



**Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels**

**Fifth Meeting of Advisory Committee**

*Mar del Plata, Argentina, 13 – 17 April 2010*

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**Title: BirdLife International's Important Bird Area Monitoring Framework**

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## **Title: BirdLife International's Important Bird Area Monitoring Framework**

As ACAP considers how best to monitor breeding sites for species covered by the agreement, it may wish to consider the monitoring framework developed by BirdLife International for monitoring Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

BirdLife views IBA monitoring as one element of a wider framework for monitoring progress towards BirdLife's strategic objectives, complementing monitoring of species (through the Red List Index, based on the changes in species' categorisations on the IUCN Red List) and habitats (through Wild Bird Indices, based on bird population monitoring). The purpose of IBA monitoring is to track and respond to threats, understand the status and trends of biodiversity, and assess the effectiveness of conservation efforts. Adoption of a common approach allows national IBA data to be compiled regionally and globally, providing a powerful tool for international conservation advocacy and fundraising.

BirdLife's IBA monitoring framework provides a standardised way to assign scores for the threats to IBAs ('Pressure'), the condition of IBAs ('State') and conservation actions taken at IBAs ('Response'). The scoring system makes it possible to integrate a wide range of information, which may often be qualitative rather than quantitative.

To ensure sustainability, the system is inexpensive to implement: the minimal data required are simple and mainly qualitative. They can usually be collected on site by management authority or project staff, Local Conservation Group members, IBA caretakers and other volunteers. Typically, a national monitoring coordinator synthesises information from the field and from other sources (such as remote sensing), and assigns indicator scores and hence overall status scores for each site. More in-depth monitoring data, where available can feed into the system, and they can be used to provide finer scale measures at a subset of priority sites.

### **1. Assessing and scoring threats (Pressure)**

The threats to IBAs are scored according to their timing, scope and severity, in relation to how likely they are to affect the 'trigger' bird species at the site (those for which the IBA has been identified). Depending on the circumstances and the information available, the assessment may be based on information on threats that affect the 'trigger' species or on information about the key habitats on which the 'trigger' species depend. Timing, scope and severity scores are then combined to give an impact score as follows:

<b>Timing of threat</b>	<b>Timing score</b>
Happening now	3
Likely in short term (within 4 years)	2
Likely in long term (beyond 4 years)	1
Past (and unlikely to return) and no longer limiting	0
<b>Scope of threat</b>	<b>Scope score</b>
Whole population/area (>90%)	3
Most of population/area (50-90%)	2
Some of population/area (10-50%)	1
Few individuals/small area (<10%)	0
<b>Severity of threat</b>	<b>Severity score</b>
Rapid deterioration (>30% over 10 years or 3 generations)	3

Moderate deterioration (10–30% over 10 years or 3 generations)	2
Slow deterioration (1–10% over 10 years or 3 generations)	1
No or imperceptible deterioration (<1% over 10 years)	0

The impact score is calculated as the sum of the scores for timing, scope and severity (if the score for any of timing, scope or severity for a given threat = 0, then the impact score for that threat = 0). Using a ‘weakest link’ approach, the highest impact score of any threat is then used to assign a threat status to the IBA on a scale of 0 to -3 as follows:

Highest impact score of any threat	IBA threat status score & its description
0	0 Low
3-5	-1 Medium
6-7	-2 High
8-9	-3 Very high

## **2. Assessing and scoring condition (State)**

The condition of IBAs is scored based on the population sizes for one or more trigger species or based on the area and quality of the key habitats on which the trigger species depend, as a surrogate for population size. For many IBAs, population data will not be available and scores for the condition status of the site will be based on habitat(s). Scores must also take into account a comparison of the population sizes of trigger species to either their size when the IBA was first identified (assuming there is no indication that species’ populations then were declining or depleted or the optimum for the site), or based on the estimated extent of potential habitat and population density in undisturbed conditions. Similarly, scores must also take into account the existing areas and quality of key habitats compared to the estimated potential optimum for the site. These comparisons are used to calculate or estimate the percentage of potential population or habitat remaining as follows:

% potential population or habitat remaining = (remaining population or area / estimated optimum population or area) x 100% [This equation assumes that the habitat quality is optimal. Often this will not be so, in which case the estimates will need to be ‘devalued’ accordingly.]

Using a weakest link approach, the IBA is assigned a condition status score based on the percentage of potential population or habitat (after adjusting for quality) remaining of the ‘worst’ species or habitat, as follows:

% potential population or habitat remaining of ‘worst’ species or habitat	IBA condition status score & description
>90%	3 Good
70-90%	2 Moderate
40-70%	1 Poor
<40%	0 Very Poor

## **3 Assessing and scoring actions (Response)**

Three complementary measures of response are scored: the levels of (1) formal designation for conservation, (2) management planning and (3) implementation of conservation action, as follows:

<b>Conservation designation</b>	<b>Score</b>
Whole area of IBA covered by appropriate conservation designation (>90%)	3
Most of IBA covered (incl. critical parts for the trigger species) (50–90%)	2
Some of IBA covered (10–50%)	1
Little/none of IBA covered (<10%)	0

<b>Management planning</b>	<b>Score</b>
A comprehensive and appropriate management plan exists that aims to maintain/improve the population of qualifying species	3
A management plan exists but it is out of date or not comprehensive	2
No management plan exists but planning process has begun	1
No management planning has taken place	0

<b>Conservation action</b>	<b>Score</b>
The conservation measures needed for the site are being comprehensively and effectively implemented	3
Substantive conservation measures are being implemented but these are not comprehensive and are limited by resources and capacity	2
Some limited conservation initiatives are in place (e.g. action by LCGs)	1
Very little or no conservation action is taking place	0

The IBA is assigned an overall response status score based on the summed status scores for the three different action types as follows:

<b>Summed action scores</b>	<b>IBA action status score &amp; its description</b>
8–9	3 High
6–7	2 Medium
2–5	1 Low
0–1	0 Negligible

This description is considerably abbreviated from BirdLife International’s detailed guidelines on IBA monitoring (BirdLife International 2006). Copies and further information can be obtained from [stuart.butchart@birdlife.org](mailto:stuart.butchart@birdlife.org).

BirdLife International (2006) Monitoring Important Bird Areas: a global framework. Cambridge, UK. BirdLife International. Version 1.2.