

BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY (CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO)

RAMSAR CONVENTION CAME INTO FORCE¹ 1999

NUMBER OF RAMSAR SITES DESIGNATED (at 31 August 2005) 1

AREA OF RAMSAR SITES DESIGNATED (at 31 August 2005) 35,424 ha

ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY FOR RAMSAR CONVENTION International Designations Team,
European Wildlife Division, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

RAMSAR DESIGNATION IS:

Complete in 1 IBA

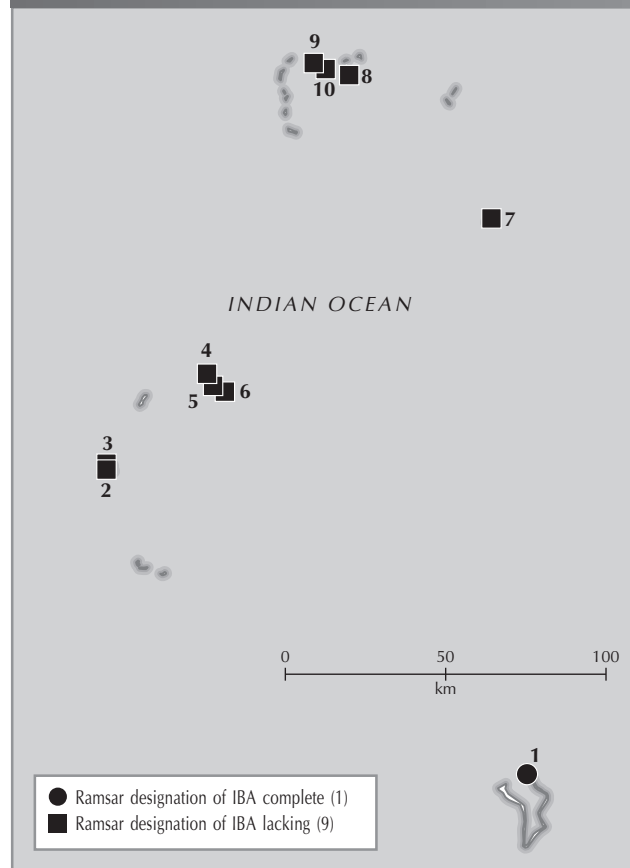
Lacking in 9 IBAs

The Chagos Archipelago lies at the southern end of the Laccadives-Maldives-Chagos ridge, in the geographical centre of the tropical Indian Ocean, and includes the Great Chagos Bank, the world's largest atoll. It comprises 55 islands with a land area of only 44 km², but below the territorial seas lie over 20,000 km² of coral reefs. The archipelago supports important breeding population of several tropical seabird species, principally Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* and Lesser Noddy *A. tenuirostris*.

The existing and potential Ramsar Sites in the Chagos Archipelago were reviewed in detail by Pienkowski (2005), which is the source of the following paragraph. The United Kingdom government announced in 1999 that it intended to designate virtually the entire Chagos Archipelago as a Ramsar Site, but this has not taken place, initially because of uncertainty about how to define boundaries in the sea, but more recently because of a legal action against the government by some Chagossians who had been displaced from the islands in the 1960s. In 2001, the Diego Garcia part of the archipelago (which is deemed by the government to be exempt from the legal action) was designated as a Ramsar Site (which includes one of the territory's IBAs). Several approaches have been suggested for the designation of the rest of the archipelago as a Ramsar Site (that would include the remaining nine IBAs), including: (1) extending the Diego Garcia site to include the whole of an Environmental Protection and Conservation Zone (EPCZ) recently declared around the archipelago; (2) designation of a second Ramsar Site, named Chagos Banks, to include the Chagos reef areas except for Diego Garcia, with boundaries drawn along easily identified lines of latitude and longitude, to include a reasonable margin around the reef walls within the EPCZ; (3) an interim option (en route to implementation of option 1 or 2) involving designation of all of the remaining land areas outside Diego Garcia and their adjacent territorial seas.

¹ = This territory is under the administration of the United Kingdom, and the Ramsar Convention came into force there after it was added in 1998 to the United Kingdom's ratification of the Convention in 1976.

Location of Important Bird Areas in British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Archipelago) that contain areas that qualify as Ramsar Sites.



Summary of Important Bird Areas that contain areas that qualify as Ramsar Sites in British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Archipelago).

Ramsar designation of IBA complete (1 IBA)

| IBA | IBA name | IBA area (ha) | Ramsar Site name | Ramsar Site area (ha) | Ramsar criteria | | | |
|-----|---|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Barton Point Nature Reserve, Diego Garcia | 680 | Diego Garcia | 35,424 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Ramsar designation of IBA lacking (9 IBAs)

| IBA | IBA name | IBA area (ha) | Ramsar criteria | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---|---|---|
| | | | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2 | Danger Island, Chagos Bank | 66 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3 | Sea Cow, Chagos Bank | 18 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4 | North Brother, Chagos Bank | 6 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5 | Middle Brother, Chagos Bank | 8 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6 | South Brother, Chagos Bank | 23 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7 | Nelson, Chagos Bank | 81 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8 | Petite Ile Bois Manguie, Peros Banhos | 9 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 9 | Ile Parasol, Peros Banhos | 8 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 10 | Ile Longue, Peros Banhos | 26 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |