



Job Title:	Marine Protected Areas Seabird Researcher (desk-based post)
Vacancy type:	Fixed Term Contract
Location:	Flexible within Ireland*
Contract term:	Provisionally 4 th October 2021 – 31 May 2022
Hours:	Full-time, 35 hours per week

**The post holder may choose to work from home or may have a base in either our Headquarters in Kilcoole or some shared office space may be available in one of our regional offices in Banagher or Letterkenny. Please note, if the postholder chooses to work from home, BirdWatch Ireland provides a home office supplement during Covid restrictions on office working, but this may not be continued if restrictions are lifted.*

Background

Ireland supports 24 species of breeding seabird and these include a significant proportion of the European Union (EU) populations of some key species, including terns, auks, shearwaters and storm-petrels. These, generally colonial birds, nest on coastal islands, cliffs and beaches although a small proportion also nest inland, on lake islands. Their locations and numbers are well documented. The location of forage and feeding areas is less well known, and there is also a lack of knowledge and understanding of the distribution outside the breeding season; these factors constitute key knowledge gaps. Additionally, Ireland's position at the western edge of Europe, in the eastern North Atlantic means that many other species use its extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on migration between more northerly, Arctic, breeding grounds and wintering areas. Some southern hemisphere breeding species also winter in the northern hemisphere (e.g. Sooty and Great Shearwaters) and a few Mediterranean species move into the northern Atlantic outside the breeding season (e.g. Balearic Shearwater). The Irish EEZ can thus be thought of as a crossroads in seabird migration systems in the North Atlantic.

Very little of the Irish EEZ is protected for the benefit of seabirds or other components of biodiversity and in this regard Ireland is behind other northwestern European countries in the identification and designation of Marine Protected Areas.

BirdWatch Ireland are part of a coalition of NGOs, working under the Irish Environmental Network and funded by [Oceans 5](#) to deliver a Marine Protected Areas advocacy programme and conduct appropriate background research. Our high level goal for this programme is encapsulated in the following statement:

“Ireland should become a world leader in marine conservation. To achieve this, the Irish government should pioneer ocean protection within the EU by putting in place ambitious legislation, and highly protecting at least 10 percent of its EEZ by 2025, with a clear pathway for realising at least 30 percent by 2030. The 30 percent should be seen as a minimum target and if there is good reason to go beyond this target, then Ireland should do so. We call on the government to expand Ireland's network of Marine Protected Areas such that it is coherent, representative, connected and resilient and meets Ireland's commitments under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the OSPAR Convention, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi target 11 and the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, Life Below Water amongst others.”



The publication of the Irish Government's (2020) Report "**Expanding Ireland's Marine Protected Area Network**" is an acknowledgment of this deficiency and although it includes a framework to move the process on, the timeframe and actions are vague. BirdWatch Ireland's position can be read in full here <https://birdwatchireland.ie/marine-protected-areas/>

Job Purpose Summary

The Marine Protected Areas Seabird Researcher will support the process of developing the campaign's position on the expansion of the network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for seabirds in Irish waters (coastal and EEZ). This will require liaison and collaboration with government agencies (NPWS, Marine Institute), Research Institutions (e.g. UCC, GMIT) and others to gather data from multiple seabird surveys, seabird tracking and other relevant research and survey work. Liaison will also be necessary with project partners (i.e. Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Irish Wildlife Trust, the Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) and Irish Environmental Network (IEN))

The focus of the position will be to work with a small team in BirdWatch Ireland to develop principles for site (MPA) boundary definition and, through data analysis and mapping, create a spatial database of the key areas of importance to seabirds with the goal of future designation as MPAs.

The job holder will have significant GIS expertise and a sound knowledge of seabirds or marine ecology.

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities

A detailed programme of work will be agreed with the successful candidate at the outset, but the post holder is expected to:

- Explore accessible data sources such as UK-Irish breeding seabird censuses, European Seabirds at Sea database, bird ringing and recovery data, tracking data depositories and published (and unpublished) research on seabird diet and marine ecosystems and food webs.
- Approach other commercial interests (offshore renewables industry) that need to gather seabird information for licensing purposes, with a view to seeking access, if possible, to that data.
- Collate all data relating to seabirds and habitats that has been obtained.
- Create a GIS database of all spatial information related to the project and generate maps of key areas for seabirds.
- Work with other team members to review MPA definition criteria for seabirds from across the world, to build a robust Irish framework for designation.
- Use these criteria to define potential seabird MPAs in Republic of Ireland and its EEZ.
- Liaise with project partners on the development of the overall MPA network, particularly with groups covering other marine taxa and ecosystems
- Research scientific literature on recommendations on MPA management for the benefit of seabirds post designation.
- Write a succinct final report with methodology, data gaps, final maps and recommendations on MPA management for seabirds.
- Work with Project Partners to provide web content, a social media presence and general communications to promote the project.



The postholder is expected to carry out you're her/his job responsibilities in an environmentally aware manner, ensuring as little damage to the environment as possible. Our aim is to ensure all resources are utilised effectively and efficiently. You will be expected to apply 'sound value for money' principles in undertaking purchasing or supply of goods and services and in accordance with the requirements BirdWatch Ireland and IEN.

Skills	Proficiency Level	Desirability
Significant demonstratable experience in the use of GIS	Expert	Essential
Sound knowledge of Ireland's seabirds [or equivalent taxa] and marine ecology, issues relating to their conservation	Expert	Essential
Demonstratable experience and understanding of good practice in database management	Expert	Essential
Sound project management skills	Proficient	Essential
A higher degree or equivalent experience	Competent	Essential
Sound knowledge of marine resource management, policy and planning legislation relevant to Ireland's seas	Proficient	Essential
Awareness and interest in other groups of marine megafauna, particularly cetaceans	Awareness/Understanding	Desirable
Ability to work accurately and to deadlines	Proficient	Essential

Contract details

This is a fixed-term contract with a pro-rata salary of €34,000 pa. The suitable applicant will be required to provide an average of 35 hours per week. Leave entitlement is 20 days per annum pro rata plus statutory holidays.

A completed application form and accompanying letter outlining your suitability for the position, should be forwarded to BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20 Block D Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow.

Applications may also be sent via email to Valerie Lowth vlowth@birdwatchireland.ie

Please ensure you indicate the job title in the subject line. You must include your name in both the application form and cover letter.

This Marine Protected Area Project is managed by IEN and principally funded by Oceans5



The closing date for applications is **5pm Mon 27th September 2021**, with interviews likely to be held towards the end of that week online, , although we do not rule out the option of 'in person' interviews at the BirdWatch Ireland HQ, Unit 20 Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow (depending on COVID-19 guidelines at the time). Work will commence a.s.a.p. following appointment.