Akhdar (which includes Kouf National Park), north-east of Benghazi includes a coastal section with has sandy beaches, rock outcrops and coastal cliffs with a band of sand dunes behind the beach fringed on the landward side by shallow, seasonal brackish lagoons. The brackish lagoons are important for various wading species and dolphins. Loggerhead sea turtles (VU) nests on the park's beaches=.

Gulf of Bomba, east of Benghazi near the town of Bomba in the eastern part of Libya is a marine IBA which is important habitat for nearby breeding populations of lesser crested tern (*Thalasseus bengalensis*).

Benghazi IBA, to the north-east of the city of Benghazi, includes the Ayn Zayanah lagoon and a stretch of shoreline, connected by a channel at the northern end to the sea and surrounded by marshland and dune habitats. It is important for migratory waterbirds, particularly American flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber)* and Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrines)* and provides breeding habitat for Black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*).

Geziret Garah, a marine IBA, is a tiny sandstone island in the Gulf of Sirt, 20 km southwest of the town of Azzuwaytinah, with mostly cliffs and sandy beaches on the southern sheltered side. The island hosts the majority of the breeding population of lesser crested tern in the whole Mediterranean and Caspian gulls (*Larus cachinnans)* also breed on the island.

➔ Marine Protected Areas

Farwa lagoon and island is located in the northwest coast, west of Tripoli close to the border with Tunisia. The lagoon is open to the sea at the western end, and otherwise separated from the sea by Farwa island, a sand bar. The site is an important tidal wetland, with extensive tidal flats, mudflats and seagrass beds. In summer it is a nesting site for several species of wader and tern. The area attracts many migratory bird species in large numbers, some of which overwinter and nesting beaches are known for loggerhead turtles in the area. Bottlenose (*Tursiops truncatus)* and common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis)* have been observed.

Ain Gazala Lagoon, in the east of the country hosts nesting sites for seabirds and nesting beaches for turtles, also in the nearby small island (El-Elba).

➔ National Parks

Idem above.

➔ IMMAs

No IMMAs are identified in Libya.

At risk Wildlife

In this section, some individual wildlife species are mentioned followed by a letter in parentheses. These are species included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species within the top three categories of risk - Vulnerable to extinction (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR). A more complete list of IUCN listed species is found in Appendix 1.

➔ At risk birds

Libya's coastline, wetlands and offshore islands support breeding and roosting seabird populations, for many species during their migration to wintering grounds. Most overwintering species are seabirds. Numerous species of wading birds and a few of seabirds are found, both resident and migrant. For seabirds, this includes an important Mediterranean breeding population of the lesser crested tern (*Thalasseus bengalensis*), primarily on Jeliana, Gara, Fteha and Elba islands. Other breeding seabirds, largely on islands, are European Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis)*, Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus cachinananus)*, Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia)*, Common Tern (*Sterna Hirundo)* and Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons)*. For wading birds the black-winged stilt (*Himantopus Himantopus*) and Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrines)* are breeding.

The following species winter in large numbers – shovelers (*Anas clypeata)*, great cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo)*, greater flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus)*, dunlin (*Calidris alpina)*, Kentish plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus)*, little stints (*Calidris minuta)* and various species of gull including Andouin's (VU), plus a few individuals of Lesser Crested Terns.

➔ At risk reptiles

Two species of sea turtle are found in Libyan waters. The country has the oldest nesting colony for loggerhead turtles (VU) in the Mediterranean. Highest nesting concentrations for loggerheads are in Sirte and Cyrenaica (eastern part of Libya, up until the border with Egypt). Densities are smaller at Misurata and westwards towards the Tunisian border. Known nesting sites are at Farwa, Sirte, Misurata, Benghazi, Al-Jabal, Al-Akhdar and Tobruk, among others. Adult green turtles (EN) forage in Libyan waters in the Gulfs of Bomba and Sirte. Recently, some small-scale nesting of green turtles has been observed near Tobrouk.

➔ At risk mammals

Waters off the eastern coastline of Libya are important for cetaceans, due to a deep water canyon and upwelling in the Gulf of Sidra. Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) have been

recorded in Libyan waters. Other species that have been observed include common dolphin (*Delphinus delphus*), striped dolphin (*Stenilla colarualba*), sperm whale *(VU)*, fin whale (VU) and Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*). The Mediterranean monk seal (VU) has historically been reocrded in Libyan waters.

Past experience with oil spill and potential risks

Libya had a major spill in 1980-81 as a result of the D-103 well blowout. It also has experienced other minor spills, such as the Captain Takis (2006). It has had one HNS spill in 1997 off the port of Benghazi. There is no reference of oiled wildlife response during these spills.

International and Regional Treaties and Agreements

➔ Oil spill and HNS Response

☒ CLC Convention 69
☐ CLC Protocol 76
☐ CLC Protocol 92
☐ FUND Protocol 76
☐ FUND Protocol 92
☐ FUND Protocol 2003
☐ LLMC Convention 76
☐ LLMC Protocol 96
☒ OPRC Convention 90
☐ HNS Convention 96
☐ HNS PROT 2010
☐ OPRC_HNS 2000
☐ BUNKERS CONVENTION 01

➔ Marine Biodiversity Protection

- Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS)
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
- Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution
- The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)

Oil Spill Response and HNS Spill Response

➔ National Contingency Plan?

The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan was adopted in 2022.

➔ Role of Competent National Authorities

Under the National Plan for combatting oil spills in the marine environment, the Ministry of Environment is the lead entity for oil spill preparedness and response and has responsibility for the implementation of the plan. The Ministry has overall command of oil spill response at sea and on the shoreline. A wider Higher National Committee, made up of a group of different Ministries, provides advice and can take action to achieve implementation of the objectives of the National Plan, including nominating the National Coordinator. The role of incident Commander is normally taken by the Minister of Environment, assisted by a National Coordinator, who coordinates foreign response assistance and the activities of all organisations involved in the response.

The Misrata free zone prepares its own oil spill response plan and own oil spill combat resources. It also manages the regional response centre.

Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response

➔ Formal guidelines?

Libya does not have a national oiled wildlife response plan.

➔ Response objectives and strategy

It is likely that wildlife rehabilitation would be permitted.
According to the National oil spill plan, oil spill dispersants are not allowed to be used in areas where marine mammals are present, important bird areas or in/near beaches where turtles nest.

➔ **Euthanasia or rehabilitation?**
The Animal, Agricultural and Marine Investment department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Resources would be involved in the discussion on strategy.

➔ **Impact assessment**
The Marine Biology Research Centre, part of the Ministry of Natural Resources, carries out marine science research, aquatic biology and marine biodiversity and have responsibility for determining the impacts on marine life during and after oil spill accidents. It is likely they would get involved in the scientific impact assessment activities of a wildlife response, although dedicated facilities are not available.

➔ **Notification and early response**
No reference.

➔ **Wildlife responders**
Some individuals at the University of Tripoli Faculty of Veterinary Medicine have gained experience in sea turtle rehabilitation in the past.
The Libyan Bird Society would likely assist in a response, also potentially the Libyan Wildlife Trust who work with terrestrial species.

A number of NGOs are conducting sea turtle monitoring along the Libyan coast, who are all members of NASTNet (see below).

➔ **Cooperation between stakeholders**
Libya is a signatory to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean.

Libyan sea turtle researchers are active in the North African Sea Turtle Network (NASTNet).

➔ **Permanent facilities**
There are no dedicated rescue centres for aquatic birds or sea turtles in Libya.

➔ **Current processes**
The Libyan Sea Turtle Programme was established by the Ministry of Environment in 2005 and responsible for developing a National Action plan for the conservation of sea turtles and conducting turtle conservation and monitoring activities. The programme still provides a mechanism for the public to report turtle strandings. It is hoped to establish a training programme on turtle monitoring for NGOs and volunteers, as a collaboration between the Ministry of Environment, the Libyan Sea Turtle Programme and some NGOs.

Documentation and references

General references

BirdLife International. 2024. Country profile: Libya. Downloaded from https://datazone.birdlife.org/country/libya on 18/10/2024.

El-Magsodi, Mohamed and Haddoud, Daw. 2010. The Salt Marsh (Sabkha) in the Western Part of Libya. 10.1007/978-90-481-9673-9_9. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226172094_The_Salt_Marsh_Sabkha_in_the_Western_Part_of_Libya

Etayeb, K.S., and Essghaier, M.F.A. 2013. The impact of climate change on population trends of marine birds in Libya. INOC -IIUM- International Conference on " Oceanography & Sustainable Marine Production: A Challenge of Managing Marine Resources under Climate Change, ICOSMaP", Kuantan- Malaysia, 28-30 October 2013. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311509253_The_impact_of_climate_change_on_population_trends_of_marine_birds_in_Libya/download?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6Il9kaXJlY3QiLCJwYWdlIjoiX2RpcmVjdCJ9fQ

Etayeb, K., Taboni, I and Essghaier, M. 2012. Aspects On Libyan Legislations For Biodiversity Conservation and Propose Farwa Complex As Protected Area. 2nd Djerba International Meditrranean Environment Sustainbility Conference, 2012. Volume XI, pp. 81-90. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272788868_Aspects_On_Libyan_Legislations_For_Biodiversity_Conservation_and_Propose_Farwa_Complex_As_Protected_Area

Hamza, A. and Salih, D. 2022. Sea turtles in the Mediterranean region 2021 Marine Turtle Specialist Group regional report: Libya. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359111364_Sea_turtles_in_the_Mediterranean_region_2021_Marine_Turtle_Specialist_Group_regional_report_Edited_by_P_Series_editors_Paolo_Casale_and_Roderic_Mast

Dr Abdulmula Abdulmagid Hamza – *pers. comm*.

Hamza, A.A., 2014. Breeding ecology, migration and population genetics of lesser crested terns *Thalasseus bengalensis emigrata*. PhD thesis. https://hull-repository.worktribe.com/output/4215875/breeding-ecology-migration-and-population-genetics-of-lesser-crested-terns-thalasseus-bengalensis-emigrata

Hamza, A., Almokhtar, A., Diryaq, S. Ouerghi, A., Bofliga, I., El-Ganaieen, A., Aljamel, A., and Jribi I. Nesting ecology of sea turtles in Libya. Chapter 1 in: SPA/RAC-UNEP/MAP, 2021. Marine Turtle Research and Conservation in Libya: A contribution to safeguarding Mediterranean Biodiversity. By Abdulmaula Hamza. Ed. SPA/RAC, Tunis: pages 77. https://www.rac-spa.org/node/2087.

Haddoud, D.A. and Rawag, A.A. 1993. Marine Protected areas along Libyan Coast. http://www.faomedsudmed.org/pdf/publications/TD3/TD3-Haddoud.pdf

RAMSAR Sites Information Service. https://rsis.ramsar.org

REMPEC, 2022. Country Profile for Libya. https://www.rempec.org/en/knowledge-centre/country-profiles/libya/conventions_view

Sharedy, M.S., Almuwalli, A.A., Shehadeh, M., Omar, M. and Mehanna, A. 2024. Risk Assessment of Oil Spill from the Al-Bouri Platform on the Western Libyan Coast. International Science and Technology Journal, Volume 22, Part 2. January 2024. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378977327_Risk_Assessment_of_Oil_Spill_from_the_Al-Bouri_Platform_on_the_Western_Libyan_Coast

Shakman, E. 2017. National monitoring programme for Biodiversity in Libya. Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas. Contract n° 09_EcAp MED II SPA/RAC_2016], SPA/RAC, Tunis, [60] pp.

State of Libya, 2022. Libya National Plan for combatting oil spills in the marine environment. First Edition. January 2022.

State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT) Report vol.14. Sea Turtles of the Mediterranean Sea. https://www.seaturtlestatus.org/swot-report-vol-14

UN Biodiversity Lab. https://map.unbiodiversitylab.org

Terms and Conditions

Appendix 1

➔ **At risk birds**

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Audouin's Gull / Larus audouinii / VU / Migratory / Wintering
Yelkouan Shearwater / Puffinus yelkouan / VU / Resident /
Common Pochard / Aythya ferina / VU / Migratory /
Northern Shoveler / Anas clypeata / LC / MIgratory / Wintering
Great Cormorant / Phalacrocorax carbo / LC / MIgratory / Wintering
Greater Flamingo / Phoenicopterus roseus / LC / MIgratory / Wintering
Dunlin / Calidris alpina / LC / MIgratory / Wintering
Kentish Plover / Charadrius alexandrinus / LC / MIgratory / Wintering
Little Stint / Calidris minuta / LC / MIgratory / Wintering
Lesser Crested Tern / Thalasseus bengalensis / LC / Resident / Breeding (may and june), wintering

➔ **At risk reptiles**

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Green turtle / Chelonia mydas / EN / Migratory (forages offshore) / Possibly nesting
Loggerhead turtle / Caretta caretta / VU / Resident/migratory / Nesting (April to August)

➔ **At risk mammals**

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Sperm whale / Physeter macrocephalus / VU / Not well studied /
Fin whale / Balaenoptera physalus / VU / Not well studied /
Mediterranean monk seal / Monachus monachus / VU / /