The Contribution of the Important Bird Areas Programme to Conservation Planning in South Africa

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Layout of Presentation

* Short introduction to the background of the IBA Programme
* Revision of the IBA Network
* Feeding the IBA network into conservation planning
* Challenges - fine scale conservation planning
* Way forward

We need advice!!!!
Important Bird Areas Programme (IBA) - International Perspective

* The IBA Programme is a key focus area of BirdLife International
* More than 10 000 IBAs worldwide
* In Africa - 1230 IBAs are found in 58 countries
* Important to realise that the programme is an international initiative and all actions taken in South Africa are peer reviewed internationally
The Goal of the IBA Programme

The goal of the IBA Programme is to identify, monitor and protect a global network of IBAs which are critical for the long-term viability of bird populations.
Elements of the IBA Programme

* Defining and IBA based on international accepted criteria

* Assessing an IBA in terms of the threats that might impact on the IBA

* Implement conservation actions
What the IBA Programme is not

* Not the Important Birding Areas Programme

* Areas outside of IBAs are still important - we need to conserve all areas

* The idea behind the IBA Programme is to focus our conservation effort
124 Important Bird Areas
Criteria

Criterion: The site regularly holds significant numbers of a **globally threatened species**, or other species of global conservation concern

Criterion: The site is known or thought to hold a significant component of a group of species whose breeding distributions define an **Endemic Bird Area (EBA)** or **Secondary Area (SA)** - **less than 50 000 km²**

Criterion: The site is known or thought to hold a significant component of a group of species whose distributions are largely or wholly confined to one **biome** considering the whole of Africa.

Criterion: **Congregatory Species**

* Site known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, ≥1% of the biogeographic population of a congregatory waterbird species.
* Site known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, ≥20 000 waterbirds or ≥10 000 pairs of seabirds of one or more species
IBA Assessments

* The assessing of IBAs is an important aspect of the programme

* The assessments are done through assessing and scoring the threats (pressure) to IBAs, the condition (state) of IBAs, and conservation actions (response) taken at IBAs

* It involves assigning simple scores to selected indicators for three categories namely pressure (threats), state (condition) and response (actions)
Indicators

- **STATE**: Quantity and quality of IBAs
- **PRESSURE**: Threat to IBAs
- **RESPONSE**: Actions at IBAs

The diagram illustrates the interconnections between state, pressure, and response in the context of indicators.
Approval Process for Assessments

* An IBA Assessment is done and submitted to Regional Conservation Manager

* Completed assessment is checked and submitted to Regional Conservation Committee (consisting of local experts and ornithologists)

* Comments received and incorporated into assessment

* Final assessment is submitted to IBA Steering Committee for approval

* The assessment is loaded on the IBA BirdLife International database

* End Result: Good quality assessments
Manager of the programme is Daniel Marnewick - located in Johannesburg.

BirdLife South Africa recently appointed 4 Regional Conservation Managers:
- Gauteng and North West
- Mpumalanga and Free State
- Western Cape
- KwaZulu-Natal

Extensive network of volunteers to assist with assessments and implementing conservation actions.

The growing staff compliment an indication of BLSA’s commitment to this programme.
Some criticism received in the past as to the value of the programme for conservation planning in SA:

- IBAs do not take conservation planning targets into account
- IBAs are too large - not fine scale enough
- Not based on sufficient data
- No clear planning why the sites were selected

Some of the criticism are justified - some not

The IBA team decided to **review** the whole network in order to address some of the above mentioned concerns.
Review of the IBA Network

Some of the actions to be implemented to review the network:

* Complete assessments for all current IBAs within the next two years. These assessments include:

  ▪ A review of all the **trigger species** that have been recorded within the IBA using up to date data from SABAP2, CWAC and BIRP as well as inputs from experts
  ▪ Review of the **boundary** of each IBA using GIS and taking into consideration conservation targets
  ▪ Review all **threats**
Review of the IBA Network (continued)

* Based on these assessments make proposals:

- Species that are considered for the network
- IBA boundary changes
- Conservation actions to be undertaken to combat the threats that were recorded
- “Deproclaim” IBAs that do not meet criteria

* After IBAs have been reviewed, assess the total network in terms of set conservation targets and define new IBAs if needed
An Example of Boundary Changes after the Review Process

Magaliesberg Important Bird Area

* Trigger species is the Cape Vulture - previously included foraging range - but decided to only include breeding area as in other IBAs where Cape Vulture is the most important key species

* The area of the old IBA was 1 462 652ha
* The proposed new IBA will be 367 108ha
* Reduction of 75% in area
* Better aligned with current and future (biosphere reserve) formal protected areas
* Key species still protected

Proposed New Magaliesberg IBA Boundaries
* Most conservation planning done at a very fine scale - small conservation units

* Birds (especially large threatened species) need large areas to survive - not sure that fine scale conservation planning cater for these species...might be wrong...

* Most conservation plans/ biodiversity assessments based on vegetation and not other taxa as for example birds - some provincial governments do now feed SABAP2 data into their assessments

* Very little scientific papers about conservation planning and birds

* It would not be possible to always define small IBAs as a small IBA might not be able to support a viable population of a threatened bird species

* How do we feed the nearly 4milj bird records in the SABAP2 database into the conservation network?
SABAP2 DATA

A massive resource

3.7 million records

Resolution - pentads
7x8km

How do we feed this data into the conservation planning network?

How do we use this Data for the IBA Programme?

Datasets are sent to provincial governments on a regular basis.
Example

Tracking data for Secretarybird

Even at this very young age this bird cover an area of more than 3km x 1km

Might grow as large as 30km x 30km

How do we protect a species like this effectively through the protected areas network and the IBA Programme?
This exercise highlighted the fact that bird species of conservation concern occur all over South Africa.

So not that easy to define areas that will sufficiently protect all species of conservation concern.
In addition to reviewing the IBA network, one of the major tasks will be to **market** the IBA Programme as a network of sites that should be considered during conservation planning and EIA assessments:

- IBA Shapefiles will be loaded on BGIS
- IBA Shapefiles will be loaded on BLSA website ([www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za))
- IBA Shapefiles and SABAP2 datasets are shared with Provincial agencies through regional conservation managers
- IBA Programme will be extensively marketed to government agencies, EIA specialists, and the general public
IBA Site and Online Texts

* General information about the programme

* IBA texts for each of the 124 IBAs in the country

* At this moment 45 texts have been loaded

* Texts will be loaded on a regular basis

* Partial or full updates

* Purpose of the text is to inform the general public about each site.
The following information is published:

* General information about the IBA
* Google Earth Map of each IBA
* Site description
* Texts about the bird species in the IBA
* Conservation issues
* Trigger species
* Threats to the IBA
* Conservation actions undertaken at the IBA
* Contact details of person to whom comments must be submitted
* Reference list or further reading

Website address: http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/iba/iba-directory
*Please help us give conservation wings by supporting the IBA Programme in your conservation actions

www.birdlife.org.za
Acknowledgements

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