

Oceans Day at Nagoya

Title

Today is Oceans Day at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of Parties meeting in Nagoya, Japan. The day is drawing attention to the increasing scientific evidence indicating the rapidly declining health of marine and coastal biodiversity. Indicative of these changes are the declines in seabird populations. BirdLife's Global Seabird Programme has launched a new booklet which outlines our innovative approach to identifying and conserving marine Important Bird Areas (IBA). Seabirds are highly threatened and have a truly global distribution. BirdLife data show that 10% of all Critically Endangered birds are seabirds, despite representing just 3% of the world's bird species. Over 130 species of seabird are listed as Globally Threatened by BirdLife on behalf of the IUCN Red List. BirdLife's Global Seabird Programme is seeking to address the conservation issues for birds which spend much of their lives travelling vast distances across national and international waters. During their lives they face a wide range of threats, both on land and at sea, including being killed as bycatch in fisheries, habitat loss and predation by a range of introduced species. Marine IBAs are making a vital contribution to current global initiatives to gain greater protection and sustainable management of the oceans, including valuable input to the identification of Marine Protected Areas. They build on BirdLife's IBA programme which has, for more than twenty five years, been successful at setting priorities and focusing actions for site conservation on land and in fresh waters. The new booklet *Marine Important Bird Areas ? Priority for the conservation of biodiversity?* presents a summary of the methods being used to identify marine IBAs and indicates how they can contribute to the improvement of protected-area coverage. It outlines how seabirds use the marine environment in different ways, including for collecting food to feed their young, for moulting or for stopping on migration to refuel, and how marine IBAs seek to identify a network of sites for seabirds throughout their complex life-cycles. To date over 2,000 candidate marine IBAs, from 158 countries and territories, have been identified across the world. Key to the progress are extensive seabird datasets such as BirdLife's: Tracking Ocean Wanderers Database; Seabird foraging Range Database; and, information shared by experts on BirdLife's Globally Threatened Bird Forums. The booklet also details how BirdLife Partners are helping to establish consistent approaches to the identification of marine IBAs across the globe. In Europe, SEO (BirdLife in Spain) and SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal) have undertaken European Union LIFE funded projects to inform the future designation of marine IBAs as Special Protection Areas under the European Union's Birds Directive. These projects have mapped seabird distributions at sea using remote sensing methods and from information gathered during boat/aerial surveys. They have applied standardised methods and criteria to identify marine IBAs for seabird species in the coastal and pelagic waters of Iberia. In the Americas, ProNatura (BirdLife in Mexico), National Audubon (BirdLife in the US) and Bird Studies Canada (BirdLife in Canada) are working together on an ambitious collaborative project to identify a network of marine IBAs extending from Barrow in Alaska to Baja in Mexico. Expert consultation, and data collected from at-sea

surveys, tracking studies and habitat modelling, are all being used to define the most significant sites for over 100 species of seabirds using the Californian and Alaskan Currents. The project is identifying a network of priority sites whose management will be essential for the successful conservation of North Pacific seabirds. Finally, the new publication highlights that designation and appropriate management of marine IBAs as Marine Protected Areas can play a vital role in fulfilling commitments to national and international obligations relating to the management of marine resources, and will go a long way towards safeguarding the future of many seabirds. **Please click to download your copy of [Marine Important Bird Areas ? booklet.](#)**