

The status of the world's seabirds has deteriorated rapidly over recent decades and several species and many populations are now perilously close to extinction. These are the findings of a major new review published this week in the scientific journal *Bird Conservation International*. The review—based on BirdLife International's data and assessment for the IUCN Red List—reveals that seabirds are now more threatened than any other group of birds. Of the 346 seabird species, 97 (28%) are globally threatened and a further 10% are close to being so. Nearly half of all seabird species are known or suspected to be experiencing population declines. The albatross family is especially imperilled with 17 of the 22 species currently threatened with extinction. "Seabirds are a diverse group of worldwide distribution and as top predators they also provide a valuable indicator of wider marine health", said Professor John Croxall, Chair of BirdLife's Global Seabird Programme, and the paper's lead author. Human activities lie behind these declines. At sea, commercial fisheries have degraded fish stocks and caused the deaths of innumerable seabirds through accidental bycatch, whilst on land the introduction of invasive species has extirpated many breeding colonies. There may still be time to reverse these declines and the review is clear on the actions that need to be taken. The sites where seabirds congregate—both onshore breeding colonies and offshore feeding grounds must be protected. BirdLife has already identified many Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for seabirds on land and is about to publish the first inventory of marine IBAs in the high seas. It is hoped that these will help develop a global network of Marine Protected Areas and assist the implementation of new approaches to the management and protection of marine systems. Invasive species, especially introduced rodents, must be removed from major seabird colonies. Several successful restoration projects have already taken place and BirdLife is currently collaborating with Island Conservation and the University of California, Santa Cruz to compile a list of priority sites for future eradication operations. There is also a need for more research to fill existing knowledge gaps and address emerging threats such as aquaculture, energy generation operations and climate change. The review paper [Croxall, J. P., Butchart S. H. M., Lascelles, B., Stattersfield A. J., Sullivan B., Symes, A. and Taylor, P. (2012) *Seabird conservation status, threats and priority actions: a global assessment. Bird Conserv. Int.* 22: 1-34.] is the lead article in a special seabird edition of *Bird Conservation International* and can be accessed for free [here](#). For more information on the status of the world's seabirds and the efforts being taken by the BirdLife partnership to save them please visit the new *State of the World's Birds* [Spotlight on Seabirds](#).