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News

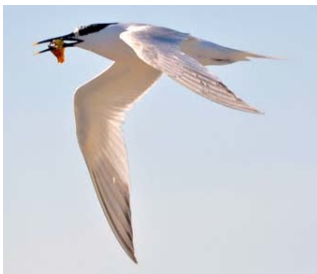
Analysis of inshore Areas of Search for possible SPAs

Initial data analyses of the numbers and distribution of inshore wintering waterbirds in an Area of Search (AoS) off South Cornwall were completed at the end of October, and JNCC has now delivered a first draft report of the results to Natural England NE. Further analyses are ongoing for 14 Scottish AoS, focussing on the numbers and distributions of migratory waterbird species. This further work is due to be completed by Spring 2012, when a report will be submitted to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).



Identifying important seabird concentrations at sea

Initial analyses carried out on the European [Seabirds at Sea](#) (ESAS) database, led by Kerstin Kober has previously identified some important areas for seabirds. However, there remained significant species and geographic gaps. In 2011, JNCC launched a second series of analyses to attempt to address these gaps. In mid November a workshop was held to explain the new approaches and present the initial results to the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs), Government and devolved administrations. By April 2012, an internal report will be produced by JNCC to summarise the work to date and the resulting options for the identification of offshore SPAs.



Identifying possible marine SPAs for breeding terns

The third season of mainly boat-based tern fieldwork was completed between June-July. Visual tracking, transect surveys and shore-based observations were carried out around 16 colonies in 2011, including five colonies not surveyed in 2009 or 2010. Work on the larger terns is now focussing on habitat association modelling, with the resulting outputs due to be available to the SNCBs in March 2012. A further field season of data collection is planned for little terns before data for this species is fully analysed.

Identifying possible marine SPAs for breeding red-throated divers

Julie Black has been continuing to progress work drawing together the results of habitat modelling to identify important marine areas for breeding red-throated divers. JNCC will be reporting the results of this work to SNH in March 2012.

Assessing important areas for Balearic shearwater

JNCC has been working with [MarineLife](#) to carry out boat-based surveys off Devon and Dorset between July and September to gather abundance and distribution data for the Balearic shearwater. Data obtained during the surveys is currently being analysed, along with data gathered previously by MARINElife, to assess the importance of the area for this Birds Directive Annex 1 and Critically Endangered seabird.

[Seabird Colony SPA Extensions](#)

The Welsh Government is working with the Countryside Council for Wales to take forward the work required for extending three island seabird colonies: Grassholm SPA, Skokholm and Skomer SPA, plus Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA. A timeline for this work is yet to be determined. A landward extension to the boundary of the Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey SPA has also been recommended and so in order to minimise stakeholder confusion and avoid multiple consultations, the aim is to align timelines for marine and terrestrial elements of the work as much as possible. England and Northern Ireland also want to align timelines and are waiting for JNCC to report on the outcome of identifying important marine areas for terns before proposing any extensions.

Recent meetings / conferences

The Marine SPA team continue to liaise regularly with our stakeholders.

In September, we met with representatives from Scottish Government, SNH and RSPB at one of our regular liaison meetings to discuss general progress of marine SPA work. In November, the team led two inter-agency workshops to discuss progress on the tern work and how best to represent multiple species within a marine SPA network.

A workshop was also held with representatives from the SNCBs, Defra, and the Devolved Administrations to discuss progress and further work towards identifying offshore SPAs.

The Marine SPA team continued to deliver regular updates on the marine SPA work in various fora, including the JNCC [MPA Technical Group](#), the [UK SPA & Ramsar Scientific Working Group](#) and the MPA sub-group of the Joint Committee.

11th International Seabird Group Conference, Plymouth, 2-4 September 2011

Several members of the marine SPA team attended this conference, where Linda Wilson presented a talk on 'combining Tracking and Transect data to identify important foraging areas for terns'.

http://www.seabirdgroup.org.uk/files/conference_2011_abstracts.pdf

Spatial Ecology and Conservation, Birmingham, 5-7 September 2011

Our team's work in support of identifying possible marine SPAs was well represented at this statistical conference. Julie Black presented the modelling work she is carrying out on tern at-sea distribution data while Kerstin Kober detailed the analyses she has been progressing on the ESAS data <http://ert-conservation.co.uk/SEC1-Homepage.htm>

On 12 September Ilka Win was invited by SNH to talk about our work in 'Identifying important foraging areas for breeding terns' to a stakeholder panel with interests in the Sands of Forvie area in Aberdeenshire.

And finally... The Marine SPA team would like to send [season's greetings](#) to you all and wish you all the best for 2012!

Photos: Black-throated diver (Mike Baird), Sandwich tern (Andrew Fulton)

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