

Marine biodiversity - CBD must keep up its commitments!

Agenda Item 21. Marine and coastal biodiversity – Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs)

Oceans provide innumerable ecosystem services by absorbing 50% of human produced carbon, supporting the highest number of living organisms on the planet, producing fisheries catches valuing 80 billion USD per year, supporting 35 million jobs and ensuring food security for millions of coastal communities.

Significant socio-economic impacts are predicted if marine biodiversity and habitat continue to be lost, degraded and disrupted. The loss of these global natural assets will result in poorly functioning marine systems and negative cultural impacts.

The Convention on Biological Diversity's initiative to describe Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas (EBSAs) has enabled the most extensive process to date to generate political agreement over areas of greatest ecological and biological value in the marine environment.

While the process for EBSAs description is a technical and scientific exercise, it can, and has, already been used by many coastal States to assist with processes aimed at securing sustainable outcomes of activities within their territorial seas, Exclusive Economic Zones and seabed of continental shelves in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – the CBD EBSAs process takes into account the sovereign right of coastal States.

Through regional workshops, EBSAs have been described based on credible technical and scientific inputs by **nationally nominated experts. Reports from these workshops have been scrutinized by CBD national focal points and sent to both SBSTTA and COP for review.**

Two EBSAs regional reports have already been welcomed by COP11: Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic and Western South Pacific. A further seven reports are being presented to COP12: Southern Indian Ocean, Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific, North Pacific; South-Eastern Atlantic, Arctic, North-West Atlantic and Mediterranean.

BirdLife International calls on:

- Parties to welcome the EBSA reports being submitted to COP12 for review
- Parties and regional organisations in areas not yet covered by EBSA workshops to facilitate regional workshops to help complete a first global set of EBSAs
- Parties and donors to provide the financial support to those workshops and the CBD Secretariat to consider previous experiences to guide future meetings in the most effective way
- the Executive Secretary of the CBD to accelerate the full operation of the EBSA repository mechanism, including by incorporating the agreed EBSA reports
- Parties and relevant organisations, in regions that have already held EBSA workshops, to champion the improved management of sites, when applicable and taking into consideration regional and international laws, facilitate on-going communication and update EBSAs described
- Parties to use the described EBSAs in the design and designation of a network of marine protected areas as well as to consider them in the development of marine spatial planning
- Parties of the North-East Atlantic region to expedite the conclusion of the process of describing EBSAs in the region and submit the final report to CBD
- the Executive Secretary of the CBD to develop a strategy for communicating and integrating the results of EBSA workshops to the United Nations, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), IMO, ISA and other management bodies with a role in achieving the sustainable development of our oceans

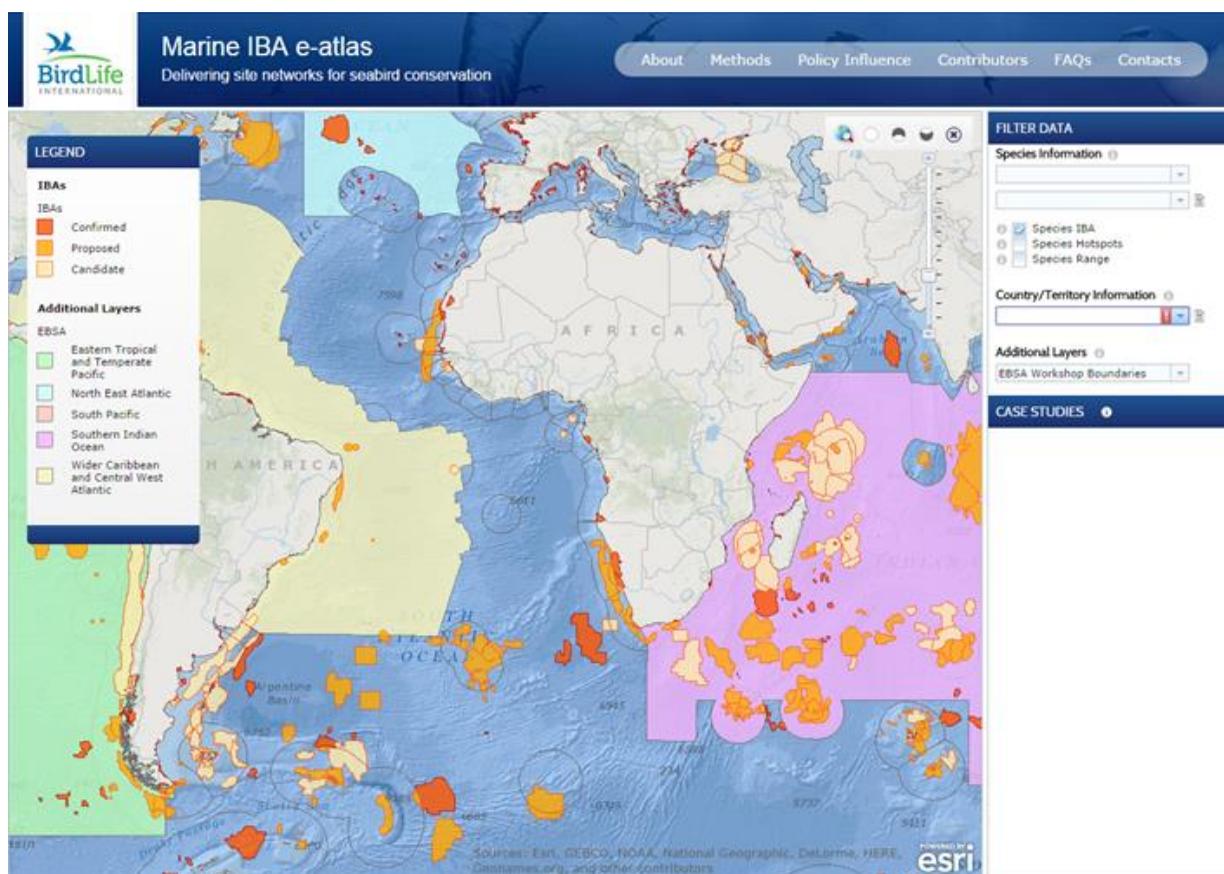
BirdLife International and the EBSAs process:

In response to the call for submission of relevant scientific data to EBSA regional workshops BirdLife has been compiling all available seabird data for the regions in question.

These IBAs have formed an important input to sites agreed to have met the EBSA criteria at the workshops to date. So far over 100 IBAs have been used to inform the scientific basis for EBSAs agreed at the workshops, while many others could be used as the EBSA process develops in these and other regions.

Seabirds are recognised as the best studied group of pelagic species, and have a worldwide distribution that often overlaps with other globally threatened marine species, meaning they can act as critical proxies for the many oceanic areas where few or no other data exist. These data has shown that areas used by seabirds fulfil a number of the EBSA criteria.

Marine E-atlas: www.birdlife.org/datazone/marine Seabird tracking database: www.seabirdtracking.org



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