



Barton Point Important Bird Area Diego Garcia

Important Bird Areas in the Chagos Archipelago

The Important Bird Area (IBA) Programme is a worldwide initiative coordinated by BirdLife International. It is aimed at identifying, documenting and working towards the conservation and sustainable management of a network of critical sites for the world's birds. It began in Europe in the 1980s and had, by 2000, a global reach.

To be recognised as an IBA, a site has to meet one of four criteria. It must either: hold at least one species of global conservation concern; be a significant component of a restricted range species whose breeding distribution defines an Endemic Bird Area (or Secondary Area); be a significant component of a group of species that are largely or wholly restricted to one biome; or be congregations on a regular basis of over 1% of a biogeographic population of a waterbird species. All of the IBAs identified to date in the British Indian Ocean Territory are of the last type.

There are 10 IBAs identified in BIOT to date¹. Included in these is Barton Point Nature Reserve on Diego Garcia that holds internationally important breeding numbers of the Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* with over 4,000 pairs in 1995. Other species that have gained an atoll IBA status are, Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* with over 11,000 pairs breeding on Danger Island and Sea Cow, Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* with over 13,000 breeding pairs on Nelson, Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* with over 32,000 breeding pairs on Ile Longue (Peros Banhos) and Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* with at least 420 pairs breeding in burrows on North Brother².

The remaining rat free islands within the Chagos provide a sanctuary in the central Indian Ocean for ground nesting seabirds in a biome that is being diminished by man's intrusion throughout the periphery. It is critical for the populations of Indian Ocean seabirds that the Chagos IBAs remain protected and undisturbed habitats.

¹ BirdLife International (2004). *Important Bird Areas in Asia: key sites for conservation*. Cambridge, UK, BirdLife International (BirdLife Conservation Series No. 13).

² Carr, P. (2006). British Indian Ocean Territory. In Sanders, S.M. ed. (2006) *Important Bird Areas in the United Kingdom Overseas Territories*. Sandy, UK: RSPB.

The **Chagos Conservation Trust** is a charity (Registered in the UK No. 1031561), whose aims are to promote conservation, scientific and historical research, and to advance education concerning the archipelago. The Trust is a non political association.

If you would like more information on the publications or membership, please contact the Secretary (simonhughes@hughes-mccormack.co.uk).

Visit www.chagosconservationtrust.org