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News

Data collection and analysis for identification of inshore SPAs

In March 2011, JNCC delivered a report to SNH detailing our analysis of the numbers and distributions of non-breeding aggregations of waterbirds within our inshore areas of search around Scotland. This report forms the basis of our initial advice on which areas SNH and the Scottish Government may wish to consider further for classification as inshore SPAs. JNCC also delivered reports on inshore areas of search to CCW and to NIEA. Analysis of data on inshore wintering waterbirds in South Cornwall is continuing. JNCC also submitted a manuscript on methods for delineating boundaries for potential inshore SPAs for publication in *Biological Conservation*, the leading UK peer-reviewed conservation journal (see below).



Identifying important seabird concentrations at sea

The European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) database is being used to identify important aggregations of seabirds at sea that might be considered as possible SPAs. The Marine SPA Team is currently looking into expanding on the original analysis ([Kober et al. 2010](#)) in an attempt to address some of its species and geographic gaps. The team met with Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland ([BioSS](#)) in May to obtain statistical advice on this. A workshop is planned in the autumn to discuss the findings of the most recent analyses with SNCB and government stakeholders. A paper outlining the original analysis has been submitted to *Biological Conservation* (see below).



Tern fieldwork

The third and final season of tern survey fieldwork is now underway. This work is in support of identifying possible marine SPAs for breeding terns. Surveys are being carried out in 10 areas around tern colonies across the UK and comprise visual tracking, boat-based line transects, and shore based counts. These data will be integrated, along with various habitat variables, into models that aim to assess which marine habitat features are important for terns. To assist us with our data analysis, we are currently receiving statistical advice from the

[Centre for Research into Ecological and Environmental Modelling \(CREEM\)](#).

Balearic shearwater fieldwork

Boat-based survey work for Balearic shearwaters in Lyme Bay (Devon/Dorset) has been arranged for three, week-long periods in July and August this year. This is to help to inform possible marine SPA options for this Annex 1 and Critically Endangered seabird. We will be working with partners in Natural England, [Marinelifa](#) and [Seawatch SW](#) to establish the patterns of use of this species in UK waters which, evidence suggests, is present in significant numbers at certain times.



Breeding red-throated diver analysis

Julie Black has been progressing work looking at important marine areas for breeding red-throated divers into the final stages of analysis. This has centred around finding an appropriate and objective method of delineating possible boundary options based on the outputs of a habitat model previously developed by our former colleague, Ben Dean. The results of her recent analysis were presented to SNH in May.

Publications

The marine SPA team has submitted three papers for publication in the journal *Biological Conservation*, for inclusion in a Marine Protected Areas Special Issue of the journal. This follows from last September's World Seabird Conference at which the team contributed significantly to several workshops and symposia. The Special Issue is being co-edited by Jim Reid. All submissions are currently being peer reviewed, and some of the team are also assisting with this process.

Recent meetings / conferences

General communication and liaison with stakeholders

The Marine SPA team continued to liaise regularly with SNH, NE, CCW and NIEA, at several bilateral meetings and also at an inter-agency meeting in February in Edinburgh. We also held one of our regular liaison meetings with SNH and Marine Scotland in February, and we met with NE and Defra in that month to discuss work needed to complete marine SPA identification in English waters. Joanna Redgwell of NE visited Aberdeen in early April to meet the team, and in particular to discuss the role of our new staff member, Matt Parsons (see below). In late April, Jim Reid and Linda Wilson attended a meeting with SNH to discuss next steps for the inshore work, following our report delivered in March (see above). A meeting with CCW and representatives from Welsh Government was held on 13 May in Edinburgh, where Jim Reid gave an update on marine SPA work generally and on that being done on behalf of CCW in Wales specifically.

The Marine SPA team continued to deliver regular updates on the marine SPA work in various fora, including the MPA Technical Group, SPA Ramsar Scientific Working Group, and the UK Marine Biodiversity Policy Steering Group. Jim Reid, NE, and the French MPA Agency exchanged information on marine SPA work in English and French waters in March in Paris. Agreement was reached to collaborate, where feasible, on cross-border survey and possible sites in the Channel.

And finally...

We are very pleased to welcome Dr Matt Parsons to our team. Matt joined the team in April 2011 and has migrated across JNCC from his previous role in the Seabird Monitoring Programme. Matt's core focus will be the work we do on behalf of Natural England (and funded by NE), in particular the identification of possible marine SPAs for Balearic shearwaters and little terns.

Photos: Great northern diver (Renton Charman), Sandwich tern (David Palmer), Balearic shearwater (Mark Darlaston)

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