



MARINE PROGRAMME

Seabirds leading the way to
global ocean protection



OUR PRIORITIES FOR A HEALTHY OCEAN

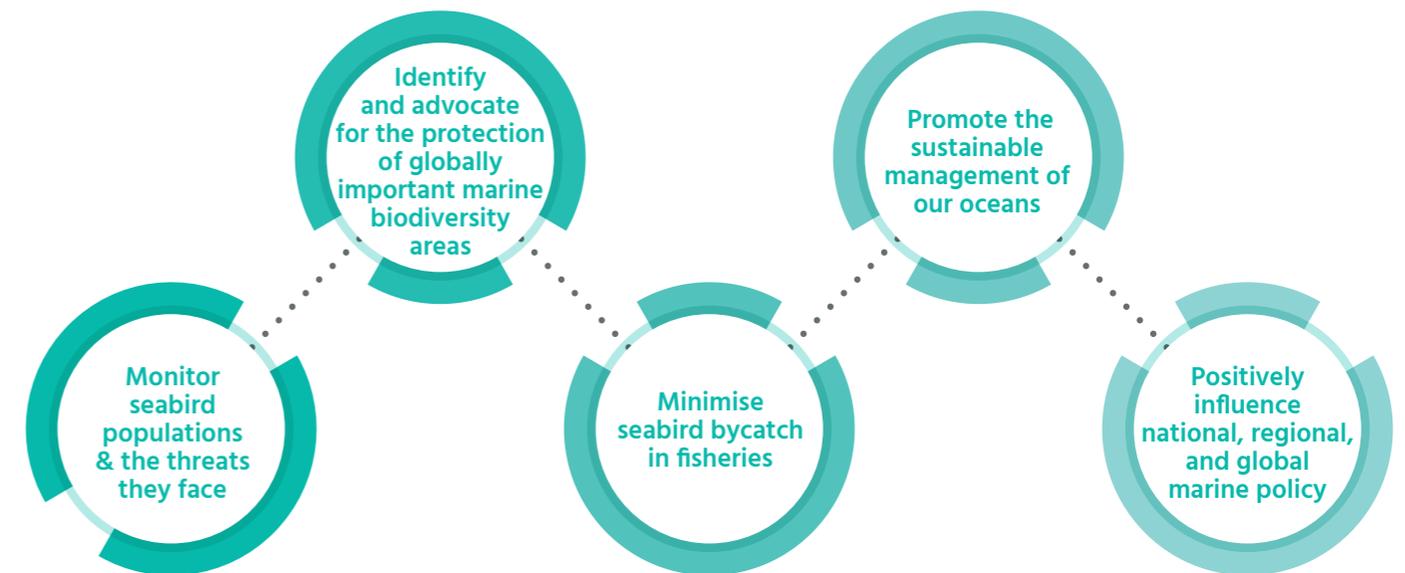
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Seabirds are the sentinels of ocean health, yet they are one of the most threatened groups of birds. This is a sad indictment of our stewardship over the most important habitat on earth.

The BirdLife Marine Programme is a global partnership of marine experts, dedicated to improving the conservation status of seabird populations. Our ethos is an evidence-based approach, underpinned by science and actively informed and adapted through grass-roots conservation action. Indigenous and locally led efforts result in meaningful conservation outcomes. We connect experts and experience to strengthen capacity to engender long-term change.

Our science positively influences marine policy at a national, regional, and global level to facilitate changes that benefit nature and take account of the needs of ocean-dependent communities.

To tackle the threats faced by seabirds we focus on the following key areas:



UNDERSTANDING THREATS TO SEABIRDS

We are targeting key threats to achieve a sea-change for seabirds.

Almost half of all seabird species are experiencing population declines, with introduced invasive species, bycatch in fisheries and climate change the top three threats in terms of number of species affected and overall impact.



Introduced invasive species affect **46%** of seabird species.

Adult seabirds, their chicks and eggs, can all fall victim to predators introduced by human activity, decimating seabird populations. We have demonstrated that removing these predators results in rapid recovery of seabird numbers.



Bycatch in fisheries affects **28%** of seabird species.

Seabirds seeking an easy meal are vulnerable to being incidentally caught and killed in many types of fishing gear. We have developed practical and highly effective solutions – which now must be adopted at a much greater scale.



Climate change affects **27%** of seabird species.

Sea surface temperature increases, changing ocean currents, sea level rise and extreme weather events caused by global warming are affecting where and when seabirds can find food and safely raise their chicks.

OVERFISHING IS A TOP THREAT TO SEABIRDS, AND THE LEADING CAUSE OF DECLINES OF 24 SPECIES. COMPARATIVELY OVERFISHING AFFECTS FEWER SPECIES THAN OTHER THREATS, BUT IT HAS A CONSIDERABLY GREATER IMPACT.

REVERSING THESE TOP THREE THREATS ALONE WOULD BENEFIT TWO THIRDS OF ALL SEABIRD SPECIES, THAT'S **45%** OF THE GLOBAL SEABIRD POPULATION.



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SAVING GLOBALLY THREATENED SPECIES

Albatrosses, gadfly petrels and penguins are the three most threatened groups of seabirds, and it is essential to tackle both terrestrial and marine threats to secure their future survival.

ALBATROSSES:

BYCATCH 90%

INVASIVE SPECIES 62%

CLIMATE CHANGE 38%

PENGUINS:

BYCATCH 65%

INVASIVE SPECIES 59%

CLIMATE CHANGE 88%

OVERFISHING 71%

GADFLY PETRELS:

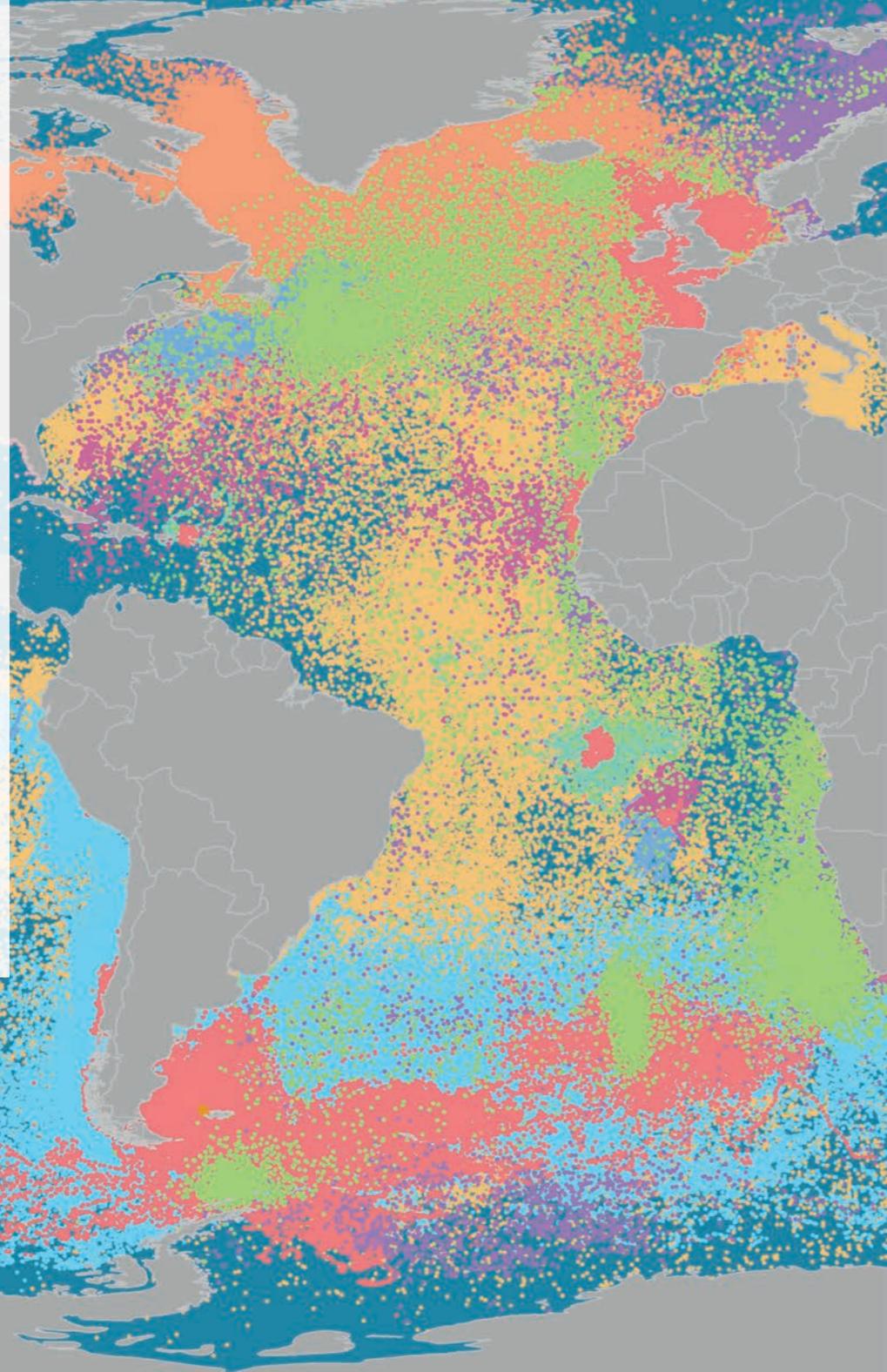
INVASIVE SPECIES 89%

CLIMATE CHANGE 18%

Numbers show percentage of species affected by each threat, but do not necessarily reflect the respective scope and severity. See Dias et al. 2019 for further information.

PUTTING SEABIRDS ON THE MAP

Effective conservation and management of our marine environment depends on knowing where and how to target our efforts. More is known about seabird movements, and how they use our oceans, than any other marine animal – thanks to an unparalleled amount of tracking data (animal-borne devices collecting location data).



Working with seabird scientists globally, BirdLife maintains the Seabird Tracking Database: the world's largest collection of seabird tracking data,



containing over **1,000** datasets



for over **150** species



totaling over **20 million** data points



from more than **250** data owners.

The Seabird Tracking Database allows data owners to store and share their data, collaborate in research projects, and contribute to conservation. Collaborations made possible by the Seabird Tracking Database underpin much of our marine conservation work. Over the last 15 years, we have used seabird tracking data to inform conservation action and policy at local, national and global scales – pinpointing those areas where seabirds and other biodiversity are at greatest risk.

Explore the world of seabird data at seabirdtracking.org

THE SEABIRD TRACKING DATABASE HAS ALREADY FACILITATED

OVER 200

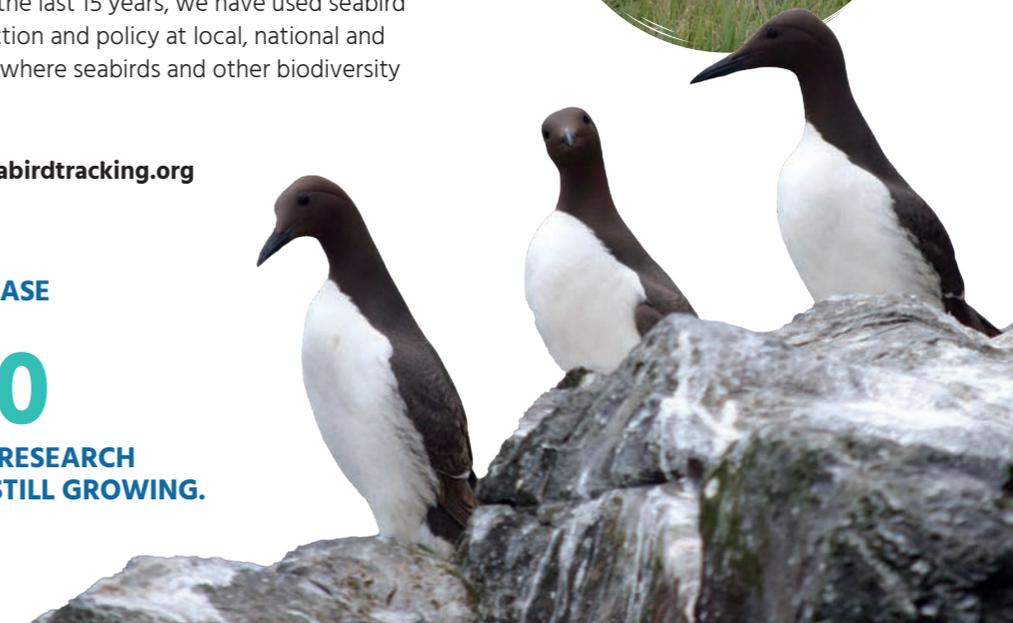
COLLABORATIONS, INCLUDING RESEARCH PAPERS AND REPORTS, AND IS STILL GROWING.



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PROTECTING THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS FOR SEABIRDS

Identifying critical sites for seabirds across their life cycle (including when raising chicks, feeding, migrating) helps ensure the holistic conservation action needed, to enable us to reverse the declines in seabird numbers.

We work with our BirdLife Partners to identify seabird and marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), which are globally important sites identified using internationally agreed criteria and form the largest global network of sites of significance for biodiversity.

Drawing on our decades of experience, we are leading the development of a practical, step-by-step Toolkit, to help others use seabird tracking data to identify important seabird sites.

Marine IBAs and KBAs have been identified in all ocean basins providing a vital layer of information on biodiversity for decision making. Seabird and marine IBAs and KBAs have benefitted the work of governments, international conventions, the NGO sector and businesses, informing conservation and policy at all levels.

Seabird and marine IBAs and KBAs are instrumental in supporting:

- Marine Spatial Planning processes
- Designating Marine Protected Areas and other effective area-based management tools
- Describing Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas
- Delineating area-based conservation measures in fisheries



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UP TO 5 MILLION

BIRDS AND 21 DIFFERENT SEABIRD SPECIES DEPEND UPON THE NACES MPA INCLUDING GLOBALLY THREATENED SPECIES LIKE THE BERMUDA PETREL, ZINO'S PETREL, BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE, ATLANTIC PUFFIN AND DESERTAS PETREL.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC AND EVLANOV SEA BASIN (NACES) MARINE PROTECTED AREA

Leading a team of experts, BirdLife identified a major seabird hotspot in the North Atlantic through a collaborative analysis of seabird tracking data using the Seabird Tracking Database. Covering an area of ocean the size of France, the NACES MPA protects one of the most important concentrations of migratory seabirds in the Atlantic Ocean and is the first marine protected area in the high seas to be designated based on tracking data.



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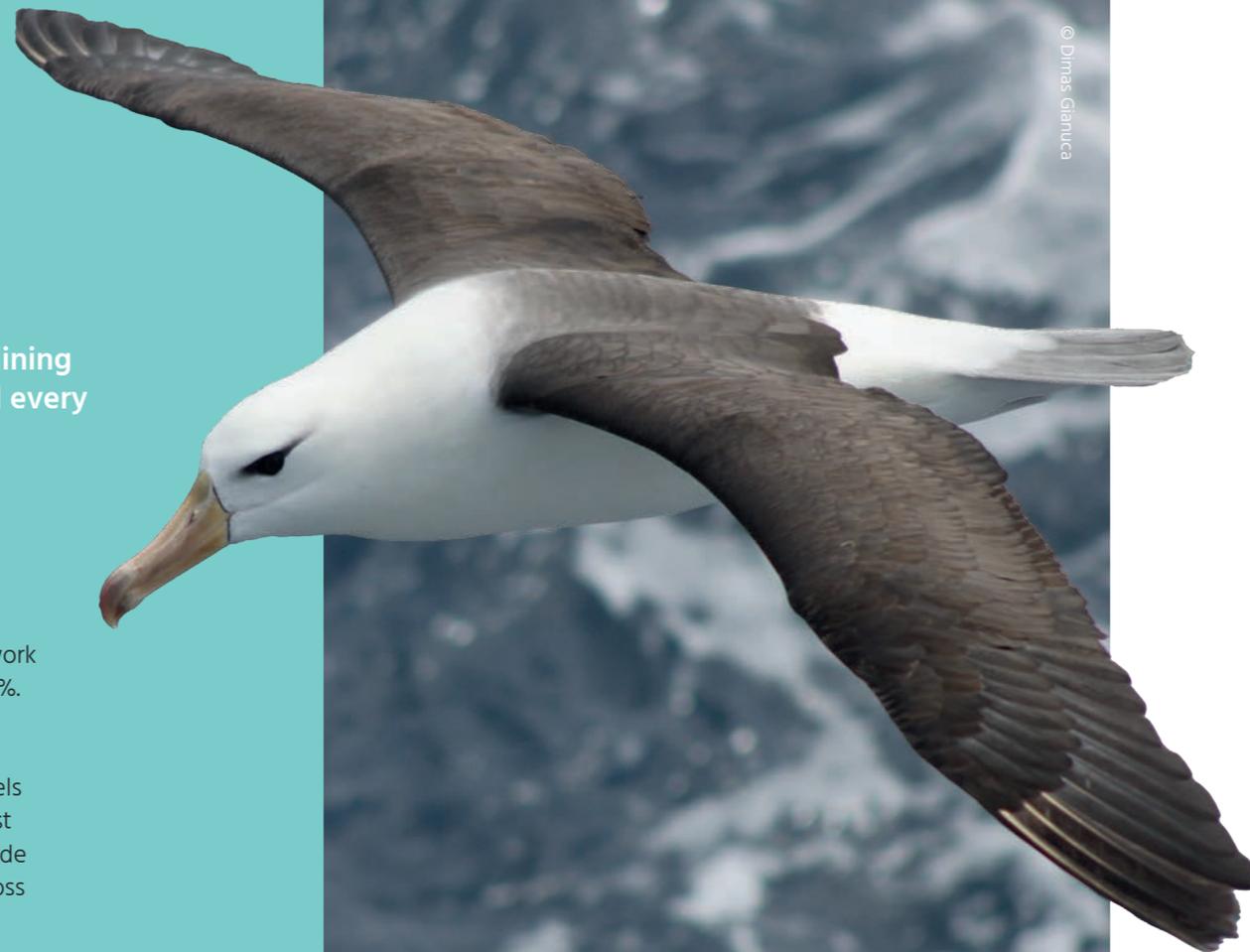
ENDING SEABIRD BYCATCH

Bycatch in fisheries is the leading at-sea driver of declining seabird populations, with at least 600,000 birds killed every year. **We are working to make fisheries seabird-safe.**

Bycatch is the accidental catch of seabirds in fishing gear. Birds drown on baited longline hooks, are fatally struck by trawl cables, or become entangled in gillnets and purse seines.

Simple and effective technical solutions to seabird bycatch exist. Our work has shown mitigation measures can reduce seabird bycatch by over 90%. That's a lot of saved seabirds!

These measures are tailored to species behaviour, types of fishing vessels and the fishing gear used. We work closely with industry to trial and test measures under commercial conditions – protecting livelihoods alongside the seabirds. This is crucial to scale-up implementation of solutions across diverse global fleets.



BEST-PRACTICE SOLUTIONS

LONGLINES AND TRAWL FISHERIES:

The threat from longliners and trawl fisheries to seabirds is well known, as are the mitigation methods to prevent unnecessary seabird bycatch. Recognised best-practice solutions include:

- **Trawl:** Offal management and bird-scaring lines
- **Longline:** A combination of bird-scaring lines, night setting and line weighting. Innovative alternatives include hook-shielding and underwater setting.

GILLNETS AND PURSE SEINE:

We are leading innovative research to identify and trial solutions to reduce seabird bycatch in gillnet and purse seine fisheries. These fisheries are often small-scale and effective mitigation measures to reduce bycatch are proving difficult to develop, but our experience places us ahead of the game to tackle these challenges.

LONGLINES – IT IS ESTIMATED THAT AT LEAST 160,000 – POSSIBLY OVER

320,000

- SEABIRDS ARE KILLED IN LONGLINE FISHERIES EACH YEAR, PARTICULARLY ALBATROSSES, PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS.



Trawls – while no published bycatch data for trawlers exists, it is estimated to affect around **50,000-100,000** seabirds per year.



Longlines – it is estimated that at least **160,000** and potentially more than **320,000** seabirds are killed in longline fisheries every year.



Purse seines – evidence is amassing of birds becoming entangled in this gear, but further research is required to assess bycatch rates in fleets around the world.



Gillnets – The most widely used gear in small-scale coastal fisheries around the world, it is estimated that **400,000** birds are killed in gillnets every year.

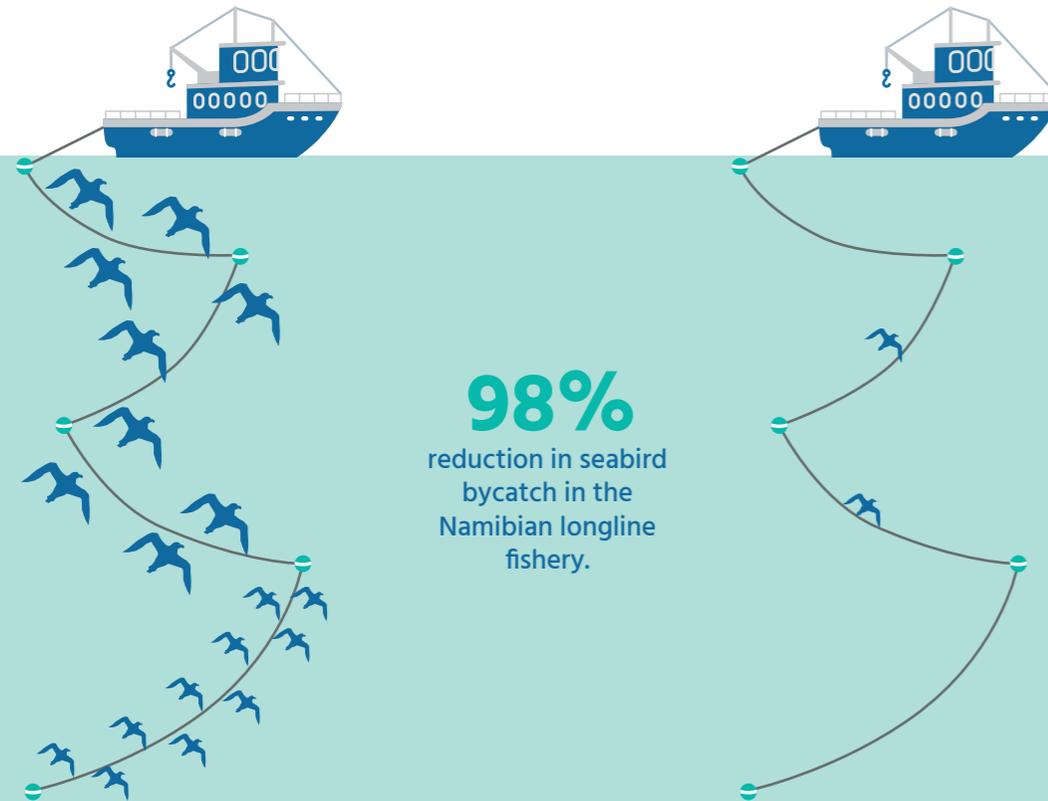


GRASS ROOTS ENGAGEMENT

MARINE CHAMPIONS

The Albatross Task Force (ATF) has created an international team of seabird bycatch mitigation experts, who work in some of the world's great marine ecosystems for seabirds; the Humboldt and Benguela Currents and the Patagonian Shelf.

After more than a decade of testing and refining technical solutions, our priority is now to use our expertise to ensure fleet-wide adoption of effective measures and secure long-term sustainable reductions in seabird bycatch.



9 OUT OF 10
OF OUR ATF TARGET
FISHERIES HAVE ADOPTED
SEABIRD REGULATIONS

MARINE TASK FORCE

Our Marine Task Force (MTF) coordinates the efforts of BirdLife Partners across the Europe and Central Asia regions to address the key threats to seabirds.

A strong focus is the identification and designation of Marine Protected Areas for seabirds in the region and the strengthening of EU legislation relevant to marine management, sustainable fisheries and tackling seabird bycatch.



WEST AFRICA

Through our network of partners in the region, we are sharing our extensive experience in implementing sustainable solutions to fisheries bycatch and effective habitat management, building local and national capacity as a result. Through our programme in West Africa, we have increased awareness of the conservation status of seabirds and their habitats in the region, and we are strengthening legislation and policy for marine conservation across multiple countries.



TACKLING BYCATCH ON THE HIGH SEAS

Tackling the threats to seabirds in international waters, beyond the control of any one country, requires coordinated effort. As a global partnership, with access to unparalleled data, BirdLife is uniquely placed to work with international decision-makers and other NGOs to drive positive change for seabirds and the marine environment of the high seas.

REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS (RFMOS):

Five RFMOs oversee the world's high seas tuna fisheries. The areas these influential bodies cover overlap with 80% of global albatross distribution, making RFMOs critical to protecting these iconic ocean wanderers from the threat of bycatch.

Our efforts to-date have supported the adoption of mitigation measures across all five RFMOs, to save seabirds at a global scale.

We are working with RFMOs to replicate the success of the ATF and develop, implement, and monitor conservation measures that help keep seabirds off the hook.



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SEABIRD-FRIENDLY SEAFOOD

Achieving sustainable fisheries requires collaborative effort from all parts of the seafood supply chain.

WORKING WITH RETAILERS

As public demand for sustainably sourced products and reduced environmental impact increases, retailers continue to look for ways to meet expectations. To support these efforts, we work closely with other NGOs, retailers and seafood suppliers to drive improvements in fisheries management through the supply chain.

Our work has already encouraged high-profile retailers to introduce bans on sourcing any fish caught in gillnets to reduce bycatch risk to seabirds.

Japan is one of the world's largest seafood consumers and producers, and plays a critical role in the global seafood market. We are engaging with the supply chain in Japan to raise awareness of the environmental impact of fisheries and to ensure bycatch is included in the sourcing policies of retailers and seafood companies alike.



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INFLUENCING GLOBAL MARINE POLICY

The ocean is in poor health with many ecosystems rapidly becoming degraded beyond repair. The United Nations proclaimed a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) to trigger a step change in humanity's relationship with the ocean, through generating scientific knowledge and partnerships to support a well-functioning, resilient and sustainable ocean.

We work across scales, from influencing international conservation policies that benefit seabirds, to supporting advocacy efforts for national site protection and marine spatial planning for action at individual sites.

At the international level, we work to ensure seabirds and IBAs are considered as part of decision making and targets, including in all Multilateral Environmental Agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

At a regional level, we work with various Regional Seas Programmes, including the OSPAR Convention (North East Atlantic), Nairobi Convention (West Indian Ocean), and the Abidjan Convention (South East Atlantic).

In the European Union, the IBA inventory has helped inform the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which, together with Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), form the Natura 2000 network of sites that provide legal protection to Europe's most important habitats and species.

AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS (ACAP):

BirdLife plays an active role at ACAP, a multilateral agreement to conserve albatrosses and petrels through international action and collaborative management. We provide important data on the conservation status of albatrosses and petrels, and new research on bycatch reduction techniques from our experimental trials in fisheries.

Our work with ACAP has supported the uptake of best-practice seabird bycatch mitigation measures throughout fishing fleets, and produced multilingual Mitigation Fact Sheets for fishers to use.





Partnership for
nature and people

The BirdLife International Marine Programme is tackling some of the biggest threats to seabirds, but we can't do it alone.

Get in touch to find out how you can help.
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