

National Marine SPA & Europe-Africa seabird workshop

Tuesday 20th – Thursday 22nd October 2009

Aula Magna, Old University Building, St. Paul's Street,
Valletta, MALTA

Workshop Report



The Yelkouan Shearwater Project is a part EU LIFE funded partner initiative with :
Parti mill-Proġett Garnija huwa finanzjat mill-fondi ta' l-EU LIFE. Dan il-proġett huwa inżajjatta ta' dawn l-imsejnin:

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Front page photos: from left to right: Workshop by M. Borg Cardona; Yelkouan Shearwater by F. Derhmain; Iván Ramírez & Joseph Mangion at the introductory session by M. Borg Cardona

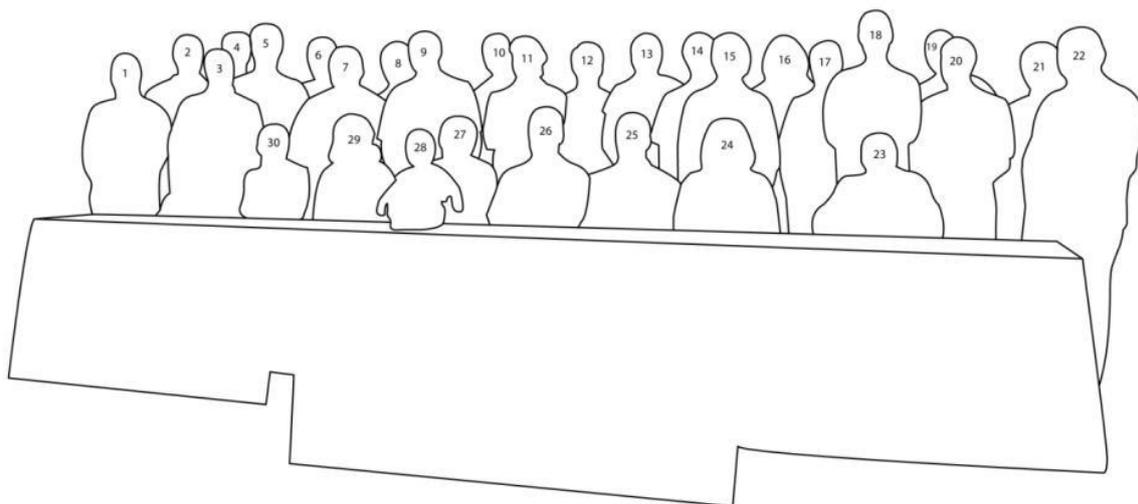
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|------------------------|------------------------|--|
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| 3. Jacopo Cecere | 14. Steffen Opper | 25. Ben Lascelles |
| 4. Pep Arcos | 15. Nicholas Barbara | 26. Iván Ramírez |
| 5. Borut Rubinic | 16. Mandi Bennetti | 27. Yuri Albores-Barajas |
| 6. Ivan Budinski | 17. Aissa Moali | 28. Leonardo Albores-Barajas Soldatini |
| 7. Abdulmaula Hamza | 18. Andre Raine | 29. Lobna Ben Nakhla |
| 8. Carles Carboneras | 19. Jakob Fric | 30. Cecilia Soldatini |
| 9. Darko Saveljic | 20. Hichem Azafzaf | |
| 10. Nicola Baccetti | 21. Jaber Yahia | |
| 11. Jose Pedro Tavares | 22. John Borg | |

Workshop programme

National Marine SPA workshop:

Developing criteria for the identification of Malta's first Marine Special Protection Areas

Tuesday, 20th October 2009

1. Introduction (09:00 – 10:30)

- A. Welcome session – Iván Ramírez (Chairman, BirdLife International), Joseph Mangion (President, BirdLife Malta)
- B. Introductory speech by Darrin Stevens (Ecosystems Management Unit Manager, MEPA) - What are Marine SPAs and EU requirements for setting up Marine SPAs
- C. The Marine IBA identification Process and their use as shadow list for SPAs – Iván Ramírez (BirdLife International)

Coffee Break (10:30 – 10:45)

2. Seabird research in Malta and the need to identify marine SPAs (10:45 – 12:00)

- A. Brief history of research on the Yelkouan Shearwater in Malta (John J. Borg, Heritage Malta)
- B. The LIFE YS Project – Nicholas Barbara (BirdLife Malta)
- C. Monitoring the Yelkouan Shearwater colony at Rđum tal-Madonna – methods and results – John J. Borg (Heritage Malta)
- D. Tracking the Yelkouan Shearwater – methods and results – Andre Raine (BirdLife Malta)
- E. Research on other Maltese seabirds – current work and what is lacking for their future conservation - Joe Sultana (BirdLife Malta)

3. Way forward with designating Marine SPAs in Malta (12:00 – 13:15)

- A. Need for SPAs for seabirds in Malta – after LIFE project considerations & future research by BirdLife Malta, etc. – Nicholas Barbara & Andre Raine (BirdLife Malta)
- B. Current initiatives in Malta in setting up marine protection areas – Darrin Stevens (MEPA)
- C. Debate discussion – What is the way forward?

Lunch Break (13:15 – 14:00)

4. Implications for the setting up of Marine SPAs in Malta (13:45 - 14:45)

- a. Tourism and marine protection areas - Josephine Deguara (OPM, Tourism section)
- b. Marine SPA Designation - a fisheries perspective - Michael Darmanin (MCFS)

Coffee Break (14:45 – 15:00)

5. Mapping Seabird Biodiversity in the Mediterranean (15:00 -16:00)

- A. UNEP representative/Barcelona Convention identification of SPAMIs (RAC/SPA) – Outcomes from Meeting of Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas (SPA-RAC) 3-6 June 2009 Malta - Lobna Ben Nakhla (RAC/SPA)
- B. CBD work towards identification of MPAs and its application in the Mediterranean – Ben Lascelles (Birdlife international)
- C. CEPF and the identification of KBAs in the Mediterranean- Jose Pedro Tavares (RSPB)

6. Conclusion and final questions/remarks (16.00 – 16:15)

Europe-Africa seabird workshop: Integrating BirdLife International Seabird Priorities for the Mediterranean Region

Wednesday 21st October

1. 09:00h-09:30h Introduction

- A. Welcoming by Iván Ramírez and Jose Pedro Tavares
- B. Outline Round table introductions
 - a. With flip-chart, hopes and fears from everyone
 - b. Species or areas where they work
 - c. 1 minute analysis of their idea of conservation in the Mediterranean

2. 09:30h-12:30h Country-by-Country Summary (5 min PPT from each participant) - Facilitated by Jose Pedro Tavares

- A. PPT model sent by organizers

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

3. 14:00-17:00 Methods for identification of Marine IBAs

- A. Application of the Marine IBA criteria- Ben Lascelles
 - a. Adaptations of the criteria
 - b. Is the IBA model applicable to all species?
 - c. Experiences from other regions
- B. Boat-based surveys
 - a. Brief PPT for non-expert countries- Ana Meirinho, including examples from other countries (Spain, Italy, Malta)
 - b. Debate – Iván Ramírez and Ana Meirinho
- C. Seabird tracking
 - a. Summary in PPT of Chizé outcomes and needs for Mediterranean Seabirds-Ben Lascelles
 - b. Debate- Ben Lascelles and Ivan Ramirez:
- D. Environmental Modelling
 - a. Brief PPT detailed explanation for non-expert countries including examples from other countries – Ana Meirinho
Debate: Pep Arcos & Ana Meirinho

Europe-Africa seabird workshop: Integrating BirdLife International Seabird Priorities for the Mediterranean Region (2nd day)

Thursday 22nd October

4. 09:00-09:30 Barcelona Convention SPAMIs report

5. 09:30-09:50 Conservatoire du Littoral

6. Working groups (Morning)

A. Seabird Conservation Assessment per Country.

- a. **09:30-10:00** Each country individually writes up their Top 5 priorities for Seabird Protection at sea and Marine IBA identification
- b. **10:00-11:30** Working groups will be established covering 3 regions.
 - i. **NW and Central Mediterranean Europe:** Spain-Italy-Malta-France
 - ii. **Adriatic and Aegean:** Greece- Croatia- -Slovenia-Turkey
 - iii. **North Africa:** Libya-Tunisia-Algeria

Objectives for the groups:

a) Discuss and analyse national priorities b) identify common objectives/species/areas and c) produce a PPT listing National countries' priorities and Common Sub-Regional shared priorities.

B. **11:30-15:00** Summaries of research activity carried out per region

- a. PPT presentations for each Group

12:30-14:00 Lunch

- C. **15:00-15:30** Debate: Discussion of already identified needs in terms of areas and species. Comparison in between existing data (reference to Barcelona convention report) and already identified needs (PPTs previously shown) for more data and areas to be defined

Coffee break 30 min

7. 16:00-17:00 CEPF Profiling and Final remarks

A. Concept paper for CEPF KBA analysis

Based on previous day's data, facilitator presents results on draft paper to be included in the CEPF Marine Profiling document that will be produced at the Sub-regional meeting to happen later in November in Tunisia

8. 17:00-17:30 Closing remarks

- A. Assessment of whether aims of workshop have been met
- B. Plans for outputs/follow-up
- C. Thank you to all concerned

Minutes from Day 1
National Marine SPA workshop

Session 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introductory Speech by Joseph Mangion (JM), President of BirdLife Malta

JM introduced the EU LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater project and the project partners and mentioned Malta's obligation to designate and manage Natura 2000 sites with respect to the EU Biodiversity Action Plan of 2006 which highlighted these deadlines:

- A. Complete the marine network of Special Protection Areas (SPA) by 2008;
- B. Designate, protect and effectively manage terrestrial Natura 2000 sites by 2010;
- C. Designate, protect and effectively manage marine Natura 2000 sites by 2012;

JM also mentioned that to date Malta lacks any marine SPAs, thus falling short of meeting the target date set out by the EU Biodiversity Action Plan, and also its commitment to designate SPAs for species listed under Annex 1 of the Birds Directive.

JM then highlighted BirdLife Malta's role as instrumental in identifying Important Bird Areas for future designation as SPAs and mentioned the current efforts by BirdLife Malta with respect to marine SPA designation, these being:

- a) a report outlining national mechanisms being used by European countries in order to develop Marine IBA/SPA programmes (Raine H., Borg J.J. and Raine A., 2008¹)
- b) the identification of the importance of the Gozo Channel as a marine IBA for future marine SPA designation in view of this being a migration bottleneck
- c) new data acquired on the biology of the Yelkouan Shearwater and its use of the marine environment around Malta and beyond by means of the LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater Project.

JM also highlighted the importance that protection of feeding grounds, rafting areas, and migratory routes through marine SPA and Natura 2000 status designation is crucial for the continued survival of the Yelkouan Shearwater

JM highlighted the added benefit marine SPA designation has for marine habitats and other species, in particular fisheries on which we depend on.

JM mentioned the objective of the 'National Marine SPA and Europe-Africa Seabird Workshop' as a means of discussing and setting the criteria to identify Marine IBAs on a national and Mediterranean level and as a way of encouraging Mediterranean countries to share their research, concerns and limitations on Mediterranean seabirds, and collaborate on the future of protecting seabirds and the marine environment.

1.2 Introductory speech by Darrin Stevens (Ecosystems Management Unit Manager, MEPA) - What are Marine SPAs and EU requirements for setting up Marine SPAs

1.3 BirdLife International and the Global Seabird Programme – Iván Ramírez (BirdLife International)

Session 2 - Seabird research in Malta and the need to identify marine SPAs

2.1 Brief history of research on the Yelkouan Shearwater in Malta (John J. Borg, Heritage Malta)

¹ www.lifeshhearwaterproject.org/mt/uploads/items/130.pdf

2.2 The EU LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater Project – Nicholas Barbara (BirdLife Malta)**2.3 Monitoring the Yelkouan Shearwater colony at Rdum tal-Madonna – methods and results**

– John J. Borg (Heritage Malta)

2.4 Trailing methods to create marine IBAs/SPAs for Yelkouan Shearwaters – Andre Raine (BirdLife Malta)**2.5 Research on Maltese seabirds – and what is lacking for their future conservation - Joe Sultana (BirdLife Malta)**

(Script of presentation available on request)

Session 3 - Way forward with designating Marine SPAs in Malta**3.1 Marine SPAs and seabirds...the future? – Nicholas Barbara & Andre Raine (BirdLife Malta)****3.2 Current initiatives in Malta on setting up marine protected areas – Darrin Stevens (MEPA)****3.3. Debate discussion – What is the way forward?**

Alan Deidun (Physical Oceanography Unit) questioned what other information is considered for Marine IBA/SPA designation and whether inputting of data in GIS format is a suitable way to show existing land/sea use conflicts. Alan Deidun also asked whether Marine SPA/IBA mapping on GIS also considers any economic importance of future plans for the marine environment and public access.

Iván Ramírez (BirdLife International) replied that such information is not utilised for IBA identification. Issues such as maritime transport, future development considerations etc are normally addressed through a management plan.

Aldo Drago (Physical Oceanography Unit) remarked about the multi-disciplinary aspect being utilised to identify marine SPAs/IBAs and that the data collected could be utilised to support the conservation of other species. Aldo Drago also commented on the probability that different sea conditions can possibly dictate bird behavioural patterns and remarked that this research needs to be expanded to include more aspects in order to cater for stronger models. Aldo Drago also expressed disappointment at the fact that the MPASC (National Marine Protected Area Steering Committee) at MEPA aimed to support & promote the designation of MPA sites, does not include academic groups which would provide a strong contribution to this strategy.

Pep Arcos (SEO, Spain) mentioned that SEO in Spain has considered oceanographic data as crucial to marine IBA/SPA designation and that it has benefited from the participation of academic institutions in applying models and identifying seabird hotspots for marine IBA/SPA designation. Pep Arcos also remarked that consideration of Malta's small size and maritime area should be credited as a limitation to the identification of possible marine IBA/SPA sites.

Andre Raine (BirdLife Malta) in answer to Aldo Drago's comment, confirmed that oceanographic data collected from an academic institution is indeed being utilised as means of identifying Malta's marine IBAs/SPAs.

Darrin Stevens (MEPA) in answer to Alan Deidun confirmed that socio economic data is taken into account at a management level. Darrin Stevens also reminded everyone that a protection status designation does not mean restricted access to maritime traffic/public and does not compromise any prospects for future developments. In fact in Malta there are protected areas which also incorporate built up areas and villages.

Darrin Stevens (MEPA) in answer to Aldo Drago, answered that the MPASC includes a structure whereby experts may be invited to attend to particular meetings and the committee's regulations also cater for the setting up of a scientific advisory group.

Iván Ramírez (BirdLife International) questioned whether MPASC has carried out any consultation exercise with Universities/NGOs with respect to potential marine SPA/IBA sites.

Darrin Stevens (MEPA) commented that the marine SPA/IBA candidate list is not official and that the only data congruent to Marine SPA/IBA designation available is being provided by BirdLife Malta. Following conclusion of this data and a better idea of the candidate list of marine SPAs, consultations will be carried out.

Nicholas Barbara (BirdLife Malta) agreed that from the forthcoming discussions socio-economic aspects needs to be acknowledged. However he asked whether such aspects may have a weight in declaring an area as a Marine SPA.

Darrin Stevens (MEPA) confirmed that sites are exclusively selected on the merit of scientific data. He also remarked about the difficulty of setting boundaries to protection areas.

Ben Lascelles (BirdLife International) remarked that the problem of defining boundaries to SPA sites is not just in Malta but has been encountered globally. At this stage identifying candidate sites is the most important thing & BirdLife's network is working well towards this aim.

Carmen Mifsud (MEPA) questioned whether the geolocator tags utilised to track Yelkouan Shearwaters do eventually fall off and whether these could be reutilised if retrieved. She also questioned why no Yelkouan Shearwaters breed on Filfla and whether this could be related to the presence of Yellow Legged Gull? She also questioned about the use of rat bait traps as part of the rodent eradication exercise on site and whether the application of poisoned bait is of any hazard to people/other fauna and whether studies of its effects have been done on the marine environment, in view of the ultimate fate of such chemical residues. The query of the effect on people or higher trophic levels was asked also in view of the recommendation not to collection snails as depiction in the birdlife poster for the public in the area.

Andre Raine (BirdLife Malta) replied that the geolocators being utilised for the project are not as accurate as satellite tags. But they do have to be retrieved in order to collect data. This can be recalibrated and reutilised.

Joe Sultana (BirdLife Malta) replied that there is no known reason for the absence of Yelkouan Shearwaters from the island of Filfla.

Andre Raine (BirdLife Malta) commented that although the yellow legged gull is generally considered as a pest in many countries, the population in Malta is still limited in number and range. He commented that the fact that the gull's largest colony is situated on Filfla could probably be attributed to the fact that Filfla is a safe haven for gulls away from hunting persecution. More so, it is improbable that the Yellow Legged Gull poses a threat to the Yelkouan Shearwater.

Nicholas Barbara (BirdLife Malta) replied that the poison used in bait stations is a slow acting one and will kill rodents after feeding on it for a few times. The public is being discouraged to pick up snails from the area due to the fact that snails are occasionally found within bait boxes and thus their consumption is to be avoided. The eradication programme, bait stations and bait used have been designed by an expert so as to pose no risk to other mammals.

Session 4 - Implications for the setting up of Marine SPAs in Malta

4.1 Tourism and marine protection areas - Josephine Deguara (OPM, Tourism section)

4.2 Designation of a Marine Protected Area - a fisheries perspective - Michael Darmanin (MCFS)

Joe Sultana (BirdLife Malta) questioned the impact of tourism on candidate sites and areas in consideration of a proposal for cruise liners to berth in Xlendi next to one of the largest colonies of Cory's Shearwaters in Malta, when a port at Mgarr could equally cater for such purposes.

Carmen Mifsud (MEPA) replied that her unit was not aware of this issue but promised that this will be looked into and possibly also discussed at the MPASC level.. Nicholas Barbara (Birdlife Malta) remarked that according to his knowledge, this application was already approved by MEPA².

Session 5 - Mapping Seabird Biodiversity in the Mediterranean

5.1 Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean – Lobna Ben Nakhla (RAC/SPA)

Jose Pedro Tavares (BirdLife International) questioned why the information shown does not show all of the Mediterranean areas. Lobna Ben Nakhla (RAC/SPA) replied that this is due to the fact that not all countries have contributed data.

Ben Lascelles (BirdLife International) questioned whether the identified seabird hotspot zones were based on productivity and sea surface temperature only. Lobna Ben Nakhla answered that the information shown is based on many variables including fishing effort and BirdLife database. A compilation of what is known of distribution at sea.

Ivan Ramirez (BirdLife International) questioned whether BirdLife can participate in the project? Lobna Ben Nakhla replied that the project is run by a steering committee but BirdLife could possibly participate as a stakeholder. The committee are to meet during November and Lobna Ben Nakhla promised to discuss and check how BirdLife can participate.

5.2 Convention on Biological Diversity: Scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection – Ben Lascelles (BirdLife International)

Carmen Mifsud (MEPA) asked whether marine areas beyond national jurisdiction were addressed in the Ottawa Expert Workshop. Ben Lascelles confirmed that the workshop did address areas beyond national jurisdiction, however no reference to management or threats was made during the workshop as this mainly focused on the scientific criteria being utilised to identify them.

With reference to the map showing tracks of the Antipodean Albatross, Ben Lascelles was questioned about how many birds should be monitored in order to have an enough informed output.

Ben Lascelles answered that the case of the Antipodean Albatross was just an example for which lots of tracking data was available. There is no set threshold of tracks or data logging that needs to be utilised for a seabird, as this greatly varies from one species to another depending on its ecology and behaviour. Two important factors that need to be considered are the distribution of the population of a particular species,

² The application reference was subsequently traced from MEPA's map server: PA6212/07 – Placing of mooring buoy at offshore site, Xlendi Bay, Xlendi

and their foraging range. The more contained to a particular area a bird species is known to be, the less tracking/data logging work would be required.

5.3 Profiling the Mediterranean hotspot for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) – Jose Tavares (RSPB)

Abdulmaula Hamza (Libya Environment General Authority) questioned whether CEPF funding is only applicable to NGOs as this would restrict funding opportunities available for North African countries where there are not much NGOs and government departments do most of the work.

Jose Pedro Tavares (RSPB) replied that civil entities are normally preferred for CEPF funding, however it could be possible for government departments from countries that have no or few NGOs, to apply and qualify for funding.

Synthesis of Days 2 and 3

Europe-Africa Seabird Workshop

Synthesis of Day 2 – Europe-Africa Seabird Workshop

All representatives from the Mediterranean BirdLife partners gave presentations introducing the seabird list for each and every country, indicating also their distribution and conservation status. Any protected areas at sea aimed for seabirds were also presented.

A review of current methods utilised for the identification of marine IBAs was given. These included boat based surveys, tracking and trailing methods, applications of marine IBA identification criteria and also a brief review of how modelling can aid the identification of marine IBAs.

Some useful conclusions from the discussions included:

- The use of geographical features as a criterion for identifying migration bottlenecks at sea in view of the absence of criteria aimed specifically at these types of IBAs.
- The identification of bottlenecks as IBAs wherever a site experiences a turnover or presence of at least 1% of the global population of a species.
- The reliability of seaward extensions of land colonies as candidate marine IBA sites – this needs to be backed up by research work as the application of fixed radii to land colonies is not wholly indicative.
- In the eventuality of a lack of exhaustive data, a precautionary approach should be adopted in the case of marine IBA designation.
- Plane surveys as being a good method of seabird observation however being the costliest.
- For boat based observations, mid-sized boats have proved to be the most ideal. Height above sea, speed and observers' experience in seabird identification are very important considerations. Observations from fishing boats are to be avoided due to the fact that seabirds associate fishing vessels as food sources and thus any observations done accordingly would be undoubtedly biased.
- Average species densities for plotting seabird distribution are the most reliable methods in order to ensure that distributions shown are not affected by sporadic events of high population densities or convergence, albeit the fact that in using averages, some relevant data on significant sporadic events would be omitted.
- Weather is a highly limiting factor for boat based observations. Data analysis does take into consideration recorded weather conditions as a way of avoiding bias of any associated seabird behaviour with particular weather conditions.

The Marine IBA toolkit paper which will be issued by BirdLife International shall present a number of criteria to be utilised for the identification of Marine IBAs and which can be adopted as a guidance tool for countries attempting to identify marine IBAs.

Besides providing the criteria by which a marine IBA can be identified, recommendations were discussed for the toolkit to also provide a guide to some of the queries mentioned during the seminar such as:

- What tracking methods are suitable so as not to impact on the breeding success/survival of an individual
- Whether tracked birds should be considered as having a behavioural ecology representative of their colony or not
- Budget for tracking

- A consideration of manpower needed to deploy tracking devices and monitor their progress
- International Cooperation as a way of economising on achieving results for different countries/species.
- Importance of how many seasons/years/chick-rearing/breeding needed to track to have representative data.
- Consideration of size of the Mediterranean in declaring Marine IBAs
- The proposal of multi-species marine IBAs in the Mediterranean that would serve the purposes of protecting more than one priority species

Synthesis of Day 3 – Europe-Africa Seabird Workshop

The criteria utilised for the identification of SPAMI (Special Protection Areas of Mediterranean Importance) were presented and discussed.³ Reference was made to RAC/SPA's initiative for identifying SPAMI beyond national jurisdictional waters. A list of SPAMIs is already in place and this is revised by an appointed steering committee. Suggestions for this SPAMI list can be received by committee.

In reaction to the presentation these points were discussed:

- Adding more important species to those addressed by the SPAMI list
- Make more information available to feed and inform the current list of SPAMIs and also to BirdLife's database of IBAs
- Modelling as a way of mitigating against the lack of data (shown as blank areas in SPAMI map).

A proposal for the creation and management of a common database was proposed by Dr Ivan Ramirez. Countries will receive a formal invitation letter to become part of a database and to contribute with raw data for the enlargement of the BirdLife International's current database. It was also agreed to that the database should make sure that even past published data is made available.

Ivan Ramirez led a debate on the identification of priorities for seabird research for each and every country. These were communicated based on the previous presentations, discussed and agreed to.

Jose Pedro Tavares explained the preparation of a concept paper for CEPF (Critical Ecosystems Partnership fund) that would be included in the CEPF Marine Profiling document that is to be produced at the Sub-regional meeting to be in December in Tunisia

Ivan Ramirez, European Marine Coordinator of BirdLife International concluded by announcing the creation of two important documents following this meeting.

- a. CEPF pro-filing document to form part of the Mediterranean Hotspot Profiling
- b. Updating of BirdLife Europe's document on Marine IBAs which would contain all information on marine IBAs from EU countries along with an Annex about non-EU and African Countries that participated in the seminar. This document would serve as a strong political tool and will summarise current data available and priorities for the commencement or continuation of seabird research for Marine IBA identification for all countries.

Further points that were discussed during this day were:

- RAC/SPA's role in helping countries who are not affiliated with BirdLife International to identify important areas at sea.

³ http://www.rac-spa.org/dl/criteres_commun.pdf

- The standardisation of methods of data-collection from seabird research and BirdLife International's role of providing the necessary guidance and tools to promote this for all countries.
- Feedback from other Mediterranean countries which could not be represented during the workshop. All participants shall distribute the outcomes of this workshop to countries which were not present and to help the collection of Marine IBA data for the whole Mediterranean.
- The suitability of having IBA identification criteria common for all Mediterranean countries including North African countries.
- The need for all countries to focus on obtaining more data on the foraging radii for all seabirds. BirdLife is committed to improve this aspect of seabird research all participants are to contribute to this by making available new data collected to this regard.

National Marine SPA Workshop

Copies of Presentations delivered

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