



Guiding Principles for Nominating and Designating Important Bird Areas and Defining their Boundaries

From its inception, BirdLife International's (BirdLife) Important Bird Areas Program has developed, guided by better science, as well as better understanding of the dynamics of conservation and volunteerism. This document aims to ensure the process for IBA selection and designation in Canada is transparent to our partners and is consistent with current international objectives and directions.

The below guiding principles, alongside our 'Canadian Important Bird Areas Criteria', and advice gathered from scientists from across Canada, will be used to ensure site selection and delineation is consistent with IBA Program objectives. As new information comes to light (via site monitoring and assessments and from BirdLife etc.), updated information, guidance, and training will be developed for our partners and the network of volunteers – Caretakers - who are vital to delivering this program and protecting birds and critical habitats into the future.

Our goal is to ensure publicized information is regularly and consistently updated to encourage broader uptake of the Program and better decision-making and conservation. This is not to diminish the importance of timely recognition of new IBAs.

The below are 'guiding principles' and there will be instances where flexibility and diversion is necessary to better protect important bird populations and habitats they depend upon. Rationale for derivations will be provided.

Nomination and Designation of IBAs

General Procedures and Decision-making

- In accordance with BirdLife's IBA Program objectives, BSC, with input from the national advisory committee and our national partner Nature Canada, will establish and modify IBA designation criteria and bird population thresholds.
- Ultimate decision-making pertaining to IBA designation rests with the national partners, with input from the national advisory committee (appointed by BSC). BirdLife reviews site information for Global designations and will confirm/reject designations according to international Program standards.
- An IBA should be regularly used by birds/groups of birds and must meet or exceed established criteria and thresholds.

General Procedures and Decision-making cont'd

- The mean maximum count for a series of recent (<10 years old) and reliable observations and/or population/abundance studies (peer reviewed) over the course of several years would ideally be used to determine IBA eligibility and renewed designation.
- Regional partners/one designate from partnership organizations should solely forward IBA nominations to BSC, as opposed to Caretakers or the public etc. Regional partners should forward nominations once general agreement is reached with their respective advisory committee that a site would warrant IBA designation.
- Partners, with consensus by their respective advisory committees, are ultimately responsible for rationalizing nominations or designations where the above mentioned population/abundance data does not exist, or where established criteria and thresholds are not met.
- Once an IBA is designated, an official announcement on our national website will be made. Sites recognized by BirdLife as meeting Global designation criteria are publicized on the BirdLife website and information is centrally managed in their World Bird Database (WBDB).
- The designation status of each IBA is subject to change through time. For example, Canadian and BirdLife IBA criteria and population thresholds will be updated periodically which may influence site designation and status. As conditions change, the abundance and diversity of birds using each IBA will also change, thus influencing site designation and status.
- Periodically, BSC in consultation with NC and the national advisory committee will review site information and may re-classify site designations. Review of site information will normally follow receipt of updated site information from regional partners (refer to 'updating site information' below) or bird population updates made by BSC.
- It is possible that a Canadian designated IBA will not be recognized in BirdLife literature. For example, BirdLife does not presently recognize continental or national designations in the Americas, in part because Canadian, American, and Mexican designation criteria and thresholds are not standardized. BirdLife solely published globally designated IBAs in their recent 'Important Bird Areas - Americas' directory; sites that met BirdLife's updated global criteria and thresholds.

Updating Site Information

- Review of site summary details should be regularly scheduled by participating regional partners (for example every 5 years).

- BSC recognizes that capacities are not equal within the IBA partnership. Where capacity to review and update site information is limited, partners should aim to target 'high priority' IBAs first.

Updating Site Information cont'd

- High priority IBAs, for example, could include globally designated sites, or where threatened species are the trigger population and the site is offered little mandated protection. Other sites subject to considerable threats or development pressures, or where bird populations are notably declining may also be categorized as higher priority. Sites that have not been updated within the past 10 years could also be deemed higher priority. Priorities will change over time as site conditions change or new information becomes available, and as each partners' capacities change as a result of increased/decreased funding etc.
- If information becomes available suggesting site conditions have considerably changed, a review of site summary details should be undertaken by regional partners at the earliest opportunity; ideally within 1 year.
- Updates to site summaries must adhere to technical guidance developed by BSC and collectively agreed by the national partners.
- Updates to site summary information can be done via the national website. One regional representative will be appointed by each regional partner to enter updated information. Updates (apart from minor textual ones) should be agreed by partners and regional advisory committees.
- BSC will review updated site information and either accept the changes, or not. BSC will contact partners and regional representatives where edits are not accepted. Updates to publicized IBA information will be regularly scheduled. The original IBA database of site information will be maintained by BSC.

Defining and Re-defining Boundaries

- Municipal planning, regional, and political boundaries etc. should not play a central role in determining boundaries. However, boundaries must be confined to lands/waters under Canadian jurisdiction. Where possible, BSC will work with neighbouring jurisdictions to harmonize boundaries.
- If a terrestrial IBA overlaps more combined land/freshwater area in one jurisdiction than another, the IBA should be nominated/designated under the jurisdiction of greater combined land/water overlap.
- Where jurisdictional divide is solely between land (continental) and marine waters, the IBA is nominated/designated to the land-owner irrespective of trigger populations.

Defining and Re-defining Boundaries cont'd

- Where jurisdictional divide is between land (continental) and marine waters where; offshore islands are present and comprise the majority of land area encompassed by the IBA; and the island(s) habitat is central to trigger populations, then IBAs are nominated/designated under the marine jurisdiction.
- IBA boundaries will be defined based on the regular presence of trigger bird populations. Habitats and environmental conditions within each site must provide the essential resources to support the trigger species and sites should be amenable to conservation.
- Since many bird species do not consistently use exactly the same areas year after year, and IBAs are not legally recognized, boundaries will remain somewhat loosely defined.
- Amalgamated sites will be assigned a new (unique) IBA national code.
- The process of identifying purely pelagic sites (rafting/foraging) will be established and coordinated, in future, by BSC. Guidance will be developed and partners informed accordingly.
- Boundary delineation principles and information about how to re-digitize IBA boundaries is detailed in "IBA Boundaries".
- BSC will review boundaries and confirm that conditions within each site could support trigger populations.

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