

ECOREGION **General advice**
SUBJECT **Data collection and storage to implement the OSPAR seabird recommendations**

Advice summary

ICES advises that the OSPAR contracting parties share the responsibility of collating the relevant data for the seven bird species mentioned in OSPAR's Recommendations 2011/1–7. It is suggested that each of the individual contracting parties (lead countries) is given the responsibility of collecting and storing data for one (or several) species.

The data collection should follow, whenever possible, international standard methods. Data for each species should be stored by the responsible lead country as part of their national monitoring schemes. While some data are easily stored in standard formats, others will require the development of more sophisticated formats for convenient data exchange and comparison among contracting parties.

Standardization and harmonization of data collection methods and reporting is crucial to ensure the comparability that is necessary for comprehensive and broader assessments at the regional and subregional levels. Several initiatives are currently working towards international standards for collection, exchange, and storage of seabird data. ICES does not at this stage recommend the creation of a central database, but a central portal might be considered.

ICES wishes to explore, together with OSPAR, the further development of a common format for seabird data collection and reporting. A dedicated workshop is suggested as a possibility for relevant country experts to meet and design the framework for the required data collection and reporting.

ICES recommends that principles similar to those stated above should apply to all OSPAR seabird data.

Request

ICES is requested to advise on suitable arrangements (including format) for data collection and storage resulting from the implementation of OSPAR Recommendations 2011/1-7 on seabirds, taking into account existing data collection arrangements and compatibility with current developments under MSFD implementation.

ICES advice

In 2011 OSPAR adopted seven Recommendations (OSPAR 2011/1-7) for furthering the protection and conservation of seven bird species:

- Lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus fuscus*)
- Ivory gull (*Pagophila eburnea*)
- Little shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis baroli*)
- Balearic shearwater (*Puffinus mauretanicus*)
- Black-legged kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla tridactyla*)
- Roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*)
- Thick-billed murre (*Uria lomvia*)

The purpose of the Recommendations is to strengthen the protection of all life stages of these species. Article 3.2 in the Recommendations states:

“Acting collectively within the framework of the OSPAR Commission, Contracting Parties should: develop and implement a monitoring and assessment strategy and data collection tools to promote and coordinate the collection of information on distribution, status of, threats to and impacts on the species, that can contribute to the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, where appropriate, including... “ ...species-specific requirements.

1. Arrangements for data collection and storage

ICES suggests that the contracting parties share the responsibility for collating the relevant data for the seven seabird species (according to the OSPAR Recommendations). This could be achieved by each of the individual contracting parties (lead countries) being given the responsibility for collecting and storing data for one (or several) species.

There is considerable variability in the available methods for collecting and reporting seabird data. This might lead to lack of comparability, preventing comprehensive and broader assessments at the regional and subregional levels. Consequently, standardization and harmonization of data collection and reporting (including formats) is of major importance.

Data collection should follow international standard methods whenever possible. Walsh *et al.* (1995) present a compilation of methods for survey and monitoring of seabirds. Schmeller *et al.* (2012) provide an overview of bird monitoring in Europe. Both may form a useful basis for further development and agreement at the OSPAR level.

Data for each species should be stored by the responsible lead country as part of their national monitoring schemes. While some data are easily stored in standard formats (e.g. population size, breeding success), others will require the development of more sophisticated formats for convenient data exchange among contracting parties (e.g. tracking data, diet data). Barrett *et al.* (2007) review different methods used to collect dietary data from marine birds.

Several other initiatives are currently working towards international standards for collection, exchange, and storage of seabird data and therefore ICES does not recommend the creation of a central database at this stage. However, it is important that data are stored in a format that allows easy comparison and exchange of data among the contracting parties. The creation of a central portal may therefore be considered.

ICES recommends that principles similar to those stated above should apply to all OSPAR seabird data.

2. Data collection arrangements and compatibility

In many cases, data are already being collected as part of national monitoring schemes or will be collected as part of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) or other directives, conventions, and international agreements. Table 1.5.5.2.1 identifies known data collections and suggests a responsible contracting party for each species; this requires further discussion by contracting parties.

Table 1.5.5.2.1 Known data collections by species. This list may not be complete.

Species	Population trends	Breeding success	Survival rates	Diets	Contaminants	Movements	Suggested Lead country
Lesser black-backed gull	X	X	X	X	X	X	Norway
Ivory gull	X	X			X	X	Norway
Little shearwater	X	X				X	Portugal
Balearic shearwater	X	X	X			X	Spain
Black-legged kittiwake	X	X	X	X	X	X	UK
Roseate tern	X	X	X	X		X	UK
Thick-billed murre	X	X	X	X		X	Iceland

When deciding on seabird data collection and storage at the OSPAR level, some other issues must be taken into account. Firstly, it should be determined whether the database(s) should be open to public access. For seabirds much data is collected by interest organizations and NGOs (e.g. ESAS) in addition to data collected through state-financed projects and monitoring programmes. Also, should access be given to data within all parameter categories? Close coordination and comparability with other commitments must be ensured and overlapping actions avoided.

ICES is aware of funding problems related to the international collation, assessment, and reporting of seabird data. So far ICES experts have collated and reported on data for OSPAR regions II and III, but funding for experts participating in ICES seabird meetings is becoming increasingly scarce, a problem that should be addressed by OSPAR.

ICES recommendation

ICES wishes to explore, together with OSPAR, the further development of a common format for seabird data collection and reporting. A dedicated workshop is suggested as a possibility for relevant country experts to meet and design the framework for the required data collection and reporting.

Sources

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- ICES. 2012. Report of the Joint ICES/OSPAR *Ad hoc* Group on Seabird Ecology (AGSE), 28–29 November 2012, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2012/ACOM:82. 30 pp.
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