

Hundreds of important sites for nature threatened with destruction

More than 350 of the planet's most important sites for nature are threatened with being lost forever according to a new report by BirdLife International.

Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) are places of international significance for the conservation of the world's birds and other nature, with over twelve thousand identified worldwide. IBAs are the largest and most comprehensive global network of important sites for nature conservation. Now, 356 of these – known as 'IBAs in Danger' – in 122 countries and territories have been identified by BirdLife scientists as being in imminent danger of being lost. About half of these are legally protected, which highlights the importance of improving the management effectiveness of protected areas.

"'IBAs in Danger' provides an essential focus for governments, development agencies, the international environmental and conservation conventions, business and wider civil society to act to prevent the further damage or loss of these sites of international significance", said **Melanie Heath**, BirdLife's Director of Science, Policy and Information. "Collectively we must work together to mitigate these threats, strengthen the implementation of national and local laws and policies ensuring environmental safeguards are implemented at the earliest stages of development, as well as enhancing the management of these sites".

According to the report there are 122 IBAiD in Europe, out of a total of 356 sites spread across 102 countries and territories and High Seas. In Europe, most of the IBAiD are in urgent need of protection and management. Across the top 20 sites, the main threats are: non-sustainable agricultural practices, dams or water management related threats, pollution and invasive species.

Some of the most threatened IBAs in Europe are:

- the Wadden Sea, a vast coastal IBA covering parts of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, which is an extremely important area for many waterbird migratory species, currently threatened by pollution, shipping and recreational activities
- Kaliakra IBA in Bulgaria, vital for the endangered Red-breasted Goose and many other coastal and meadow birds currently threatened by energy production and mining
- Sa Conillera e Islots de Bledes y Espartar, in Spain, a small but very important IBA where the critically endangered Balearic Shearwater breeds and currently threatened by a Luxury boutique hotel development.

Iván Ramírez, head of Conservation at BirdLife Europe and Central Asia stated: "IBAs are the backbone of our work in BirdLife. By launching the IBAiD campaign we make a call to protect the most endangered sites in the World. Each one of these 122 areas for Europe needs our attention, investment and management. Only by protecting these sites we will ensure not only the survival of many endangered species, but also our legacy for future generations."

The new report - *Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas: a global network for conserving nature and benefiting people* - details aspects of the work of the IBA programme over the last four decades. IBAs have proven extremely influential, by helping to target conservation effort at priority sites, by stimulating the designation of formal protected areas for many sites and by inspiring similar approaches for other taxa.

'IBAs in Danger' overlap with no fewer than 56 Wetlands of International Importance. The main threats to these sites are inappropriate water management, recreation and agriculture. Yet, these areas variously provide free water treatment and flood defences and also support the livelihoods for people living around them.

Since the IBA programme's inception in the late 1970s, BirdLife International, through its 120 National Partners, has applied this influential approach to site conservation in virtually all of the world's countries and territories, both on land and at sea. As such, in addition to the programme's significant direct contribution to bird and wider biodiversity conservation, many hundreds of protected areas have been designated as a direct consequence of their recognition as IBAs. IBAs have also had considerable and, indeed, increasing relevance in developing responses to a number of wider environmental issues, such as habitat loss, ecosystem degradation, sustainable resource use and climate change.

ENDS

For more information or interviews please contact:

Martin Fowlie: martin.fowlie@birdlife.org - tel +44 (0)1223 279813

Ivan Ramirez: : ivan.ramirez@birdlife.org - tel +34 646477962

Images and copies of the report can be downloaded from <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6igyriddufb8qjp/AABXTjyMDzhAKXvHNSy9Qw67a?dl=0>

Notes for Editors

1. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership. Together we are 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide – one per country – and growing, with almost 11 million supporters, 7000 local conservation groups and 7400 staff. Find out more at www.birdlife.org/ www.facebook.com/BirdLifeInternational
2. Over 12,000 have been identified globally. Find out more at <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/site>
3. Explore the interactive map at <http://tinyurl.com/IBAiDmap>
4. The new report *Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas: a global network for conserving nature and benefiting people* is being launched by BirdLife at the World Parks Congress, Sydney, Australia.