



2006

Implementing N2000 in the
marine environment
Marine IBAs: Lisbon-Vilanova
2006 update



This document is an update of the Lisbon-Vilanova conclusions released by SPEA and SEO/BirdLife in 2005 and should not be read as a substitute to our previous document. It was prepared for the December 2006 BirdLife Europe meeting of the Birds and Habitats Directives task force.

1- Cross-cutting issues

a) Spatial scale

Following our previous recommendations, SPEA and SEO/BirdLife ask BirdLife to develop further work in the definition of the maximum size of a representative IBA.

In all probability, the size (and boundaries) of a marine IBA will be given by the careful analysis of the seabird concentrations observed and the subsequent application of spatial statistics. This will be the case both for extensions of a breeding colony and for pelagic/coastal concentrations not related to seabird colonies. However, it will be also necessary to take into account other practical reasons for defining the size of an IBA, as very large areas could lead to unfeasible management.

The use seabirds make of the marine component is important to define the effective size for the marine IBAs. For example, including feeding areas of coastal seabirds could mean defining considerably bigger IBAs than rafting areas for most Procellariidae.

b) Seabird species for which marine IBAs can be defined

BirdLife International has recently classified seabirds into the following categories:

Pelagic	Seabird species that utilise the marine environment throughout the year (primarily pelagic except when breeding)
Coastal	Seabird species that utilise the marine environment throughout the year (primarily inshore)
Coastal non-breeding	Seabird species that utilise the marine environment only during the non-breeding season

With regards to this, we still believe the decisions about which species trigger Marine IBA criteria must be data-driven. Spending too much time in defining the different types of bird that use the marine habitat is not essential to define marine IBAs.

2- Review of the four potential types of marine IBA

Lisbon-Vilanova 2005 conclusions supported BirdLife's suggestion of four types of Marine IBA.

Progress of the Portuguese and Spanish LIFE projects, more (quality) field-data available and further discussion of this topic, leads us to support that there is little effective difference between the second and fourth type of Marine IBA. This was also pointed out in some previous BirdLife publications (2004, Tracking ocean wanderers).

SPEA and SEO/BirdLife suggest the following classification:

1. Seaward extensions of breeding colonies
2. Coastal or pelagic seabird congregations
3. Migration bottlenecks

1. Seaward extensions of breeding colonies

Coastal and pelagic birds make intensive use of the surrounding colony waters for different purposes, such as feeding, physical protection from adverse weather conditions, predator-avoidance behaviour, preening, etc.

Establishing radii from colonies needs to be data-driven, and again the spatial-scale issue of marine IBA arises. For coastal species, it could be possible to include a significant fraction of the foraging grounds using this approach. For pelagic seabirds (e.g. storm-petrels), which may travel long distances from their breeding grounds to forage (i.e. foraging and breeding grounds are often disconnected), this is clearly unfeasible.

It is a logical certainty that the closer we get to the seabird colony the higher probabilities we will get to observe seabird congregations, so there will always be a certain point from which, regardless of the use that seabirds make of the area, it needs to be protected.

It is also important to note that, in addition to inter-specific differences, there could also be inter-colony differences within a species. Therefore, it is always desirable to define those IBAs based on radii case by case.

2. Coastal or pelagic seabird congregations

Seabird congregations do occur both in inshore and offshore waters and are clearly related to a number of variables (depth, shape of the coastline, salinity, chlorophyll, water-fronts, etc). Previous marine IBA classification attempted to establish differences between coastal or pelagic congregations, but both SPEA and SEO/BirdLife support they are just extremes of a continuum, responding to very similar causes, and that the criteria used to define them will essentially be the same.

It is important to understand that the degree of aggregation will differ according to the species and type of habitat. Some qualifying sites will hold large numbers of seabirds in very high densities, while other sites will qualify when relatively low numbers of a threatened/rarer species are involved. The former are most often associated with coastal areas, while the latter best reflect the case in pelagic areas, but this rule is not always true.

In fact, getting sufficient data on seabird distribution, as well as on oceanographic features (and how do they interact) will drive the IBA identification process and criteria, more than establishing differences between whether seabird distribution occurs in inshore or offshore waters.

SPEA and SEO/BirdLife Projects will probably help to identify which modelling procedures are most useful for the identification of the main congregations. Defining the line that actually limits this type of IBA will be a matter of finding the right threshold.

3. Migration bottlenecks

Although we still believe there are some topographic features, such as the Straits of Gibraltar, or the Bosphorus, that are clear bottlenecks, it is also true that seabird densities at those points could actually be similar to those recorded on other relevant topographic sites such as capes or island-channels. Dynamic (oceanographic) areas such as water-fronts could also define narrow areas where seabirds do migrate repeatedly and need further protection.

3- Review of the Marine IBA criteria

Both SPEA and SEO/BirdLife understand it is still too early to dive into any adjustment of the existing terrestrial criteria. Data gathered will probably start to allow this by late 2007.

Implementing N2000 in the marine environment

Marine IBAs: Lisbon-Vilanova 2006 update

This text was compiled by:

Iván Ramírez, Marine and IBAs Programme Coordinator. Portugal.

Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves, SPEA

Email: ivan.ramirez@spea.pt

Pep Arcos, Marine IBAs Life. Spain.

Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/BirdLife)

Email: jmarcos@seo.org

Recommended citation: SPEA-SEO/BirdLife. *Lisbon-Vilanova 2006 update.*