

# DATA COLLECTION

## GEOGRAPHICAL DEFINITION OF EUROPE

The geographical area covered by this publication is defined in Figure 1, and is the same as that covered by the previous pan-European Important Bird Area (IBA) inventory 10 years ago (Grimmett and Jones 1989). Thus, Europe here includes the Atlantic archipelagos of the Canary Islands, the Azores and Madeira, as well as western Russia (all administrative regions lying mainly west of the Ural mountains and Ural river), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Svalbard and Jan Mayen, and the whole of Greenland, Turkey and Cyprus.

In total, 51 countries or autonomous regions are covered in this publication, compared to 39 such entities in the previous pan-European IBA inventory. This difference is due to the large political changes that have taken place during the past decade. No IBAs were identified in Monaco, San Marino or Vatican City (Holy See).

## THE BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

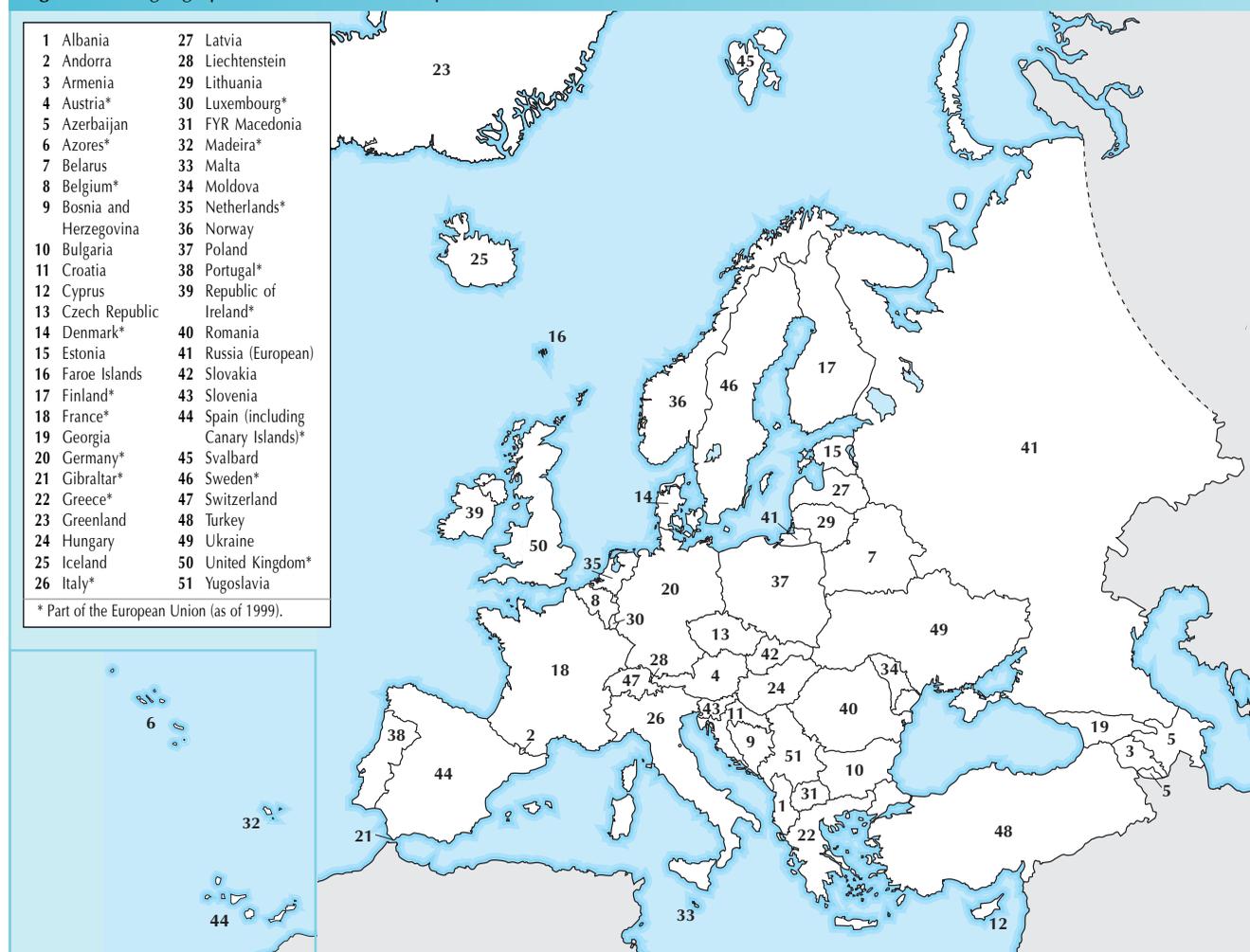
A vast network of ornithologists, birdwatchers and conservation experts across Europe have contributed to this inventory (Figure 2). Many hundreds have been involved in the collation of data specifically for this project, and are acknowledged in each country chapter. Indirectly, many thousands more have laid the foundation for the inventory, through carrying out surveys of bird numbers and distributions during the last three decades.

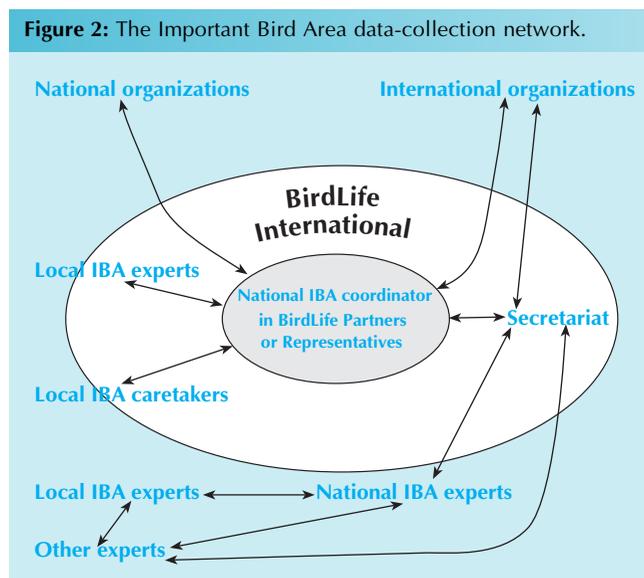
The existence of the BirdLife International Partnership (see Box 2, 'Introduction' chapter) has greatly facilitated the assembly of this huge and diverse network. The 32 Partners of BirdLife International in Europe have endorsed and are implementing the BirdLife IBA Programme, initiated in 1990. Most have an IBA coordinator (or team), responsible for delivering this programme within the country concerned.

In most countries, therefore, it has been the IBA coordinators/teams within Partners who have organized the collation of new and revised IBA information, and who have been responsible for a large network of volunteer contributors to the project (Figure 2). The networks of local IBA experts are usually those who are active in the protection, management and monitoring of IBAs in their area (Figure 2). In a few countries this network has a formal structure (e.g. 'IBA caretaker network') and procedures, e.g. regular reporting to the national coordinator on the status of sites, or distribution of a national IBA newsletter. In most such cases, the IBA coordinator has also been the principal author of the relevant country overview in this publication. In countries without a BirdLife Partner or IBA coordinator, an expert was commissioned to coordinate the collection of data nationally.

In addition, much valuable information has come from beyond the BirdLife Partnership. At local and national levels there has been substantial collaboration with other bodies that collect and hold relevant data, both governmental and non-governmental, and these are duly acknowledged in each country chapter. Special mention should be made of Wetlands International, the leading non-profit

Figure 1. The geographical definition of 'Europe' as used in this book.



**Figure 2:** The Important Bird Area data-collection network.


organization devoted to the conservation of wetlands, which co-produced the first pan-European IBA inventory (Grimmett and Jones 1989) and which has helped in the production of this revised inventory, through the provision of data on population thresholds of waterbirds and, at the national level, on particular wetlands.

## SOURCES OF DATA

### ■ National IBA inventories

The previous pan-European IBA inventory (Grimmett and Jones 1989) stimulated, during the past decade, the production of national IBA inventories for 16 European countries (Box 1). In a high proportion of these publications, the national IBA inventory was a completely revised version, or otherwise contained much new, updated or corrected data. These inventories were a primary source of information for this new pan-European inventory.

### ■ Other publications

As well as publications focusing on IBAs, a large number of other relevant studies have been published over the last 10 years that have stimulated or facilitated data-collection for IBAs:

- *Birds in Europe: their conservation status* (Tucker and Heath 1994): this BirdLife publication was a comprehensive assessment of the conservation status of all bird species in Europe, based on population sizes and trends, and range trends. Through identifying which species are of European conservation concern, and determining their national population numbers, the results have been central to the identification of IBAs for these species, based on numerical criteria.
- *Birds to Watch 2* (Collar *et al.* 1994): on behalf of IUCN–The World Conservation Union, the universally recognized authority on globally threatened species, BirdLife identified in this publication those species of bird that are of global conservation concern, in Europe and elsewhere. This update of previous such

### Box 1: National Important Bird Area inventories that have been produced in Europe since 1989.

All inventories are in the relevant national language; those marked with an asterisk (\*) are also available in English. Apart from those indicated below, national IBA inventories are currently also in preparation for Estonia, Finland, Germany, Romania, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

Country	Year	Citation
Austria	1995	Dvorak, M. and Karner, E. <i>Important Bird Areas in Österreich</i> . Wien: Bundesministerium für Umwelt (Monographien Bund 71). 454 pp.
Bulgaria	1997	Kostadinova, I. [ <i>Important Bird Areas in Bulgaria</i> ]. Sofia: Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB Conservation Series, Book 1). 176 pp. (In Bulgarian.)
Czech Republic	1992*	Hora, J. and Kanuch, P. <i>Vyznamna ptaci uzemi v Evrope [Important Bird Areas in Europe—Czechoslovakia]</i> . Prague: Czechoslovakia Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation. 124 pp.
France	1994	Rocamora, G. <i>Les Zones Importantes pour la Conservation des Oiseaux en France</i> . Angoulême, France: Ligue Pour La Protection des Oiseaux/Ministère de l'Environnement. 339 pp.
(East) Germany	1991	Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU). <i>Die Europäischen Vogelschutzgebiete (IBA) in den fünf neuen Bundesländern [IBAs in the five new Bundesländer of the Federal Republic of Germany]</i> . Bonn: NABU.
Greece	1994	Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS). [ <i>IBAs for the birds of Greece</i> ]. Athens: HOS. 271 pp. (In Greek.)
Hungary	1992	Waliczky, Z. <i>Európai Jelentőségű Madárléhelyek Magyarországon</i> . Budapest: Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület/International Council for Bird Preservation. 118 pp.
	1998	Nagy, S. <i>Fontos Madárléhelyek Magyarországon</i> . Budapest: Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület. 138 pp.
Ireland	1995	Magee, E. and Coveney, J. <i>Important Bird Areas (IBAs): threats and protection status</i> . Monkstown, Ireland: Irish Wildbird Conservancy.
Italy (+ in prep.)	1991	Lambertini, M., Gustin, M., Faralli, U. and Tallone, G. <i>IBA—Italia. Aree di Importanza Europea per gli Uccelli Selvatici in Italia</i> . Parma, Italy: Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli. 263 pp.
Latvia (+ in prep.)	1994*	Viksne, J. <i>Putniem Nozīmīgas Vietas Latvijā [Important Bird Areas in Latvia]</i> . Riga: Latvijas Ornitoloģijas Biedrība. 45 pp.
Netherlands	1994*	van den Tempel, R. and Osieck, E. R. [ <i>Areas important for birds in the Netherlands: wetlands and other areas of international or European importance for birds</i> ]. Zeist, Netherlands: Vogelbescherming Nederland (Techn. Rep. 13E). (In Dutch.) 126 pp.
	1996	Eggenhuizen, T. and van den Tempel, R. <i>Belangrijke Vogelgebieden</i> . Zeist, Netherlands: Vogelbescherming Nederland. 160 pp.
Poland	1994	Gromadzki, M., Dyrzc, A., Glowacinski, Z. and Wieloch, M. <i>Ostoje Ptaków W Polsce</i> . Gdansk: Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków. 403 pp.
Slovakia	1992*	Hora, J. and Kanuch, P. [ <i>Important Bird Areas in Europe—Czechoslovakia</i> ]. Prague: Czechoslovakia Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation. 124 pp.
Spain	1992	de Juana, E., ed. <i>Áreas Importantes para las Aves en España</i> . Madrid: Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Monografía 3). 183 pp.
	1998	Viada, C. <i>Áreas Importantes para las Aves en España</i> . Madrid: Sociedad Española de Ornitología/BirdLife (Monografía 5). 398 pp.
Türkey	1989	Ertan, A., Kiliç A. and Kasperek, M. <i>Türkiye'nin Önemli Kus Alanları</i> . Istanbul: Doğal Hayatı Koruma Derneği. 155 pp.
	1997*	Magnin, G. and Yazar, M. [ <i>Important Bird Areas in Turkey</i> ]. Istanbul: Doğal Hayatı Koruma Derneği. 313 pp.
United Kingdom	1992	Pritchard, D. E., Housden, S. D., Mudge, G. P., Galbraith, C. A. and Pienkowski, M. W., eds. <i>Important Bird Areas in the UK including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man</i> . Sandy, UK: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. 540 pp.

**Box 2.** The different types of data collected on Important Bird Areas, and available in the IBA database.

Area accuracy		
Reliable	A	accurate to within 10%
Incomplete	B	accurate to within 50%
Poor	C	definitely not accurate to within 50%
Unknown	U	

Land ownership
Private
State
Communal
Religious group
International waters
Mixed
Other
Unknown

Season types	Code	Description
Breeding resident	R	Species breeds in IBA and remains throughout the year.
Breeding visitor	B	Species breeds in IBA but is not present for parts of the year.
Winter visitor	W	Species spends a substantial part of the winter in IBA.
Passage visitor	P	Species stages in IBA during migration.
Non-breeding visitor	N	Species occurs in IBA but does not breed (usually over-summering immature birds or post-breeding moult-gatherings).
Unknown	U	Breeding or seasonal status of species in IBA is unknown or uncertain.

Population abundance	
Abundant	Encountered in large numbers in preferred habitat.
Common	Encountered singly or in small numbers in preferred habitat.
Frequent	Often, but not always, met with in preferred habitat.
Uncommon	Encountered sporadically in preferred habitat.
Rare	Rarely seen, often implying less than 10 or so records.
Unknown	Not possible to assess abundance on available information.

Accuracy of Population size/Trend		
Reliable	A	accurate to within 10%
Incomplete	B	accurate to within 50%
Poor	C	definitely not accurate to within 50%
Unknown	U	

Estimate of trend (1985–1995)	
+2	Large increase
+1	Small increase
0	Stable
-1	Small decrease
-2	Large decrease
F	Fluctuating
N	New breeder
X	Extinct
U	Unknown

Impact of threat
High
Medium
Low
Unknown

Relationship of protected area/IBA
Protected area is contained by IBA
Protected area contains IBA
Protected area overlaps with IBA
Protected area is adjacent to IBA
Relationship unknown

Geographical data	
<b>Compiler</b>	Person responsible for the IBA data provided.
<b>Date</b>	Date of completion of data compilation.
<b>IBA codes</b>	Current site-code; national IBA code; previous pan-European inventory (1989) code.
<b>Site names</b>	International name in English; national name in national language.
<b>Country</b>	Country in which IBA is located.
<b>Administrative regions</b>	Administrative region(s) in which IBA is located (at primary and secondary levels).
<b>Area of IBA</b>	Area of IBA in hectares (ha); 100 hectares = 1 km <sup>2</sup> .
<b>Area accuracy</b>	Accuracy to which area of IBA is known.
<b>Central coordinates</b>	Central coordinates of IBA, in degrees and minutes (latitude/longitude; Greenwich).
<b>Altitude</b>	Altitudinal range spanned by IBA (in metres above/below sea level).
<b>Map</b>	Whether a map showing IBA boundaries (in paper or digitized form) is available.
<b>General description</b>	A general description of the IBA, its location and general appearance.
<b>Ownership</b>	An indication of the dominant type of ownership of the land within the IBA (should cover >50% of the IBA area).
<b>Management plan</b>	An indication of whether the IBA is covered (partly or wholly) by any existing management plan(s).
Criteria	
<b>Endemic Bird Areas</b>	Name of Endemic Bird Area, if A2 criterion is met; see the following chapter for further explanation.
<b>Biomes</b>	Name of biome(s), if A3 criterion is met; see the following chapter for further explanation.
<b>Criteria</b>	The reasons why the site is considered ornithologically important (summary list of IBA criteria fulfilled at the site). See the following chapter for an explanation of the criteria.
Ornithological data	
<b>Species name</b>	See Appendix 2a for a list of scientific and English names of birds used in this book. Taxonomy and nomenclature follow Cramp <i>et al.</i> (1977–1994).
<b>Season</b>	The season in which the species occurs in the IBA.
<b>Year</b>	The year of the latest data on which the population estimate is based.
<b>Population size (minimum and maximum)</b>	An estimate of minimum and maximum population size of the species at the IBA.
<b>Population size accuracy</b>	Accuracy of population-size estimate.
<b>Population abundance</b>	Qualitative estimate of population size. Only completed if minimum and maximum values not available.
<b>Trend</b>	An indication of the population-size trend at the site over the last 10 years.
<b>Trend accuracy</b>	Accuracy of indicated trend.
<b>Criteria</b>	IBA criteria fulfilled by species's population at site (see the following chapter for an explanation of the criteria).
Habitat data	
<b>Habitat type</b>	Habitat types covering >5% of the IBA area. Two levels of habitat data can be provided (see Box 3 for classification).
<b>Percentage cover</b>	The percentage of the IBA covered by the habitat type.
Land-use data	
<b>Land-use type</b>	Land-uses covering >5% of the IBA area. (See Box 4 for classification.)
<b>Percentage cover</b>	The percentage of the IBA covered by the land-use.
Threat data	
<b>Threat type</b>	Key threats impacting on the IBA. (See Box 5 for classification.)
<b>Impact of threat</b>	The seriousness of the threat (the assessment of impact is explained in Appendix 3).
Protection status	
<b>Name</b>	The name of the protected area.
<b>Designation</b>	The national or international designation-type (e.g. National Park).
<b>Year</b>	The year of initial designation.
<b>IUCN category</b>	The IUCN protected-area management category (I–VI) (IUCN 1994).
<b>Area</b>	The area, in hectares (ha; 100 ha = 1 km <sup>2</sup> ), of the protected area.
<b>Central coordinates</b>	The central coordinates of the protected area (in degrees/minutes of latitude/longitude; Greenwich).
<b>Relationship to IBA</b>	The spatial relationship between the IBA and the protected area.
<b>Overlap</b>	The extent of overlap in hectares (ha) between the IBA and protected area.
Other data	
<b>General ornithological description</b>	A general description of the ornithological importance of the IBA.
<b>Other flora/fauna</b>	Other significant flora and fauna present in the IBA.
<b>Habitats/Land-uses/Threats</b>	Additional text on habitats, land-uses or threats.
<b>Research/conservation projects</b>	Information on research, conservation or management activities at the IBA. Further details on protection, including any proposed protection measures.

publications, together with data in *Birds in Europe*, has allowed more authoritative identification of IBAs for globally threatened species, based on standard, numerical criteria.

- Wetlands International has published new and more accurate information on the sizes and geographical ranges of waterbird populations in Europe (Rose and Scott 1994, 1997)—analysed and mapped in more detail for swans, geese and ducks (Scott and Rose 1996)—and has also stimulated the production of national wetland inventories in Europe, which contain much new information on wetland sites. Together, these data-sources have allowed more reliable and comprehensive identification of IBAs for waterbird species.
- The process of drawing up the most recent international action plans for bird species of global conservation concern in Europe, which was coordinated by BirdLife International, and the subsequent publication of the plans (Heredia *et al.* 1996), have together stimulated many national-scale field surveys of these species. Again, this has led to the discovery of a large number of new IBAs for these key species, and has improved or updated information on known IBAs.
- *United Nations List of Protected Areas* (WCMC/WCPA 1998): this publication has provided much useful information on the location and extent of statutory protected areas in each country, making it much easier to categorize and analyse the legal protection status of IBAs.

### ■ Field surveys of IBAs

The national monitoring and research programmes of BirdLife Partners have updated and filled gaps in the original 1989 data on IBAs and have improved monitoring of these key sites. In other European countries as well, much new fieldwork has been conducted on IBAs over the last decade, resulting in more detailed and up-to-date information about each site, as well as the identification of many new IBAs. The collation of more detailed information on IBAs has also depended heavily on local IBA experts or caretaker groups (Figure 2). Apart from contributing their own knowledge of the current status of IBAs locally, they have often succeeded in involving many of the other key organizations, individuals and bird-counting networks that study or use IBAs in their area, in the provision of data (often unpublished or otherwise difficult of access).

## TYPES OF DATA COLLECTED

For each IBA across Europe, key data have been collected on:

- Location
- Bird species
- Reasons for importance
- Habitats and land-uses
- Threats
- Protection status
- Conservation action

Box 2 presents a fuller explanation of the types of data collected.

For many countries in Europe, especially in the centre and east, this is the first time that such detailed data on sites have been collated. In other countries, such information already existed, at least in part, but was spread across a broad range of sources.

Compared to the previous pan-European IBA inventory (Grimmett and Jones 1989), the data collected for this inventory have been more quantitative, which has allowed a more rigorous analysis. The methods used for compiling and classifying this information have been standardized as much as possible. Standard lists were developed for several of the data-types, to simplify data-collection, and to facilitate any subsequent comparison and analysis of data between sites at local, national, continental and global levels. Thus, for habitats, land-uses and threats, a standard classification was drawn up for each, covering all the possible options that can be encountered at IBAs in Europe, and these are listed in Boxes 3, 4 and 5.

The importance of an individual site for bird conservation was also categorized in a standard way, such that a site may qualify as an IBA on the basis of one or more of 20 ornithological criteria

**Box 3.** Classification of habitats at Important Bird Areas in Europe. Full definitions are given in Appendix 3. Primary habitats are comparable with other IBAs globally.

Primary	Secondary
Forest/woodland	broadleaved deciduous forest native coniferous forest mixed forest alluvial/very wet forest broadleaved evergreen forest wooded steppe wooded tundra treeline ecotone wooded desert/semi-desert
Scrub	scrub heathland sclerophyllous scrub/garrigue/maquis
Grassland	steppe/dry calcareous grassland dry siliceous grassland alpine/subalpine/boreal grassland humid grassland mesophile grassland tundra machair
Desert	desert semi-desert
Wetland	tidal river/enclosed tidal water mudflat/sandflat saltmarsh sand-dunes/sand beach shingle/stony beach coastal lagoon standing fresh water standing brackish and salt water river/stream raised bog blanket bog water-fringe vegetation fen/transition mire/spring
Marine areas	open sea sea inlet/coastal features
Rocky areas	sea cliff/rocky shore rock stacks/islets scree/boulders inland sand-dunes caves
Artificial landscape	highly improved reseeded grassland arable land perennial crops/orchards/groves forestry plantation urban parks/gardens other urban/industrial areas ruderal land
Introduced/exotic vegetation	
Unknown	

Based on: *A classification of Palaearctic habitats* (Devillers and Devillers-Terschuren 1996).

**Box 4.** Classification of land-uses at Important Bird Areas in Europe. Full definitions are given in Appendix 3.

Agriculture  
Fisheries/aquaculture  
Forestry  
Hunting  
Military  
Nature conservation/research  
Tourism/recreation  
Urban/industrial/transport  
Water management  
Not utilized  
Other  
Unknown

**Box 5.** Classification of threats at Important Bird Areas in Europe. Full definitions are given in Appendix 3.

Abandonment/reduction of land management  
 Afforestation  
 Agricultural intensification/expansion  
 Aquaculture/fisheries  
 Burning of vegetation  
 Consequences of animal/plant introductions  
 Construction/impact of dyke/dam/barrage  
 Deforestation (commercial)  
 Disturbance to birds  
 Drainage  
 Dredging/canalization  
 Extraction industry  
 Filling-in of wetlands  
 Firewood collection  
 Forest grazing  
 Groundwater abstraction  
 Industrialization/urbanization  
 Infrastructure  
 Intensified forest management  
 Natural events  
 Recreation/tourism  
 Selective logging/cutting  
 Shifting agriculture  
 Unsustainable exploitation  
 Other  
 Unknown

(see the following chapter). The ornithological data provided for each site were analysed systematically against these 20 numerical criteria (BirdLife International 1995), to ensure that all sites accepted as IBAs were truly of international importance and that the reasons for qualification were clearly documented. These standard, numerical criteria are fundamental to the IBA concept, and are fully explained in the following chapter.

## TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Two main tools were developed to gather, store and manipulate the data on IBAs:

- Data-form (paper questionnaire)
- Computer database

Important qualities that were required of these tools were compatibility, uniformity and flexibility.

### ■ Compatibility

The tools were developed as part of the regional IBA programmes of Europe and other continents (particularly Africa), so as to ensure that all user-requirements were fully considered. In addition, elements of the data-collection mechanisms and classifications used by other international organizations, or by directly relevant pan-European initiatives, which were collecting information on sites in Europe—e.g. the Protected Areas Database of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the Ramsar Sites Database of the Ramsar Convention Bureau, the Natura 2000 network of the European Commission, and the CORINE Biotopes database of the European Environmental Agency—were taken into account in designing the tools, so as to maximize compatibility (European Commission 1995, WCMC 1996).

### ■ Uniformity

Both tools have a very similar structure, the IBA Database being a computerized version of the paper data-form, although it must be stressed that the IBA Database forms part of a larger World Bird Database and has many other valuable functions apart from data-collection, explained more fully in Box 6.

Since the tools were designed to collect standardized data, it is possible to compare directly any attribute of an IBA, such as location, ornithological importance or habitats, with that at any other IBA or IBAs, within and between countries or even continents, without encountering methodological problems.

### ■ Flexibility

The creation of two tools, one paper-based and one computer-based, allowed for the breadth in user-requirements when collecting data. In general, local experts found it most convenient to compile the original IBA data onto paper data-forms (often translated into the local language by the national coordinator), and then sent these in to the national coordinator, who organized the transfer of data onto the IBA computer database. Nearly all national (and sub-national) IBA coordinators used the database in this way. The tools were also designed so as to allow different quantities and detail of data to be collected per site, depending on the level of knowledge, and also for more data to be added at a later date without difficulty.

## DATA-COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The general procedure for data-collection is illustrated in Figure 3.

In 1995, 1996 and 1998, international workshops were held involving national IBA coordinators from across the region, in order to share and pass on useful skills and experiences in planning, training and communication. Similarly, many countries held national workshops involving many local coordinators, contributors and experts, to publicize this project and to involve, train and enthuse participants. Most countries translated the data-form into their local language, so as to enable the widest possible dissemination and use of this data-gathering tool. However, the

**Box 6.** The Important Bird Area Database—a part of the World Bird Database

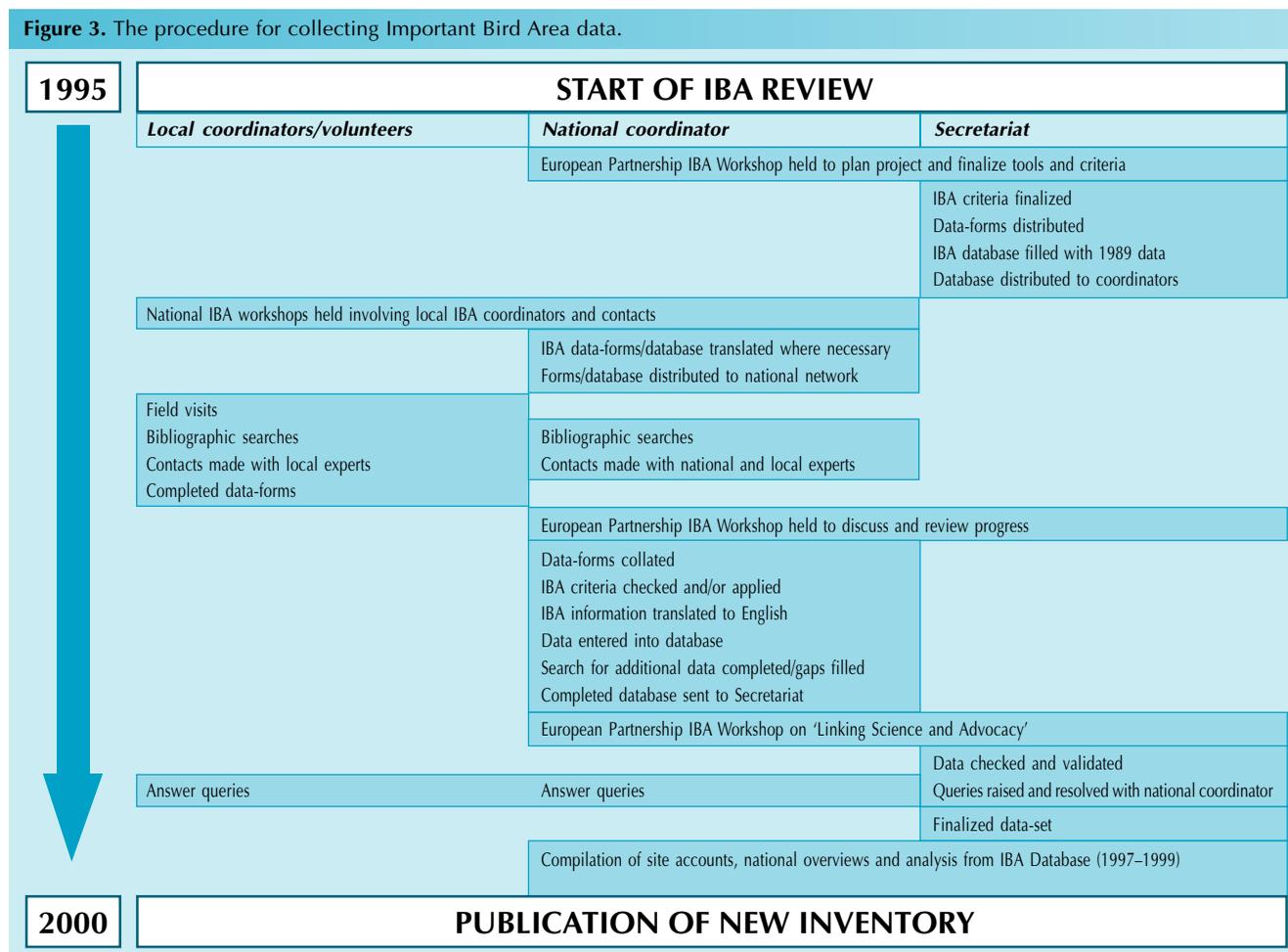
The IBA Database forms the basis of this book, and contains much additional information that could not be published here due to space constraints. Currently used in more than 35 countries across Europe, the IBA Database is a key part of the larger World Bird Database, which is a tool used by BirdLife International for managing, analysing and reporting on the full spectrum of its data on sites and species, for the purpose of conserving birds and their habitats. The World Bird Database is a distribution network, enabling data to flow between the people who collect the data or update it, those who collate and verify it, and those who make the analyses to turn data into information and targets, in order to influence policy and decision-making—moving from science to conservation action.

Key benefits of the World Bird Database are the ability to:

- Manage and validate a large volume of information on IBAs and globally threatened species
- Analyse trends in data and monitor changes
- Link site (IBA) data with species data, e.g. for international conventions, directives and other initiatives or programmes
- Determine the conservation status of sites or species internationally, regionally and nationally, with background information about the birds
- Produce focused, targeted reports for specific purposes
- Improve the sharing of information and expertise between Partners
- Improve electronic links to non-BirdLife data and information, such as socio-economic and non-bird species data, for use in analyses
- Link to geographic information systems (GIS) for presentation purposes

An overall principle of BirdLife International is to maximize the availability and use of its data for conservation purposes. Information on IBAs in Europe will therefore be made available beyond the BirdLife International Partnership, following the guidelines on use and dissemination of data that are stipulated in the *IBA Data Access Policy* (BirdLife International 1996). This agreement was drawn up by the European Partnership in February 1996 and applies to the IBA Database as it currently stands, plus subsequent updates.

The World Bird Database runs in single-user and multi-user environments and can be made available over the Internet. The development tools are industrial-strength products (Microsoft Visual Basic and Microsoft Access), which offer suitable upgrade paths when new technologies become available. The World Bird Database is simple to use and intuitive in operation, adopting the same look and feel as other widely used Windows products.

**Figure 3.** The procedure for collecting Important Bird Area data.


exact mechanism for collecting data within a country varied according to the resources available (in terms of time, people-power, expertise, money, and so on) and according to the existing methods for the collection of national bird data. Therefore Figure 3 only shows the general procedure followed.

#### ■ Data checking/validation

Once the national network had submitted a suite of sites as potential IBAs, the data provided were then checked for errors and

inconsistencies by national IBA coordinators and the BirdLife Secretariat, before the importance of each site was evaluated against the 20 ornithological criteria mentioned earlier. This evaluation process is explained more fully in the following chapter.

The use of pre-defined selection lists and standardized terms during the data-collection phase helped to reduce the amount of checking needed, and the computer database also allowed the checking and validation of huge quantities of data to be partially automated, at both international and national levels (see Box 6).

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