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Marine conservation e-Atlas marks a breakthrough in sharing data to manage the world's oceans

The first global inventory of important sites for the conservation of migratory marine species represents a major contribution to marine conservation and will prove to be a vital resource for meeting the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) target of protecting 10% of marine and coastal areas by 2020. It will also be crucial to the process of describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and will have significant input into the siting of offshore energy infrastructure.

The *e-Atlas of Marine Important Bird Areas* will be launched by BirdLife International at the Eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in Hyderabad, India, on 16 October.

The e-Atlas covers 3,000 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) worldwide. It is the result of six years of effort that, to date, has involved around 40 BirdLife Partners, with the world's leading seabird scientists from inside and outside the BirdLife Partnership, in collaboration with government departments of conservation, environment and fisheries, and the secretariats of several international conventions (CBD, EU Bird's Directive, Nairobi Convention). Over 150 marine IBAs have already been recognised in the CBD process to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas (EBSAs).

The *e-Atlas* provides essential information for conservation practitioners and policy makers; for energy sector planners (windfarms, gas and oil exploration and drilling); for fisheries managers; for marine pollution management planners; and for the insurance industry.

Seabirds are now the most threatened group of birds. They present unique conservation problems, since many species travel thousands of kilometres across international waters and multiple Exclusive Economic Zones, and only returning to land to breed.

"Given the vast distances they cover, the long periods they spend at sea and the multiple threats they face there, identifying a network of priority sites for their conservation is vital to ensure their future survival", said Ben Lascelles, BirdLife's Global Marine IBA Coordinator.

The e-Atlas provides a model for inventories of areas of conservation importance for other mobile pelagic taxa, such as whales, turtles and sharks. IBAs have been found to capture a large and representative proportion of other biodiversity, providing a reliable and easily monitored

way of identifying priorities for conservation. Effective management of IBAs will therefore help conserve a wider range of taxa and habitats. BirdLife has been working through the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) to link with other organisations working for the conservation of other marine taxonomic groups.

The e-Atlas represents a breakthrough in the format of BirdLife's IBA inventories. It will be available exclusively online.

Like a Google Map, the e-atlas will be dynamically updated as new sites are identified and new data about them become available. It will be linked to other BirdLife data resources, including BirdLife's species accounts, IBA fact sheets and *State of the World's Birds* case studies.

"We hope that the e-atlas of marine IBAs will be a key resource for management of the oceans for years to come, and show the wider marine community the benefits that can be achieved when data are shared for conservation purposes", said Ben Lascelles.

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Notes for Editors

1. The IBA e-atlas can be accessed here: www.birdlife.org/datazone/marine
2. Other BirdLife data sources, include the Tracking Ocean Wanderers database (www.seabirdtracking.org), which holds a wide range of data (primarily on albatross and petrels) collected from tracking devices held by the wider seabird community, and the Seabird Foraging Range Database (<http://seabird.wikispaces.com/>)
3. The e-atlas is being showcased at the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties meeting "CBD COP 11". The side event is "*1st global network of key sites for seabird conservation: their uses for informing EBSAs and other marine conservation initiatives*", Tuesday, 16 Oct, at local time 13:15- 14:45, Room 1.02 - Level 1
4. BirdLife International is a Partnership of 115 national conservation organisations and a leader in bird conservation. BirdLife's unique local to global approach enables it to deliver high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. Find out more at www.birdlife.org
5. Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are key sites for avian conservation, identified nationally, using globally standardised criteria, usually involving multiple stakeholders. They are

delimited so that they are or can be managed for conservation, and do one (or more) of three things:

- a. Hold significant numbers of one or more globally threatened bird species;
 - b. Are one of a set of sites that together hold a suite of restricted-range species or biome-restricted bird species;
 - c. Have exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory bird species. For more information on IBAs see <http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/sites/index.html> and for factsheets on individual IBAs <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/site/search>.
6. Governments have made commitments to address biodiversity loss through the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#). At the Tenth Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010, the 193 Parties agreed a Strategic Plan which included 20 targets. These included Target 11 “By 2020, at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes” and Target 12 “By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained”.
7. An exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is a seazone prescribed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea over which a state has special rights over the exploration and use of marine resources
8. The work of the BirdLife International Secretariat to compile this inventory has been supported via generous contribution from the Lenfest Ocean Program, Boston Environmental, Tilia fund, EU LIFE, Jensen Foundation, Nippon Keidanren, Nairobi Convention, IUCN, Conservation International, Marisla Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Canadian Wildlife Service, Wallace Research Foundation, World Seabird Conference.