

The first global inventory of important sites for the conservation of migratory marine species represents a major contribution to marine conservation and will prove to be a vital resource for meeting the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) target of protecting 10% of marine and coastal areas by 2020. It will also be crucial to the process of describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and will have significant input into the siting of offshore energy infrastructure. The [e-Atlas of Marine Important Bird Areas](#) was launched by BirdLife International at the Eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in Hyderabad, India, on 16 October. The [e-Atlas](#) covers [3,000 Important Bird Areas \(IBAs\)](#) worldwide. It is the result of six years of effort that, to date, has involved around 40 BirdLife Partners, with the [world's leading seabird scientists](#) from inside and outside the BirdLife Partnership, in collaboration with government departments of conservation, environment and fisheries, and the secretariats of several international conventions (CBD, EU Bird's Directive, Nairobi Convention). Over 150 marine IBAs have already been recognised in the CBD process to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas (EBSAs). The [e-Atlas](#) provides essential information for conservation practitioners and policy makers; for energy sector planners (windfarms, gas and oil exploration and drilling); for fisheries managers; for marine pollution management planners; and for the insurance industry. Seabirds are now the most threatened group of birds. They present unique conservation problems, since many species travel thousands of kilometres across international waters and multiple Exclusive Economic Zones, and only returning to land to breed. "Given the vast distances they cover, the long periods they spend at sea and the multiple threats they face there, identifying a network of priority sites for their conservation is vital to ensure their future survival", said Ben Lascelles, BirdLife's Global Marine IBA Coordinator. The [e-Atlas](#) provides a model for inventories of areas of conservation importance for other mobile pelagic taxa, such as whales, turtles and sharks. IBAs have been found to capture a large and representative proportion of other biodiversity, providing a reliable and easily monitored way of identifying priorities for conservation. Effective management of IBAs will therefore help conserve a wider range of taxa and habitats. BirdLife has been working through the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) to link with other organisations working for the conservation of other marine taxonomic groups. The [e-Atlas](#) represents a breakthrough in the format of BirdLife's IBA inventories. It will be available exclusively online. Like a Google Map, the e-atlas will be dynamically updated as new sites are identified and new data about them become available. It will be linked to other BirdLife data resources, including BirdLife's species accounts, IBA fact sheets and [State of the World's Birds](#) case studies. "We hope that the e-atlas of marine IBAs will be a key resource for management of the oceans for years to come, and show the wider marine community the benefits that can be achieved when data are shared for conservation purposes", said Ben Lascelles. ***The work of the BirdLife International Secretariat to compile this inventory has been supported via generous contribution from the Lenfest Ocean Program, Boston Environmental, Tilia fund, EU LIFE, Jensen Foundation, Nippon Keidanren, Nairobi Convention, IUCN, Conservation International, Global Greengrants Fund, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Canadian Wildlife Service, Wallace Research Foundation, World Seabird Conference.***