

Important Bird Areas AMERICAS

Priority sites for biodiversity conservation

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Important Bird Areas

AMERICAS

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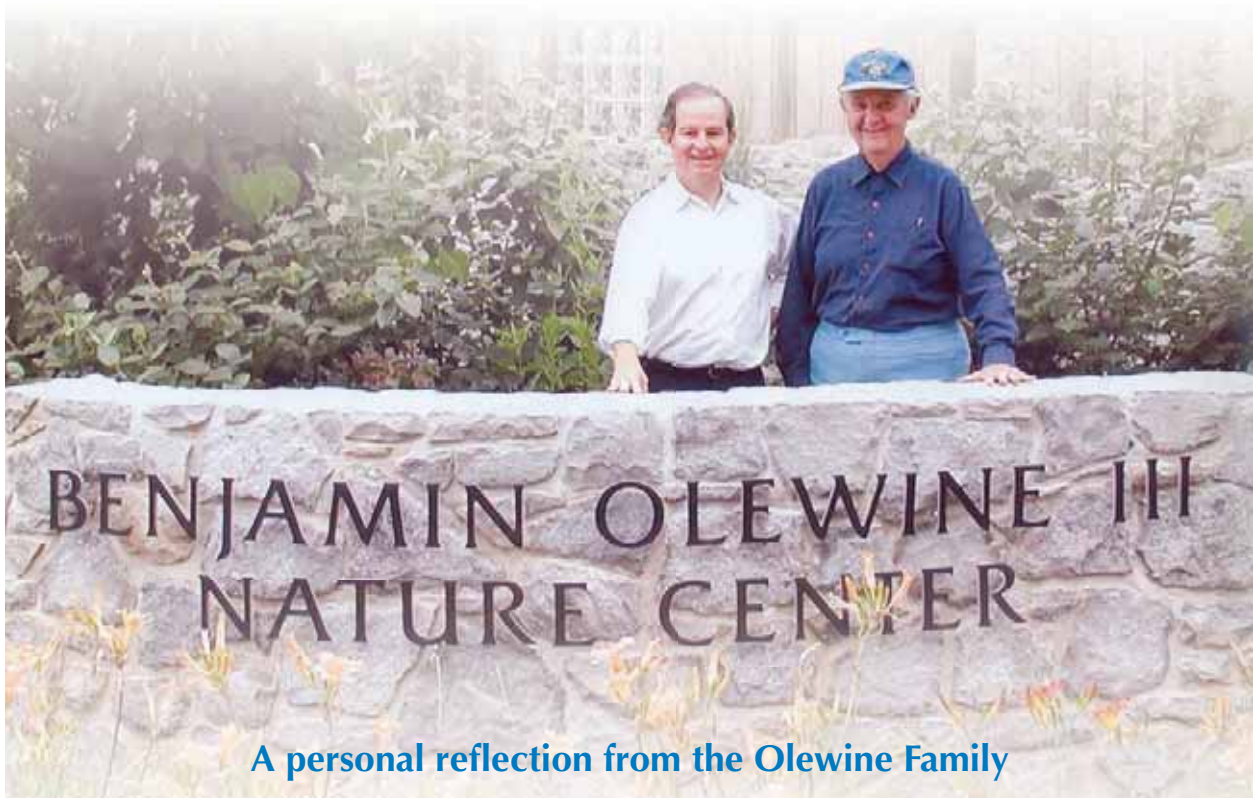
and the Olewine Family

The Americas IBA program has also been funded by many other sources at national level.

"... on cool August nights you can hear [the Upland Plovers'] whistled signals as they set wing for the pampas, to prove again the age-old unity of the Americas. Hemisphere solidarity is new among statesmen, but not among the feathered navies of the sky."

Aldo Leopold
A Sand County Almanac

**The Americas IBA directory is dedicated to the Olewine Family
in recognition of their unfailing engagement to bird conservation
in the Americas.**



A personal reflection from the Olewine Family

The Important Bird Areas program is an unrivalled approach to protecting and conserving birds and their habitats, thereby, helping to maintain the earth's biological diversity. Coming from a business background, our family was incredibly impressed by the program's solid strategic orientation. With so many different places in the world that are important for biodiversity, how can their value be evaluated? Which are truly the most important places? The IBA Program provides the necessary strategic framework to answer these questions and helps ensure that the most important places get effectively conserved.

It has become successful throughout the world because:

- It is site-based. The need to protect and properly manage specific sites and groups of sites is one of the most important aspects of conserving many bird species. The IBA Program identifies those sites that are most important for birds, particularly those of conservation concern.
- It is science-based. Sites are selected using scientific criteria established by BirdLife International, ensuring that the highest priority sites are selected. This is important given the relatively limited funds available for habitat protection and management.
- It is people-based. It involves partnerships of non-profit organizations, government agencies, corporations, private landowners, and citizens working together. This cooperative approach helps ensure that real and lasting conservation results are achieved.
- By protecting and properly managing IBAs, we also end up conserving the world's biodiversity of flora and other fauna. Scientific evidence has shown that there is a strong link between those areas that are important for birds and those areas that are important for other forms of life as well.

We are extremely pleased and proud that our family has been able to support and help advance the IBA Program in the Americas.

Sincerely,
The Olewine Family:
Benjamin Olewine III, Kristen Olewine Milke, and Benjamin Olewine IV



Spix's Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*)
Illustration: Peter Hayman



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Forewords



IBAs are defined by birds, but their fate will be defined by people. This directory represents the conclusion of just the first step in the IBA Program in the Americas. The challenge now is to use this invaluable document in guiding our decisions on land-use, development and biodiversity protection across a hemisphere.

Peter Johan Schei
Chair of Council, BirdLife International



IBAs are important pieces of the conservation landscape. They bring together local conservation efforts, are structured within a global framework of strategic planning and engage volunteers to mobilize community spirit for conservation. IBAs are models for successful public-private conservation partnerships.

Carol A. Lively
Wings Across The Americas Coordinator
US Forest Service-International Programs

BirdLife Partners in the Americas reach from Tierra del Fuego to the Tundra. The 2345 Important Bird Areas scattered over these territories contain more than 3 million km² of habitat that is critically important not only for migratory and resident birds, but for the countless other life forms they also preserve. If we could look down on these havens from above, as the birds themselves do during their astonishing, exhausting migrations, we'd view them as a cartography of hope. More is needed, but as long as these oases exist, saving the birds is still possible.



Margaret Atwood & Graeme Gibson
Joint Honorary Presidents, BirdLife International
Rare Bird Club

Our national inventory, published in 2005, acts as a blueprint for companies, NGOs, local and national governments to put biodiversity on their agendas. For example, the Secretary of Tourism, is making special efforts to promote IBAs as special sites for birdwatchers and naturalists. Through this, we trust that special efforts to conserve these areas will also be made.



Andrés Bosso
CEO, Aves Argentinas
President, Americas Regional Partnership & Global
Council Member, BirdLife International

We are already using IBA designation to advocate for the protection of these sites. Local political leaders pay attention when respected international organizations such as BirdLife International use their strict criteria to designate an IBA. It is no longer just the local NGOs speaking out and gives us a louder voice in spreading the word about the importance of these habitats. The popular press takes notice as well and this coverage is important in our struggle to draw attention to IBAs and build popular support for their protection.

Natalia Collier
President, Environmental Protection In the Caribbean (EPIC)



This publication is another stunning contribution to the BirdLife International Partnership's innovative IBA program. IBAs are vital for saving global biodiversity. They are not only key sites of international importance for conservation, but also through the participatory and innovative way in which they are identified – create a shared agenda and powerful constituency for their protection and sustainable management.

Dr. Mike Rands
Executive Director, Cambridge Conservation Initiative

The Americas IBA Directory is probably the most comprehensive inventory of key sites for biodiversity in the western hemisphere. IBAs are the critical places for the conservation of birds, and with them, a wealth of other biodiversity. As such, they can lead the way in helping prioritize conservation planning and financing. This is an inventory of real sites with defined boundaries and a clear assessment of their biodiversity value. It is also a formidable tool to guide decision makers in governments, the private sector, investment banks and donors in avoiding the adverse impacts of development projects on priority sites and species, and to direct conservation funding towards clearly defined priorities. The directory is also a tribute to the amazing, incredibly diverse and unfortunately often threatened avifauna of the Americas.



Dr. Marco Lambertini
CEO, BirdLife International



We currently live in exponential times. Increasing population and pollution are filling the world beyond capacity and causing its devastation without precedent. It is also a time of increasing technologies and information shared among countries. We need to combine such knowledge and expertise to revert the present situation. The Americas IBA Directory is an example of how data sharing may benefit bird and biodiversity conservation. By adapting solutions found elsewhere and by facilitating the channeling of funds towards the preservation of the highest priority sites, conservation initiatives are more likely to be successful in Brazil and in other countries in the Americas.

Jaqueline M. Goerck
President, BirdLife/SAVE Brasil



We must be concerned about threats to the environment because we humans have a tendency to ignore the voices that are not human and biodiversity has a right to exist like all of us. This regional directory will serve as a comparative account to tell our IBA story in Belize.

Anna D. Hoare
Executive Director, Belize Audubon Society



Important Bird Areas unite people and places to conserve some of our most vital natural treasures. This global initiative gives wings to the stewardship Audubon has encouraged for over 100 years.

John Flicker
President & CEO, National Audubon Society



The IBA approach multiplies partnerships with other NGOs and tackles biodiversity problems at a global scale. This directory will be a true calling card of our work, and represents conservation priorities for French Guiana and the continent. It will accompany us during meetings with both the state and local communities. It is necessary that in the future people open this directory and ask the following question, "is my enterprise compatible with biodiversity conservation?"

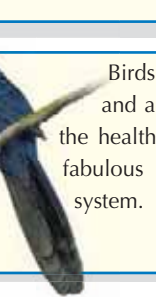
Nyls de Pracontal
Conservation Officer, Groupe d'Etude et de Protection des Oiseaux en Guyane



The Americas IBA directory makes an important contribution to biodiversity conservation by identifying priority sites in a specific and precise manner, where actions must be concentrated. It is also a celebration of the astounding natural diversity of our continent.

IBAs stand out from other conservation initiatives because they involve a large number of countries, providing the opportunity for national, regional and continental programs to be established as well as exchanging experiences and implementing joint projects at these different levels to mitigate threats to biodiversity.

Susana Aguilar Mugica
Head of Technical Department, Centro Nacional de Areas Protegidas, Cuba



Birds are a very important part of biodiversity and are also excellent bio-indicators to assess the health of environments. Therefore, IBAs are a fabulous input for any national protected area system.

Agustín Carriquiry
Executive Director, Aves Uruguay



The sites most critical to the conservation of birds throughout the Americas are identified in this new directory, providing an invaluable resource to governments, industry and others in making improved land use decisions. The directory will help link birds and people along the migratory flyways, so important for the future of birds in Canada and elsewhere, and will make a unique contribution to coordinated conservation action and education.

Richard Yank
Chair, Board of Directors, Nature Canada

IBAs are used by the Inter-American Development Bank to identify natural habitats or areas of known high ecological and conservation value, thus providing critical data for incorporating sustainable development in project investment decisions.

Janine Ferretti
Chief of the Environment Safeguards Unit, Inter-American Development Bank

Important Bird Areas AMERICAS



The appropriate scale of IBAs (conservation management units by definition), has allowed us to create Local Conservation Groups, and through them, implement tangible and measurable conservation actions on the ground, creating positive impacts among local actors.

Sandra Loor-Vela, M.Sc.
Executive Director, Aves & Conservación
(Corporación Ornitológica del Ecuador)



The Americas IBA directory offers a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness, and to increase the importance of these fabulous places for birds across the Americas, where IBAs have been identified in all 57 countries or territories. This effort will bring appropriate attention, and hopefully protection, to these important areas for conservation. IBAs are a cooperative approach using local participation in identifying key areas for conservation that contribute to continental populations of wildlife.

Paul R. Schmidt
Assistant Director for Migratory Birds,
US Fish and Wildlife Service

The planet's biological diversity is closely linked to its cultural diversity. Therefore, placing social, economic and cultural values on flora and fauna represents an important part of the struggle to combat poverty and to respect human rights. Principles such as these have guided the work of Fundación Biodiversidad for the last 10 years. By conserving biodiversity we will ensure an indispensable source of ecological goods and services for society's wellbeing. Thus, Fundación Biodiversidad will continue to support initiatives such as this, which promotes the creation of protection categories, one of the best ways to conserve species.

Ana Leiva
Director, Fundación Biodiversidad, Spain

Eleven years ago, SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain) helped to publish one of the first leaflets on the Americas IBA Program. From that moment until the publication of this magnificent directory of IBAs in the Americas, much water has flowed under the bridge, especially in terms of work on this program. The Neotropics is the most important biogeographic region for birds on the planet, making this catalogue an essential contribution towards their conservation. I hope that over the next 10 years we will be able to collaborate further from the other side of the Atlantic with this crucial undertaking for the future of biodiversity in the Americas.

Dr. Alejandro Sánchez
Executive Director, SEO/BirdLife, Spain



In these difficult times, combining efforts to protect birds and their habitats is an intelligent idea. Using the synergy of a variety of conservation actions to maximize scarce resources, the IBA program becomes a catalyst to securing new sites and increasing protected area coverage. This approach provides valuable experiences and multiple tools to empower a younger generation of individuals concerned with the biodiversity of their regions.

Philippe Bayard
President, Société Audubon Haïti



IBAs have become an important tool for biodiversity conservation in Paraguay – this publication puts IBAs into a hemispheric context, providing an opportunity for national authorities to plan development based on sustainability and use. Where there are birds, there are forests with water. And life.

Dr. José Luis Casaccia
Environmental Attorney,
Office of the Attorney General, Paraguay



Many of the areas now identified as IBAs were not previously on the conservation radar as areas of international importance. This new directory will help the global conservation community know what needs saving, and it will help local conservation communities garner a new appreciation for the importance of their own stewardship. IBA maps for the Americas show us quite clearly that much more than just the existing protected areas need conservation attention. The IBA initiative offers excellent opportunities for the participation of local people in conservation. The reality is that birds of conservation importance often are found outside of protected areas and near where people live. The IBA initiative helps connect the two, birds with people and vice versa.

Dr. Oliver Komar
Technical Director, SalvaNATURA, El Salvador

This directory is an essential tool to raise awareness of the importance of protecting bird habitats, given the environmental services that they provide, such as provision of water, production of cleaner energy, capturing carbon, providing new medicines or slowing climate change. The IBA program as such should be considered as a vital subject for the schools in the region, using birds to bring home the importance of guaranteeing these ecosystem services among the younger generation.



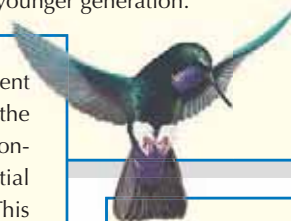
Claudia Belli (left)
President

Liliana Chavarría Duriaux (right)
Treasurer
Private Nature Reserve Network, Nicaragua



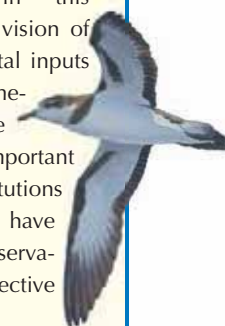
Rio Tinto has significant investment and land holdings throughout the Americas, and therefore has responsibilities for the current and potential use of the land that it manages. This includes the biodiversity and social values of the land, its connection to other habitats as well as community expectations as to how it is developed and managed. Working with Birdlife and the IBA program enables Rio Tinto to consider the broader biodiversity context and also provides a genuine opportunity to work with communities and others.

Andrew Harding
Chief executive officer, KUCC, Rio Tinto



IBA selection in Nicaragua has made an important contribution to the process of identifying priority sites for conservation in the country. The information presented in this directory allows a holistic vision of bird populations in the region, providing vital inputs for conservation strategies, within the framework of commitments acquired as part of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is important that both the scientific community and institutions responsible for environmental policies have concerted tools reflecting priorities and conservation strategies in order to guarantee the effective management of species and sites.

Francisco Gadea
Director, Natural Heritage, Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, Nicaragua



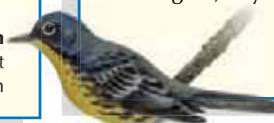
A concerted and participative approach is necessary when attempting to coordinate conservation actions across a hemisphere. The IBA Program sets out to do this by linking local, national and regional networks of sites, identified by a regional network of organizations. Conserving the 2345 sites in this directory will bring benefits both to wider biodiversity and to the many communities whose livelihoods depend on IBAs and their surrounding areas. With the increasing threat of climate change, this directory also provides a blueprint of priority sites for evaluating the impacts of predicted changes and as a starting point for planning adaptive conservation strategies.

Jørgen B. Thomsen
Director, Conservation and Sustainable Development
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation



As Senators, we are able to gauge the importance of these IBAs within regional development strategies and work towards them becoming fundamental parts of legislative mechanisms fostering sustainable development in our countries and in the region, beyond our political borders.

Alfredo G. Stroessner
Senator, Paraguay



The compendium of data held by this directory is sufficient for countries in the Americas to make a genuine commitment to conserving biodiversity as well as changing the habits that we humans have developed in order to fulfil our needs. Every citizen must be committed to protecting biodiversity in their own area given that this planet is made up of each one of these small areas.

Wanda Algarín
Vice-president, Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña, Inc., Puerto Rico



IBAs represent a global initiative, backed by scientists, NGOs and government bodies to designate, define, study and promote the areas that will allow the protection and conservation of birds and their habitats. This IBA directory, although it is also a document of great scientific value, must be taken on board by the political and economic authorities of our countries so that the intrinsic value of biodiversity, and the role it plays in ensuring our quality of life, can be properly evaluated.

Bernardo Zentilli
President, CODEFF, Amigos de la Tierra-Chile

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Over three thousand people participated in the production of this directory which for the first time, systematically documents sites of global importance for birds in the Americas. The implementation of this phase of the Important Bird Area (IBA) program would not have been possible without the selfless engagement of these extraordinary people. Nor would we have succeeded without the help, encouragement and commitment of countless organizations and donor agencies that provided valuable resources for this publication.

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Ian J. Davidson
Ottawa, Canada
26 August 2009





What is the Important Bird Areas program?

BirdLife International's Important Bird Area (IBA) program is a worldwide initiative focused on identifying, documenting and working towards the conservation of a global network of high priority sites for bird and biodiversity conservation. IBAs are identified nationally, from data gathered locally, using internationally standardized scientific criteria. The IBA program in the Americas region was initiated in 1995 and aims to:

- support national conservation strategies and protected area programs;
- highlight areas which should be safeguarded and identify the most urgent conservation actions within them;
- provide a focus for conservation efforts led by civil society; and
- inform the implementation of global and regional conservation agreements.

The Americas

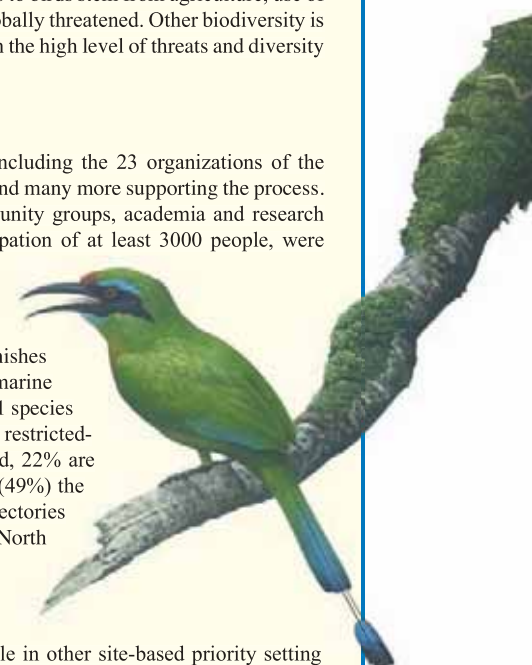
The Americas region, as defined by BirdLife International, encompasses 57 countries or territories from Tierra de Fuego at the extreme tip of South America, north to Alaska and the Canadian Arctic, including the Caribbean. The Americas is one of the most important regions in the world in terms of bird conservation, holding almost 40% of all threatened birds. Major threats to birds stem from agriculture, use of natural resources (e.g. logging and hunting) and invasive species, with 11% of the region's birds globally threatened. Other biodiversity is also exceptionally represented with seven of 17 megadiverse countries identified in the region. Both the high level of threats and diversity are reflected in the designation of nine conservation Hotspots.

Who has participated in the IBA program?

This directory is the result of a collaborative effort in every country across the hemisphere, including the 23 organizations of the BirdLife Americas Partnership, 49 other organizations directly participating in IBA identification and many more supporting the process. Organizations include conservation and development NGOs, government agencies, local community groups, academia and research institutions. Over 30 key regional workshops and many more national events, with the participation of at least 3000 people, were instrumental in the process of IBA identification.

Achievements of the IBA program

A total of 2345 IBAs have been identified to date, with almost 3000 expected when the process finishes in certain countries. IBAs cover an area of 3,284,602 km², including some 140,000 km² of marine extensions, representing 7.9% of the region's terrestrial area. IBAs have been identified using 1981 species triggering IBA criteria, of an approximate total of 2200 in the Americas, including threatened, restricted-range, biome-restricted and congregatory species. Thirty-one percent of IBAs are fully protected, 22% are partially protected and the remainder are either unprotected or without information. Almost half (49%) the area of IBAs in the Americas lies within a protected area. To date, 19 national and regional IBA directories have been published since the first regional IBA directory in 1999, including directories for North America, the Tropical Andes and the Caribbean.

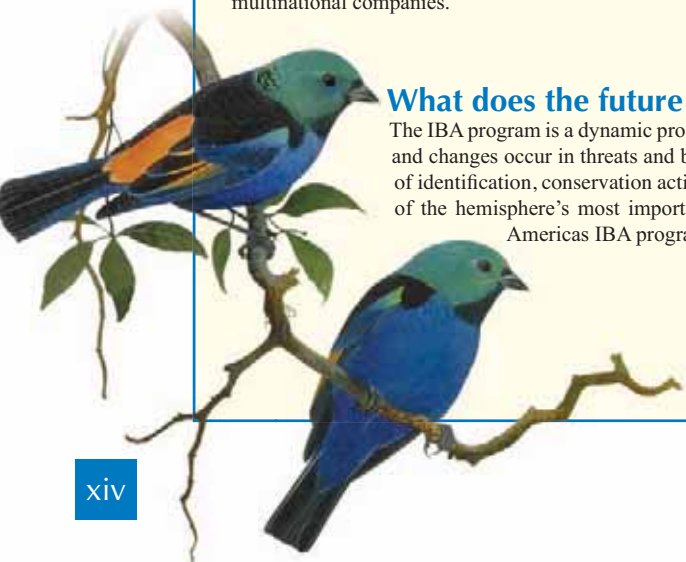


Beyond bird conservation

By conserving IBAs, many other aspects of biodiversity conservation are supported, for example in other site-based priority setting initiatives, implementation of international conventions, donor safeguard policies and corporate or community conservation initiatives. Among the site-based conservation initiatives, IBAs have become the basis for identifying Key Biodiversity Areas in the Caribbean and Central America, as well as in other countries of the region. IBAs have also been employed to identify sites within the Alliance for Zero Extinction across the hemisphere. IBAs have been used to draw up site shadow lists for the Ramsar Convention and Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. Additionally, IBAs are functional tools for implementing international environmental agreements, for example, sites will play a key role in regional agreements or memoranda in the context of the Convention on Migratory Species. IBAs have also been employed to inform and meet obligations within the Convention on Biological Diversity, such as national reports, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the Protected Areas Program of Work. IBAs also play an important role in informing safeguard policies of major donors (e.g. investment banks, foundations, etc.), for example in defining critical natural habitats within development proposals. Finally, IBAs have become part of local community and corporate conservation or development initiatives, whereby conservation actions are implemented at sites necessary for local livelihoods or within the operations spheres of multinational companies.

What does the future hold?

The IBA program is a dynamic process, requiring regular updating and revision as new information becomes available and changes occur in threats and bird populations across the hemisphere. Thus, the program is not a linear sequence of identification, conservation action and monitoring, rather, it is an assemblage of actions to ensure the conservation of the hemisphere's most important sites for bird conservation. Among the most important future themes in the Americas IBA program are conservation planning, priority setting and monitoring.





Resumen

¿Qué es el programa de Áreas Importantes para la Conservación de las Aves?

El programa de las Áreas Importantes para la Conservación de las Aves (IBAs) de BirdLife es una iniciativa a nivel mundial que se centra en la identificación, documentación y conservación de una red global de sitios críticos para la conservación de las aves y la biodiversidad. Las IBAs son identificadas a nivel nacional a partir de información recopilada localmente, mediante criterios científicos estandarizados internacionalmente. El programa de las IBAs en América se inició en 1995, con el objetivo de:

- apoyar estrategias nacionales de conservación y programas de áreas protegidas,
- destacar aquellas áreas que deberían ser protegidas, identificar las acciones de conservación más urgentes para cada una de ellas,
- dotar de un objetivo a los esfuerzos de conservación liderados por la sociedad civil y,
- promover la implementación de acuerdos de conservación regionales y globales.

América

América, según BirdLife International, abarca 57 países o territorios desde la Tierra de Fuego en el extremo sur, hasta Alaska y el Ártico de Canadá en el norte, incluyendo el Caribe. América es una de las regiones más importantes en términos de conservación de aves; ya que contiene casi el 40% de todas las especies amenazadas a nivel mundial. Las principales amenazas a las aves provienen de la agricultura, el uso de recursos naturales (ej. tala y caza) y especies invasoras; con el 11% de las aves de la región globalmente amenazadas. Otra biodiversidad está también excepcionalmente representada, estando 7 de los 17 países megadiversos en la región. Tanto el nivel de amenazas como de diversidad biológica se ven reflejados en la designación de nueve *Hotspots* para la conservación.

¿Quiénes han participado en el programa de IBAs?

Este directorio es el resultado del esfuerzo conjunto de todos los países del hemisferio; incluyendo a las 23 organizaciones de la red de socios de BirdLife en América, otras 49 organizaciones involucradas directamente en la identificación de IBAs, así como otras muchas apoyando el proceso. Las organizaciones incluyen ONGs de desarrollo y conservación, agencias gubernamentales, grupos locales de base e instituciones académicas y de investigación. La realización de más de 30 talleres regionales, otros muchos a nivel nacional, con la participación de más de 3000 personas ha jugado un papel decisivo en el proceso de identificación de las IBAs.

Logros del programa de IBAs

Se han identificado un total de 2345 IBAs hasta la fecha, aunque se espera que el total se acerque a las 3000 una vez que el proceso de identificación termine en varios países. Actualmente, las IBAs cubren un área de 3.284.602 km², incluyendo unos 140.000 km² de extensión marina, lo que representa el 7,9% de la superficie terrestre de la región. De las 2200 especies que pueden justificar la identificación de IBAs en América; 1981 cumplen con los criterios en al menos un sitio, incluyendo especies amenazadas, de rango restringido; restringidas a biomas y congregatorias. El 31% de las IBAs están totalmente protegidas, el 22% lo están parcialmente y el resto están desprotegidas o bien sin información sobre su estado de protección. Casi la mitad del área de las IBAs (49%) de América se encuentra dentro de algún área protegida. Desde la publicación del primer directorio de IBAs en América en 1999, hasta la fecha se han publicado un total de 19 directorios, entre nacionales y regionales; incluyendo varios directorios en Norte América, los Andes Tropicales y el Caribe.

Más allá de la conservación de aves

A través de la conservación de las IBAs se apoyan otros muchos aspectos de la conservación de la biodiversidad; por ejemplo, otras iniciativas de priorización basadas en sitios, la implementación de convenciones internacionales, políticas de salvaguarda de donantes e iniciativas de conservación corporativas o comunitarias. Entre las iniciativas de conservación basadas en sitios, las IBAs se han convertido en la base para la identificación de las Áreas Clave para la Conservación (KBAs) en el Caribe y Centro América, así como en otros países en la región. Igualmente, las IBAs también han servido para identificar sitios pertenecientes a la Alianza para la Extinción Cero a lo largo del hemisferio, así como para preparar listados de sitios candidatos para la Convención Ramsar y la Red Hemisférica de Reservas para Aves Playeras. Adicionalmente, las IBAs son herramientas funcionales a la hora de implementar acuerdos medioambientales a nivel internacional. Por ejemplo, algunos sitios jugarán un papel crucial en los acuerdos o memorándum regionales en el contexto de la Convención sobre la Conservación de las Especies Migratorias. Las IBAs también han sido utilizadas para promover y cumplir las obligaciones del Convenio sobre la Diversidad Biológica, en la forma de reportes nacionales, Planes de Acción y Estrategias Nacionales de Biodiversidad, y Programas de Trabajo de Áreas Protegidas. Las IBAs también han jugado un importante papel para promover políticas de salvaguarda de grandes donantes (ej. bancos de inversión, fundaciones, etc.); por ejemplo al definir hábitats naturales críticos dentro de las propuestas de desarrollo. Finalmente, las IBAs han formado parte de iniciativas de conservación y desarrollo de comunidades locales y corporaciones; a través de las cuales las iniciativas son implementadas en sitios necesarios para el sustento local o dentro del campo de operaciones de compañías multinacionales.

¿Qué nos espera a futuro?

El programa de las IBAs es un proceso dinámico, necesitando de actualizaciones y revisiones regulares conforme a la disponibilidad de nueva información, cambios en las poblaciones de especies o en las amenazas de las IBAs a lo largo de todo el hemisferio. Por lo tanto, el programa no sigue un esquema lineal de identificación, acciones de conservación y monitoreo; más bien se trata de un ensamblaje de acciones para asegurar la conservación de los sitios más importantes para la conservación de aves en todo el hemisferio. Entre los temas más importantes del programa de IBAs en América a futuro se encuentra la planificación para la conservación, procesos de priorización y el monitoreo.

