

# Marine Important Bird Areas

Summary of BirdLife International  
progress and objectives



# Why Marine IBAs?

- **Terrestrial and freshwater IBA programme successful in prioritising and focusing conservation**
- **Many seabird species have a critical conservation need**
- **Potential for contribution to global initiatives to gain greater protection and sustainable management of the oceans, (including Marine Protected Areas).**
- **However, identification of marine IBAs presents many challenges**

# Global IBA-selection criteria

Within the existing global criteria, the following are readily applicable to identifying marine IBAs

**A1** Species of global conservation concern

**A4** Congregations

**4i** > threshold numbers of waterbird (sensu Ramsar)

**4ii** > threshold numbers of seabird or landbird

**4iii** > 20,000 waterbirds/ 10,000 pairs seabirds

**4iv** > threshold (>20,000?) at migratory bottleneck  
[possibly]

# Ongoing review of global criteria for identifying marine IBAs

- **Several BirdLife Partnership projects informing this refinement.**  
e.g. marine IBA publications (covering the North Sea and the Baltic, and RSPB boundary selection criteria), and national projects (LIFE-Baltic, LIFE-SEO – Spain/SPEA – Portugal, RFBPS- New Zealand and LIFE-Malta)
- **Research relating seabird-at-sea distributions and marine eco-regions to help clarify relevance of marine biome category**

# The Four Probable Manifestations of Marine IBAs:

- **Seaward extensions to breeding colonies** (e.g. to cover foraging areas) (Contiguous with existing IBAs, often seaward extension of existing IBA boundaries needed)
- **Coastal congregations of non-breeding seabirds** (e.g. foraging and moulting seaducks) (Non-contiguous, often inshore)
- **Open-ocean foraging areas** (Non-contiguous, often pelagic)
- **Migration hotspots and bottlenecks** (Non-contiguous, inshore)

# Delimiting Marine IBAs

- **Current focus on marine IBAs contiguous with breeding colonies (seaward extensions)**
  - high conservation importance and manageability
- Interactive database of available research, and expert consensus, on foraging radii for seabirds under development by BirdLife
- Database tool will demonstrate potential applicable species and distances, for seaward extensions

# Breeding Colony Seaward Extensions

## Recommended preferences for data specificity:

1. **Site-species specific data (from literature, expert knowledge and field projects), taking account of potential density-dependence (colony size)**
2. **Species-specific data (from other colonies)**
3. **Data from closest related species**

**(In cases where multi-species colonies exist, recommend using the species with the largest foraging radius to set the outer limit)**

# Delimiting Marine IBAs (cont.)

- **Conservation importance of non-contiguous areas recognized**
- Engage in future when **more knowledge** on: - **biology of taxa** (including from EU LIFE projects and further Tracking Ocean Wanderers research)
- Approaches to **dealing with management and policy issues** of non-contiguous marine areas



# In Summary

- **Marine IBAs deemed an important conservation tool**
- **Investigative progress currently on seaward extensions to breeding colonies**
- **Open ocean areas hold many more challenges**