



Accurate and up-to-date information about our Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are needed to help decision-makers (e.g. governments, planners, regulators) protect birds and the diverse habitats they rely upon for their survival. Bird Studies Canada (BSC) are also responsible for reporting IBA data to BirdLife International (BLI) who manage the World Bird Database (WBDB); storing IBA data collected from around the world. Using standardized terminology to describe habitats, land uses, and threats permits comparison of changing conditions within IBAs over time and between regions, thus you are asked to report using standard terminologies.

This document will help you understand what information needs to be collected in order to complete the IBA Reporting Form; the form which will be used to update site information which was originally gathered for the purposes of site nomination. BSC and IBA coordinators will use the form to update site information published on our website (www.IBACanada.org) and will also report new information to BLI. Once site summary information is updated, additional monitoring and assessments will be scheduled at IBAs. A KMZ of IBAs (which allows you to visualize sites over satellite images using Google Earth/ArcGIS Explorer) and site maps are available from the national IBA website. To request a shape (digital) file of IBAs, please contact Mike Burrell (mburrell@bsc-eoc.org) or Andrew Couturier (acouturier@bsc-eoc.org).

Updating information is a team effort and we appreciate your help! Please provide us with as much detail as you are able, and if you have questions, don't hesitate to [contact your regional IBA representative](#). **If the land is privately owned, ask permission from the land-owner before accessing. Safety for you and the birds is the number one priority.**

Trigger species refers to the species of bird(s) for which the IBA has been designated; because their numbers met and exceed established criteria and thresholds respectively.

Section 1: Site Assessment

Conservation Status and Activities

Status – BSC will update IBA-protected area overlap for each site (i.e. the % an IBA overlaps with a national park, migratory bird sanctuary or international designation etc.) and we hope to publish this information on-line in site summaries. However, we may have missed some important ones, or new conservation management initiatives or recent land acquisitions (e.g. by a conservation group). Please use the form to record all protected areas that you know of that intersect with the site; even if it is a national park (refer to question 3).

Activities – question 3 entails recording details of on-going conservation activities. In question 4, record any activities that could positively influence bird populations and their habitats. These could include education initiatives targeting groups or individuals that access the IBA, techniques to protect habitats or birds (e.g. signage), habitat restoration, new/updated pollution control measures etc. Where possible, please assess the value of existing protected areas and on-going conservation activities. This information will be used by your IBA coordinator to update the 'Conservation Issues' section of on-line site summaries. For example, you could describe how the installation of nestboxes/platforms has led to the recovery of a species by stating how many birds were using the area before and after installation and successes and challenges. Our aim is to clearly identify how and to what extent activities are helping/hindering (in the case of threats) birds by comparing past



conditions or numbers of birds historically using the area, to current conditions or the numbers of birds presently using the area. In future, Caretakers will help us to conduct additional monitoring and assessments to better understand the dynamics of changing bird populations with changing site conditions. Further guidance and reporting mechanisms are being prepared by BSC.

IBA Boundaries

Question 6 of the reporting form should only be completed after bird monitoring has been undertaken and Caretakers have become familiar with their sites and have also completed the site assessment portion of the form (section 1).

First – confirm that the IBA boundary includes the areas regularly used by trigger populations; originally, boundaries were generalized, or loosely drawn. Where highest concentrations of trigger populations are mostly observed outside boundaries, or where considerable portions of the site overlap with unsuitable areas (e.g. urbanized/developed), please provide your IBA coordinator with:

1. Specific details about how and why the boundary is inappropriate (e.g. ‘northeast section extends into a town which does not provide essential habitat and trigger species do not use this area’)
2. A map showing how the boundary should be changed. Try and choose a map that shows topographic and landcover features (e.g. elevation contour lines, roads, vegetation and water etc.), or use the site map BSC provided if appropriate. It would be helpful if you could mark on the map where trigger species are present, and distinguish where they are present in highest and lowest numbers based on your observations during site visits.

Note: If birds have shifted and are no longer using the area, the IBA may be put on ‘hold’ for future assessment. It is likely the site will lose its designation status as an IBA unless birds return in sufficient numbers.

Habitats

The habitat ‘categories’ are standardized and derived from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Habitat ‘types’ were modified by BLI for North America and these are what we report in web published summaries: both ‘category’ and ‘type’ are reported to BLI. Habitats include both natural and altered environments, for example ‘freshwater lakes and pools’ and ‘urban parks and gardens’ etc.

Please record all habitats present, but only include the % each occupies relative to the total IBA area for predominating habitats; those most likely to influence the success, abundance, and distribution of trigger species (i.e. likely to exceed 20% of the total IBA area). You only need to include the % cover for predominating habitats because these are the ones which will be described in ‘Site Descriptions’ and should be readily discernable to IBA designates responsible for editing site text. Thus, % cover may not equal 100%.

Example (table 1 of the reporting form – condensed):

Habitat Category	Habitat Type (these are published on the web)	√ + % cover (of total IBA area)
Forest	Boreal coniferous	√ 25%
Forest	Boreal deciduous	
Forest	Boreal mixed	
Grassland	Tundra	
Coastline	Estuarine waters	√
Coastline	Intertidal mud, sand & salt flats	√
Coastline	Lagoons	
Coastline	Rock stacks & islets	
Coastline	Sea cliffs & rocky shores	√ 25%
Coastline	Shallow marine areas, coral reefs & keys	
Coastline	Shingle & stony beaches	
Sea	Open sea	√ 35%
Sea	Pelagic waters	
Rocky areas	Scree & boulders	
Wetlands (inland)	Rivers	√

Land Uses

Land uses were established by BLI. The land uses most likely to influence the presence/absence of trigger species over time should be recorded using table 2 of the reporting form. Land uses that exceed about 20% of the total IBA area are likely the more important ones to note.

The ‘Site Description’ section of web-published IBA summaries is used to describe land-uses; the ‘Conservation Issues’ section will solely be used to quantify/qualify their negative and positive impacts to trigger populations. The % cover may not add up to 100% because hunting, for example, may occur within other land use categories (e.g. forestry and range/pasturelands etc.). If the total exceeds 100%, please provide some explanation in the space provided below the table to identify overlap of land uses.

Example (table 2 of the reporting form):

Land Use	√ + % cover (of total IBA area)
Agriculture	√ 10%
Rangeland/pastureland	
Fisheries/aquaculture	
Forestry	
Energy extraction and mining	
Water management	
Hunting	√ (40%)
Military	
Urban/industrial/transportation	
Tourism/recreation	
Nature conservation and research	√ 50%
Not utilized (natural area)	√ 40%
Other ¹	

“Hunting occurs within the entire ‘not utilized (natural area)’ portion”.

Threats

Refer to tables 3 and 4 of the reporting form. Similar to habitats, threats are IUCN classifications with two levels (see table 3): threat 'types' are published on the national IBA website, and both 'categories' and 'types' are reported to BLI. Our aim is to document the negative impacts to birds (i.e. changes in their numbers and distributions) resulting from threats our Caretakers describe and from supporting studies/information.

Do your best to be objective when describing threats. There are a considerable number of activities which are threatening; we aim to identify the more serious and/or frequently occurring threats. Even though you will record some threats as 'low risk', these threats still pose considerable danger to trigger populations. Please refer to Appendix A at the end of this document for examples of low, moderate, and high risk threats. Using the reporting form, for each threat identified in the first table (table 3), please record the following additional information in the second threat table (table 4):

1. The proportion (e.g. 50%) of IBA area each threat impacts.
2. The 'timing' each threat occurs. For example, is it presently occurring, imminent in the short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), or longer-term (5+ years).
3. The potential severity of the threat. For example, does the activity present a high, moderate, or low risk to trigger species?
4. The season each threat is/will adversely impact trigger species (i.e. breeding, wintering, or during migration).

Section 2: Bird Monitoring

Birds

In order to update site information, the numbers of birds or trigger species using an IBA must be well documented and the information should be relatively recent; preferably under 10 years old. We are relying on your observations and other information collected as part of standardized monitoring studies. We hope you can help us count birds in your IBA and provide us with information about other monitoring efforts we may not be aware of. **Caretakers should aim to enter all bird observations (count data) using eBird (www.ebird.ca).** A "quick start guide" on how to use eBird is available on their website and there is a very good help centre also available from the eBird website. Your IBA representative can also provide tips on using eBird.

Your Observations: Please confirm which birds triggered the site to be designated an IBA and focus on counting these species. Counts must be conducted during the appropriate season. If the IBA was designated because large numbers of birds are breeding or migrating, counts should be scheduled when breeders have returned from wintering grounds (to avoid overestimating if counts were to include chicks) and during peak migratory periods respectively. **Record the number of individuals, nests, or pairs observed** (somewhat species dependent) in the table (page 11 of the form) or checklist (if >31 species). Record the location of sightings using a GPS (if available) and mark their position and respective numbers on the site map BSC created (available as a pdf from the site summary on the [IBA website](#)) or use a topographic map. When entering data using eBird, you will be asked for the coordinates of your sightings. In the case of congregatory birds, such as waterbirds and seabirds (see definitions below), you do not need to record the individual number of each species where they congregate in large numbers. However, **total counts of congregating waterbirds and seabirds must be documented in the table.** For example, X number of waterbirds and X number of seabirds were observed at X location (which you will mark on a map and use a GPS if available). This will permit us to assess their importance as triggering IBA selection using Canadian IBA criteria which uniquely distinguishes between these two groupings.

If you make several visits to monitor birds, remember to bring new copies of section 2 of the form (and the checklist if applicable). Be sure to circle (or otherwise clearly identify) the maximum number of each species/group of birds observed in the table/checklist if more than one monitoring trip is made; maximum counts are particularly important to record using e-Bird. This will make it easier for your IBA coordinator to identify maximum counts when reporting your findings back to BSC.

Waterbirds include: oystercatchers, kittiwakes, loons, grebes, geese, swans, ducks, pelicans, cormorants, anhingas, bitterns, herons, egrets, ibis, spoonbills, storks, rails, moorhen, coots, stilts, avocets, curlews, cranes, all 'shorebirds,' gulls, terns, and skimmers.

Seabirds include: all 'tubenoses' (petrels, shearwaters, albatrosses, fulmars), auklets, murrelets, gannets, skuas, jaegers, puffins, guillemots, murrees.

Some Caretakers may be experts at identifying native plants or other wildlife. Please also record the location and number of other valuable or threatened species (section 1, question 7 of the form). This information would be used to describe the site and it would provide greater support for site protection.

Other studies and bird data – Please record any bird monitoring studies undertaken in the IBA that you are aware of (section 2, question 4 of the form). These may have occurred in the (recent) past or are planned. These could include theses or academic studies, NGO work, or perhaps a local naturalist has recorded abundance information that you can provide us with. ***BSC is responsible for managing bird datasets and information in Nature Counts and contacting Environment Canada – Canadian Wildlife Service and other government agencies to acquire additional bird abundance and distribution data if needed to support site designation/updates.*** BSC also has access to abundance records collected from other bird monitoring efforts we are involved in, but where results are not publically distributed (species at risk and High Elevation Landbird Programs etc.).

Appendix A: Threats –Definitions and Examples:

Threats should be identified as low, moderate, or high risk to birds; consistent with reporting structures adopted by BLI Partners around the world. When reporting threats, keep in mind why the IBA was designated and ensure that what you report is consistent with its designation.

Definitions:

Low risk threats generally lead to localized changes to bird populations, but are less likely to result in sustained changes where, for example, a site would not qualify as an IBA in future.

Moderate risk threats can be described as causing considerable and longer-term changes to bird populations. IBA designations could be down-listed from global to national for example, or certain species may no longer use the area.

High risk threats, for example, would result in direct/indirect bird mortality, very low breeding success, and/or birds no longer using an area which ultimately would lead to loss of site status as an IBA in future.

Examples:

Below provides guidance on whether to report a threat as low vs. moderate vs. high risk.

1. Threat: ‘Transportation and Service Corridors’ (IUCN) – ‘shipping lanes’ (BLI)

A coastal IBA designated for a group of breeding seabirds is situated in a high traffic shipping zone. Abundance records for trigger populations have declined somewhat as shipping traffic have increased through time. In this scenario, record ‘shipping lanes’ as a low threat.

If birds had died or had negatively and conspicuously been impacted because of an oil spill from shipping in the past, “shipping lanes” could be identified as a moderate risk in this situation.

If a threatened population of birds would likely be extirpated if even a ‘relatively’ small oil spill occurred, risk could be identified as ‘high’ in this situation.

Do not automatically report ‘shipping lanes’ as a threat for all coastal associated IBAs. There must be a clear and conspicuous reason threats are included; in this case, because the IBA is situated in a particularly high traffic shipping area where perhaps evidence of oiled beaches/birds exists. Because you do not report a threat does not, however, mean that a particular ‘class’ of threats would not be described in the ‘Conservation Issues’ section of the IBA summary. For example, if an IBA is not in a high traffic shipping zone but in an area where there is shipping, you may wish to note that the threat to birds from oil spills does exist under question 7 ‘other descriptions’ of the reporting form.

Note: for threats related to oil or gas drilling, please use ‘Energy production and mining - Oil and gas drilling’.

2. Threat: ‘Pollution’ (IUCN) – ‘industrial and military effluents’ (BLI)

An industry is approved to discharge effluent into a series of specially designed holding ponds and an artificial wetland area (the ‘treatment system’) that eventually connects to a natural watercourse. Over the years’ industrial capacity has increased and the treatment system does not appear to have been adequately maintained: discharge into the watercourse has increased, there is a new and conspicuous

grey/blue 'sheen' to the effluent, a grey-coloured algal growth currently extends downstream from where the effluent enters into the watercourse, and there is a conspicuous foul odour. While trigger species continue to use the area, numbers have decreased and they have shifted further downstream to forage. Report this as a low risk.

If there has been evidence (media releases/other reports) of accidental discharges of effluent that resulted in considerable and what is expected to be longer-term damage to the watercourse and the flora/fauna supporting trigger species, and many birds were injured/died, this could be reported as high risk.

However, if you are aware that the industry has begun modernizing and increasing capacity of their effluent treatment systems, you may choose to report as moderate risk. Even though further discharges are unexpected, trigger populations will be negatively influenced for subsequent years based on the above accidental discharges and damage reported.

3. Threat: 'Pollution' (IUCN) – 'domestic and urban waste water' (BLI)

An IBA includes a freshwater lake that trigger species depend upon for food/survival. The lake supports numerous older cottages (25+ years) and recreational use has increased considerably in the past ten years. Trigger species have somewhat declined from historic reports, but have stabilized in number. Report as low risk.

If trigger species populations are fewer, but numbers are stable, while other species such as loons and herons and a frog species at risk no longer breed or use the area, you could report as a medium risk.

In addition to increased recreation, discharges from the older (faulty or non-existent) septic systems are thought to be the primary cause of the lake turning green with algae (eutrophication) and some fish dying. The numbers and diversity of birds (and fish) using the lake and area have noticeably declined within this time. The IBA was originally a global designation, but current bird numbers would result in a national designation. There is no indication that regulatory bodies are taking action to stop the (unlawful) sewage discharges. For example, government officials were questioned and indicated they have not taken action or laid charges with respect to discharges. This could be reported as high risk.

4. Threat: 'Residential and Commercial Development' (IUCN) – 'housing and urban areas' (BLI)

Approval to construct a small-scale residential development was granted that will marginally encroach into an IBA. It is likely to influence the distribution and abundance of trigger species. Report as low risk.

In addition to the small-scale residential development, a supportive commercial zone has been given approval within the IBA too. Construction of supporting transportation routes, power supply lines, and water services for these developments will fragment critical habitat. Considerable changes to the abundance and distribution of trigger species are anticipated, but unknown. Report as medium risk. While this may be perceived as high risk, the effects are unknown at present and some planning concessions had been made to protect native wildlife and local habitats.

If the development were larger scale and would result in considerable loss of habitat, report as high risk.

5. Threat: 'Climate change and severe weather' (IUCN) – 'habitat shifting and alteration' (BLI)

If an island is used by a threatened species to breed, but sea levels have risen resulting in conspicuous habitat loss and increasingly fewer numbers of breeding individuals over the past decade, the risk could be cited as high.

Only use this category where there is strong evidence (published or other reliable research) that climate change has resulted in declining numbers of trigger species within an IBA. Bird Studies Canada (BSC) may investigate vulnerabilities to birds from climate change and will assess which birds and IBAs may be more at risk. For example, birds dependent on marine resources and that breed on low-lying coastal islands are vulnerable, and species with breeding ranges restricted to high elevation habitats, are also vulnerable (The State of the Birds 2010 Report on Climate Change).

6. Threat: 'Human intrusions and disturbance' (IUCN) – 'recreational activities' (BLI)

If trails and facilities were constructed that led to marginal habitat fragmentation, and use of off-road vehicles are creating disturbances which led to changes in trigger species' distributional patterns and a slight decrease in their numbers, cite this as a low risk.

Where there has been a considerable increase in boating traffic and recreational use of islands and coastal areas that can directly be correlated with changes in breeding distributional patterns and linked to considerable population declines and/or loss of a trigger species using areas (that historically were consistently utilized for foraging for example), then recreational activities could be cited as a high risk threat. Moderate risk could be cited where population declines are less severe.

Another common form of disturbance arises from off-leash dogs. Off-leash dogs can cause considerable disruptions in shorebird use at migratory stop-over sites and can restrict availability of shorebird breeding habitat (i.e. Piping Plovers).

Bird Studies Canada, Nature Canada, and our IBA Partners thank all participants for their help! If you have any questions or comments, please contact your IBA representative.

