

Title Almost 17,000 people have called for the British Government to step up and honour its responsibilities to the UK Overseas Territories, which contain over 85% of the UK's globally threatened species. The UK's Overseas Territories are home to an assortment of species, from penguins to parrots and hummingbirds, seabirds and whales. Their unique environments are home to hundreds of species found nowhere else, a third of the world's albatrosses and the largest and most pristine coral atoll on earth, the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean. Tackling the threats of habitat destruction, invasive species and climate changes to Europe's Overseas Territories is one of the [10 key actions needed to prevent further bird extinctions](#) identified by BirdLife International. The pledges for action are being handed in to Henry Bellingham MP, Minister for the Overseas Territories in response to the UK Government's ongoing consultation on the Overseas Territories. Representatives from the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) presented Mr Bellingham with an image of a Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross – one of the 33 bird species in the UK Overseas Territories threatened by extinction – made up of the names of supporters who have added their voice. The UK Government is currently consulting on a new strategy for Overseas Territories. Results of the consultation will eventually feed into a White Paper and the RSPB hopes the Government will step up to the environmental challenges faced by the Territories. Dr Tim Stowe, the RSPB's director of international operations, said: "These pledges are a clear demonstration that people care about Overseas Territories and want the Government to take action. "We are urging the Government to consider its 2020 biodiversity obligations and commit to developing and implementing its Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy in the upcoming White Paper. This could save hundreds of British species from the threat of global extinction." All 14 territories, mostly made up of island groups, are a treasure trove of spectacular species, some of which are found nowhere else on Earth, but hundreds of them are sliding towards extinction. Put together, the Overseas Territories occupy an area of land far smaller than the UK mainland, yet their wildlife value is immeasurably more significant. A major driver of the economies for the islands is tourism, and wildlife and the natural environment are major attractions. Wildlife on Overseas Territories faces several threats, but non-native species, fisheries, habitat degradation and climate change are the factors affecting the greatest number of species. Dr Stowe added: "We must take care of our islands and the exceptional species that live on them. We welcome the UK Government's new approach to the Territories, and hope it will fulfil this promising new engagement by developing its Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy. "Three hundred and fifteen species in the Overseas Territories face extinction. Their survival is in our hands but time is running out." Find out more about the BirdLife [Preventing Extinctions Programme](#)