

BirdLife experts and marine stakeholders collaborate to define how to better protect oceans

Title

The transnational project FAME (Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment) is coordinated by BirdLife and aims to research, identify and protect important areas for seabirds along the Atlantic seaboard. Funded by the European Commission, it was initially planned to be a three year project starting in 2010, but due to its interesting outcome, the funding was extended for one more year. The project coordinators will use this extension to disseminate the scientific data collected during the last three years to a wide range of key stakeholders.

Within the FAME project 2010 ? 2013, BirdLife partners from UK, Ireland, France, Portugal and Spain have been collaborating with the offshore renewable company WavEC and Minho University in Portugal to assemble environmental, ecological and human-related data. The purpose of the project is to develop and propose sustainable practices for human activities at sea. Using birds as an indicator for wildlife, the Partners have been studying why birds feed where they do and have mapped activity overlap between seabirds and human activity. These achievements have been possible thanks to the innovative use of tracking techniques such as miniature tags (GPS tags and Dive loggers), and through the assemblage of information through coastal and beached bird surveys that aim to identify causes of seabird mortality.

The partners engaged with fishermen to collect data related to seabird bycatch and proposed recommendations to offshore renewable energy industry stakeholders, while also providing ?sensitivity indexes? that will help in the planning of future projects. In certain countries, such as Ireland, the project involved local communities and volunteer sea watchers who helped identify seabird colonies.

The project results are being presented just in time for the implementation of the ?Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Management? directive. This new EU directive will hopefully come into play before April 2014 and will serve as a toolbox that will help Members States reduce the impact of different activities on the coast and at sea. The FAME project is crucial to conservation efforts because it provides biodiversity data and recommendations to ensure the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources while minimising the impact of

human activity at sea.

For more information on the FAME project, visit www.FAMEproject.eu
