
ENDEMIC BIRD AREAS AS TARGETS FOR CONSERVATION ACTION

THE LAND SURFACE of the earth is almost entirely under undisputed national jurisdiction; the major exception is Antarctica, and the small number of other areas are chiefly islands and some continental borderlands. Conservation efforts aimed at maintenance of terrestrial ecosystems are therefore, in almost all cases, a national responsibility. However, in the past century there has been a growing realization that conservation of biodiversity is ultimately a global concern. This has been reflected in the increasing number of international agreements and treaties concerned with biodiversity conservation to which nations subscribe. The EBA analysis can have considerable input into these, in identifying areas which are important for the conservation of birds, and (as demonstrated in the previous chapter) for other components of biodiversity. However, most EBAs are too large to protect in their entirety and therefore further work needs to be done to identify small areas or sites within them which are more commensurate with practical conservation action. BirdLife has already started to do this in its Important Bird Areas programme (see below).

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

There are four international agreements to which the EBA analysis could be relevant.

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)

The Ramsar Convention was adopted in 1971 and came into force in 1975. By August 1997, the 101 contracting parties (nations) had designated 881 wetlands of international importance. The designation process follows a set of criteria including one based on the 1% flyway population level of waterfowl species and others related to ecological uniqueness. Parties must: maintain the ecological character of Ramsar sites; ensure that any human activities affecting them follow the principle of wise use, so

that the natural properties of the ecosystem are maintained; and develop management plans. There are only a handful of EBAs for which wetlands are an important habitat for restricted-range birds but protection of the key sites in these EBAs under this convention may be possible.

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)

The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972 and became effective in 1975, and had 151 contracting parties by August 1997. Parties to the convention designate and protect natural and cultural areas of outstanding universal value. Besides conserving cultural monuments, the convention has become increasingly important to nature conservation by enabling the protection of unique natural sites all over the world through financial and technical assistance. Many sites in EBAs are already protected under this convention (see Box 1) and many more could potentially be considered.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention or CMS)

Aimed at the conservation and effective management of migratory animals, the Bonn Convention was adopted in 1979 and came into force in 1983. By August 1997 the convention had 51 contracting parties. Its concerns are the identification and strict protection of endangered species, the concluding of multilateral agreements for the conservation and management of migratory species that have an unfavourable conservation status or would benefit significantly from international cooperation, and research. The Agreement on the Conservation of African–Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds is the first agreement under the convention to deal specifically with birds, and a similar agreement is envisaged for the Asian–Australasian region. Few restricted-range species are migratory, and the EBA analysis may

Endemic Bird Areas of the World

Box 1. Examples of EBAs, or sites within EBAs, which are protected as World Heritage Sites.

Argentina

Iguazú National Park (EBA 075)

Australia

East Coast Temperate and Subtropical Rainforest Parks (EBA 183)

Fraser Island (EBA 183)

Kakadu National Park (EBA 187)

Lord Howe Island Group (EBA 204)

Western Tasmanian Wilderness National Park (EBA 185)

Wet tropics of Queensland (EBA 182)

Cameroon

Dja Faunal Reserve (EBA 085)

Ecuador

Galápagos Islands (EBA 031)

Sangay National Park (EBA 043)

Ethiopia

Simien National Park (EBA 115)

Indonesia

Ujung Kulon National Park (EBA 161)

Ivory Coast

Tai National Park (EBA 084)

Mount Nimba Reserve (EBA 084)

Guinea

Mount Nimba Reserve (EBA 084)

Madagascar

Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve (EBA 093)

Nepal

Sagarmatha National Park (EBA 129)

New Zealand

South West New Zealand (EBA 207)

Tongariro National Park (EBA 206)

Panama

Darién National Park (EBA 023)

La Amistad International Park (EBA 020)

Peru

Huascarán National Park (EBA 051)

Manu National Park (EBA 068)

Río Abiseo (EBAs 049, 051)

Pitcairn Islands (to UK)

Henderson Island (EBA 215)

Seychelles

Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve (EBA 100)

Aldabra Atoll (EBA 099)

St Helena (to UK)

Gough Island (EBA 080)

Sri Lanka

Sinharaja Forest Reserve (EBA 124)

Tanzania

Ngorongoro Conservation Area (EBA 108)

Serengeti National Park (EBA 108)

Kilimanjaro National Park (EBA 109)

Uganda

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (EBAs 106, 107)

Rwenzori Mountains National Park (EBA 107)

USA

Redwood National Park (EBA 001)

Yosemite National Park (EBA 001)

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (EBA 218)

Venezuela

Canaima National Park (EBA 064)

Zaire

Virunga National Park (EBAs 106, 107)

Kahuzi-Biega National Park (EBAs 106, 107)

Okapi Wildlife Reserve (EBA 107)

therefore not be particularly significant to this convention. However, there are several EBAs at strategic points along migratory routes, and the birds of these EBAs could benefit from agreements under this convention.

Convention on Biological Diversity (Biodiversity Convention or CBD)

The Biodiversity Convention came into being as a result of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and is the first treaty to deal specifically with the conservation and use of global biodiversity. This convention came into effect in 1993 and now has some 170 contracting parties, making it one of the largest environmental treaties. It has three aims: the conservation of biodiversity; the sustainable use of biodiversity; and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of biodiversity. These aims are elaborated in a series of 42 articles to which parties to the convention bind themselves to adhere. Of primary concern for the first aim (the conserva-

tion of biodiversity) are Articles 6, 7 and 8. Article 6 deals with general measures for conservation and sustainable use, Article 7 with identification and monitoring, and Article 8 with various measures for *in situ* conservation. Article 7 calls on parties to identify components of biodiversity important for its conservation and sustainable use, drawing attention to an indicative list contained in Annex I to the convention. The first category on this list is 'Ecosystems and habitats: containing high diversity, large numbers of endemic or threatened species, or wilderness; required by migratory species; of social, economic, cultural or scientific importance; or, which are representative, unique or associated with key evolutionary or other biological processes'.

Because this convention is still in its early stages, many parties have yet to begin identifying the important areas and ecosystems set out in Annex I. The information on EBAs presented in this book could be extremely valuable in pointing parties to just such areas (see also Box 2).

Box 2. Biodiversity Conservation Information System.

Decisions about the environment are taken every day at international, national and community levels. However, although the information important for such decisions often exists, it is not always readily accessible. Improved access to data on the status of the world's biodiversity is therefore urgently needed.

The Biodiversity Conservation Information System (BCIS) is being developed to meet this challenge by improving and supporting communication between data-owners and governments, international conventions and organizations concerned with conservation. For example, BCIS will provide information to permit assessment of the extent and types of threats to species, habitats and landscapes, as well as provide feedback on the success of existing conservation and protective measures. This is being made possible by drawing on the extensive data and information already held by the BCIS partners, consisting

in mid-1997 of IUCN The World Conservation Union, BirdLife International, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, TRAFFIC, Wetlands International, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy. The technological capacities of these partners are currently being improved, and compatible methods of collecting and managing data are being developed in order to facilitate the exchange and analysis of information.

At the national level, BCIS will be a particularly valuable tool for parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity by making its information available to them through the so-called Clearing House Mechanism. It is through this route that the information on EBAs could have considerable impact in helping parties to identify their priority areas for conservation.

BIRDLIFE'S IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS PROGRAMME

In 1993 the selection of sites for the conservation of restricted-range species was adopted as one of the criteria for BirdLife International's Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme. The function of the IBA programme is to identify and protect a network of sites, at a biogeographic scale, critical for the long-term viability of naturally occurring bird populations, across the range of those species for which a site-based approach is appropriate.

IBAs:

- Are places of international significance for the conservation of birds at the global, regional or sub-regional level,
- Are practical tools for conservation,
- Are chosen using standardized, agreed criteria applied with common sense,
- Must, wherever possible, be large enough to support self-sustaining populations of those species for which they are important,
- Must be amenable to conservation and, as far as possible, be delimitable from surrounding areas,
- Will preferably include, where appropriate, existing protected areas,
- Should form part of a wider, integrated approach to conservation that embraces sites, species and habitats.

Criteria for the selection of IBAs have been set in a hierarchy to identify sites of global and regional importance. At a global level, criteria embrace:

- Globally threatened species: sites which regularly hold significant numbers of a globally threatened

species, or other species of global conservation concern.

- Restricted-range species: sites which hold a significant component of the restricted-range species whose breeding distributions define an EBA or a Secondary Area. Sites also have to form one of a set selected to ensure that, as far as possible, all restricted-range species of an EBA or Secondary Area are present in significant numbers in at least one site and, preferably, more.
- Biome-restricted assemblages: sites which hold a significant component of the group of species whose distributions are largely or wholly confined to one biome. Sites also have to form one of a set selected to ensure that, as far as possible, all species restricted to a biome are adequately represented.
- Congregatory species: sites which hold more than 1% of a biogeographic population of a congregatory waterbird species, or more than 1% of the global population of seabird or other species that concentrate in significant numbers, or which meet the criteria of the Ramsar Convention for waterbirds.

The documentation of EBAs has been a major step towards the rational identification of a highly significant suite of Important Bird Areas. Altogether, 2,444 IBAs have already been selected in Europe (Grimmett and Jones 1989), 391 in the Middle East (Evans 1994) and 596 ('Key Areas', for threatened species only) in the Neotropics (Wege and Long 1995). There are programmes currently underway to select sites in Africa, Asia and the Americas, as well as a further review of sites in Europe.

