Title

BirdLife has published a map showing the location of over 10,000 of the world?s most important sites for birds and biodiversity, and their protection status. The map, to be presented for the first time at COP-10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, shows the global network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) identified by the BirdLife Partnership. Although chosen using standardised scientific criteria based on the distribution of key bird species, IBAs have also been shown to be important for other animals and plants. They provide a ?first cut? of the overall network of the most significant sites for biodiversity conservation worldwide. For example, the 30 Ugandan IBAs, covering only 8% of the land surface, hold 74% of Uganda?s 1,247 recorded butterfly species, and 82% of those endemic to the country or the Albertine Rift region. IBAs have been recognised worldwide as practical tools for conservation, enabling efforts to be concentrated where they will be most effective. For example, with the publication of this new global map of IBAs, BirdLife is exposing the gaps in the world?s network of protected areas. While some 59% of the sites are shown in dark green, indicating that they are wholly or partially protected, the remaining sites are shown in light green, indicating that they lack any form of protection or, in some cases, that their protection status is unknown. Such information is very pertinent to the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (POWPA) whereby every country has agreed to conduct a gap analysis of its protected areas network. To help with this, BirdLife has made its information on the protection status of IBAs available to governments and a number of countries are already using their national IBA inventories to help guide the expansion their protected area networks. Despite recent progress in declaring new protected the protection status of IBAs worldwide shows that only 26% of IBAs are currently fully legally protected. ?Our government is committed to keeping Palau?s bird populations and their habitats healthy for our current and future generations to enjoy. The identification of IBAs throughout Palau is assisting our communities in planning and implementing their conservation and sustainable development strategies such as protected areas and land-use planning?, said Anu Gupta, Director of Conservation and Protected Areas, Palau Conservation Society Wherever possible, IBAs are identified and documented through a process led by BirdLife?s national Partners. This ensures that the best local knowledge feeds into the process, and builds engagement and capacity for later IBA conservation and monitoring work. By mid-2010, 126 national IBA inventories had been published, in a variety of languages, together with five continental directories. The extensive datasets are managed globally in BirdLife?s World Bird Database, and much of the information is made available to everyone through BirdLife?s website. BirdLife recognises that successful conservation needs the wholehearted support of local people. Since the late 1990s, BirdLife has been nurturing and networking grassroots groups at IBAs, working with communities to develop site-specific solutions that combine conservation with sustainable livelihoods. ?These collaborations help build social capital, improve accountability and reduce poverty?, said Achilles Byaruhanga, Director of BirdLife Partner Nature Uganda. ?In contrast, exclusionary approaches to site conservation can destroy livelihoods and lead to conflict and resentment, and for these reasons often fail to meet their conservation goals.? IBAs across the world are monitored using BirdLife?s standardised and simple methods for scoring their condition (based on the key species and habitats within them), the pressures (threats) impacting upon them, and the conservation responses in place (such as action plans and management activities). Such monitoring, carried out by local groups, volunteers, government staff and BirdLife Partners, generates data for IBA indices that provide powerful tools for quantifying conservation efforts and measuring their impact. Click here to download map