

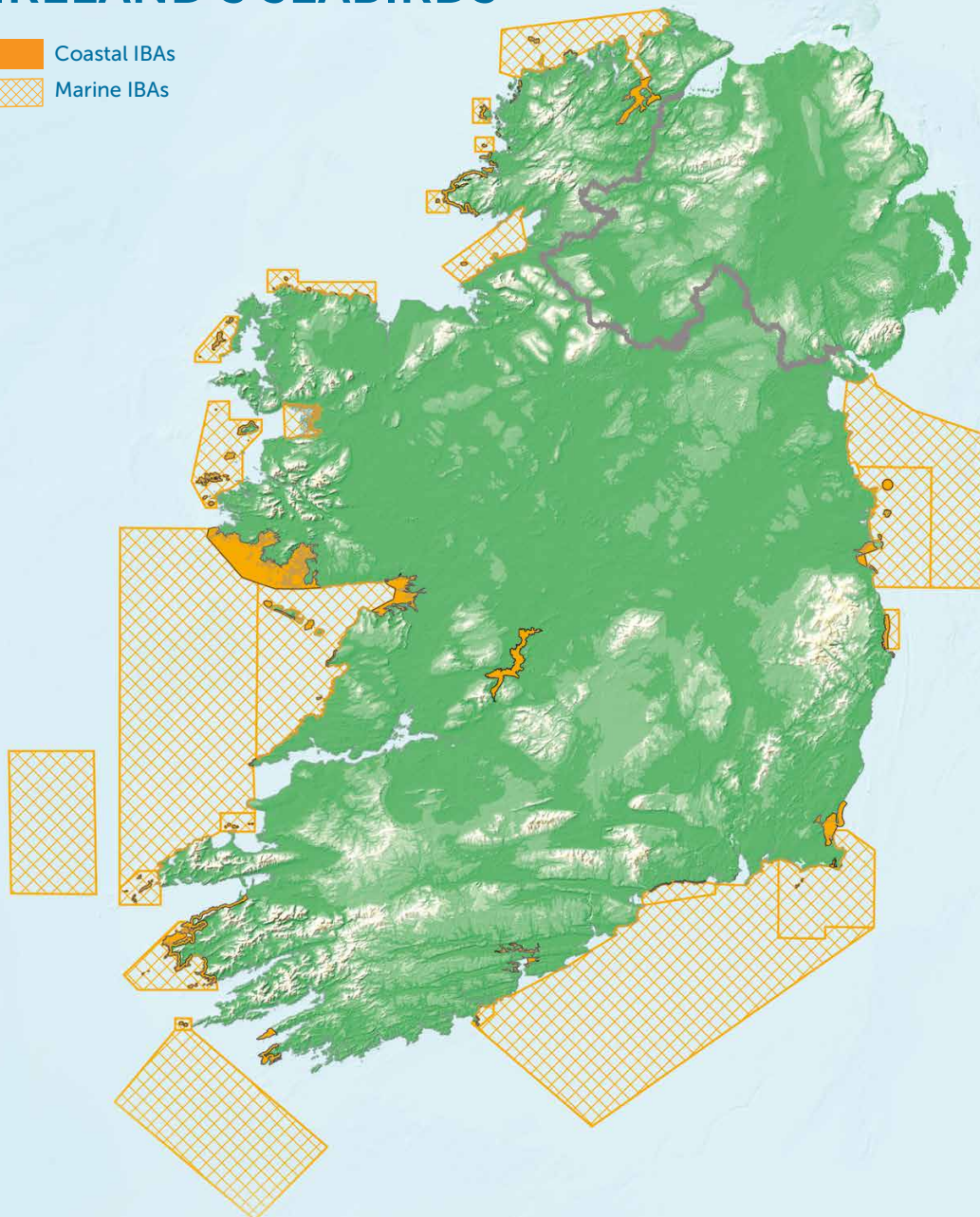


# Important Areas for Ireland's Seabirds and their Contribution to Protected Area Targets



# IMPORTANT AREAS FOR IRELAND'S SEABIRDS

 Coastal IBAs  
 Marine IBAs



## MARINE PROTECTION IN IRELAND

Commitment to protect  
**30%**  
of marine territory by 2030

**10%**  
of Ireland's marine territory is  
currently protected

**<2%**  
of Ireland's marine territory  
is protected for birds

**24**  
breeding seabird species  
in Ireland

**49**  
coastal IBAs

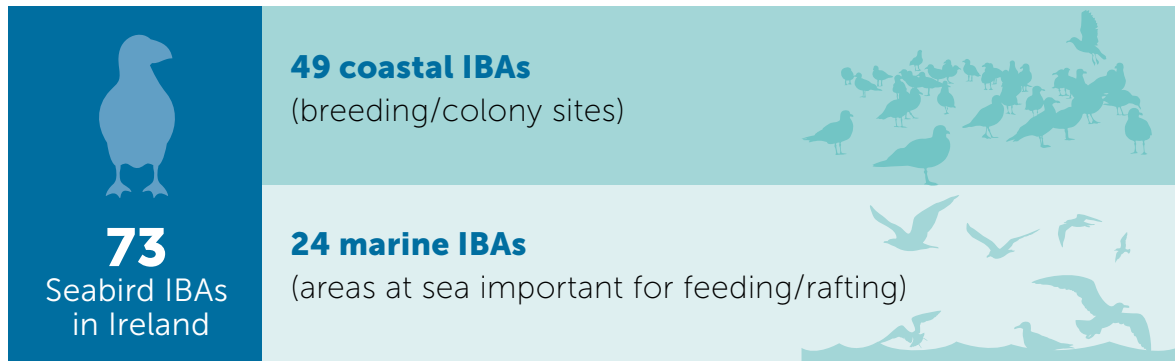
**24**  
marine IBAs

IBAs cover **7.6%**  
of Ireland's marine territory

Located on the Atlantic edge of Europe, with an extensive coastline, many offshore islands, and vast marine waters, Ireland supports a rich maritime biodiversity and heritage and is home to some of the most iconic seabird colonies in Europe.

BirdWatch Ireland and BirdLife International have identified the most important areas for seabirds in Ireland - areas qualifying as Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) due to the seabird numbers they hold - using the best available data.

### We identified



BirdLife's IBAs represent a global network of the most significant sites for the conservation of wild birds based on specific criteria and thresholds. IBAs have been identified in more than 200 countries, and although not a legal protection mechanism, have been used to directly inform the designation of thousands of protected areas. In the EU, their value for informing the designation of protected areas for birds under the EU Birds Directive - Special Protection Areas (SPAs) - is widely recognised, including by the European Court of Justice.

## WE CALL ON THE IRISH GOVERNMENT

- **To designate all seabird IBAs as SPAs.**
- **To review and update existing SPAs using the new IBA data.**
- **To develop management plans for all SPAs** with clearly defined and quantifiable science-based conservation objectives and establish and implement the conservation measures necessary to achieve these objectives.
- **To support the development of avian sensitivity maps** and their use to inform marine spatial planning, in particular the deployment of offshore renewables.

Ireland has committed to protecting 30% of its land and marine territory by 2030. The designation of Ireland's seabird IBAs as SPAs, and if properly managed, would make a significant contribution to achieving this target, in particular for the marine environment, and securing the future for Ireland's iconic seabird populations.



## Why Action is Needed for Ireland's Seabirds

- 23 out of 24 Irish breeding seabirds have an unfavourable conservation status.
- Lack of protection for seabirds in the marine environment and at breeding/colony sites.
- Avian influenza has seriously impacted populations of some seabird species in Ireland.

## Main Existing Pressures on Ireland's Seabirds

- Fishing (seabird bycatch & overfishing).
- Predation of nests and chicks at breeding/colony sites, including by invasive species (e.g., rats).
- Disturbance by human activities (at sea and at breeding/colonies sites).
- Marine pollution (e.g., plastics).
- Climate change intensifies existing pressures, such as on prey availability, and it increases extreme weather events.

## Main Future Threats to Ireland's Seabirds

- Offshore renewables deployment (collision, displacement, barrier effects).
- Expansion of other human activities at sea and at breeding/colonies sites.
- The cumulative impacts of existing pressures and future threats.

**Further information** on Ireland's seabird IBAs, including the methodology used to identify them, can be found on the BirdWatch Ireland website [www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie) or from [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie). IBA shapefiles can be requested via the **BirdLife DataZone**.



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