



IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Criteria for Site Selection

DEFINITION

An Important Bird Area is a site providing essential habitat for one or more species of breeding or non-breeding birds in South Carolina.

BACKGROUND

Standardized criteria are used to identify and select Important Bird Areas. These criteria reflect the quantity and/or quality of bird life in a given area. Every attempt should be made to fulfill one or more of the criteria when nominating a site for IBA designation, but the criteria are not absolute, and all nominations will be carefully weighed based on the available data.

In addition to the criteria, a number of general characteristics should be applicable to the nominated site whenever possible, as follows:

- a) The site should be predominately **natural area**, broadly defined (for example, landfills and abandoned mine sites are likely exclusions)
- b) There is no minimum or maximum size, but the site should be **clearly delimitable** from surrounding areas (boundaries can include rivers, roadways or other clear divisions), while also being **large enough to encompass most of the birds' needs** (for example, feeding and roosting areas for migratory shorebirds).
- c) Site may be **protected** (such as national parks and refuges) **or unprotected**; if unprotected, there should be some potential for the site to be protected in the future or managed for the benefit of birds.

The criteria are divided into five major categories below. The fifth category, Important Bird Research Areas, includes research sites that contribute to long-term bird conservation.

Important Bird Areas may be significant on different scales: State, National, Continental, or Global. Criteria used for National and higher IBAs are similar to State criteria but at higher thresholds. Send nominations to the South Carolina committee; if a site appears to qualify for a National or higher designation it will also be reviewed by the National Audubon Society committee and leading scientists and endorsed by BirdLife International.

CRITERIA

CATEGORY 1: SITES FOR ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES, OR SPECIES OF CONCERN IN SOUTH CAROLINA

The site holds a number of individuals classified as endangered, threatened or of special concern in the state. These species include the following: **Endangered or Threatened**: Wood Stork, Swallow-tailed Kite, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Wilson's Plover, Piping Plover, Least Tern, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bewick's Wren, Bachman's Warbler. **Species of Concern**: Brown Pelican, American Bittern, Little Blue Heron, Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel (breeding populations only), Black Rail, Royal Tern, Black Skimmer, Barn Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Loggerhead Shrike.



(CRITERIA CONTINUED)

The significance of the site should be judged relative to overall numbers of the species in the state and to numbers occurring at other sites. Sites should be those areas where the species regularly occurs, or sites with suitable habitat where reintroductions are planned. Sites should not include areas where the species occurs irregularly or has not recently occurred.

CATEGORY 2: SITES FOR SPECIES ON THE NATIONAL WATCHLIST WITH SIGNIFICANT POPULATIONS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

The site regularly holds one or more species on the national Partners In Flight WatchList (high priority) with significant breeding or wintering populations in the State. Applicable species: Swainson's Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Prairie Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler. Significant areas include one or two sites in the state that have the largest concentrations of these species, and those with several of these species regularly present in substantial numbers.

CATEGORY 3: SITES FOR SPECIES ASSEMBLAGES ASSOCIATED WITH A REPRESENTATIVE, RARE OR THREATENED NATURAL COMMUNITY TYPE

The site regularly holds an assemblage of species wholly or largely associated with a specific habitat type that is representative, rare or threatened within the state. This category will mainly cover relatively large areas capable of supporting populations of species within particular habitat requirements. The significance of the site should be judged based on the completeness of the avian assemblage relative to other similar sites; characteristic species of birds (and other wildlife) indicative of the habitat type should be identified and quantified.

"Representative" sites are those of exceptional extent or intactness, and should be selected using the generalized list of habitats on the nomination form. Rare and threatened habitat types include the following: Bald Cypress-Tupelo Gum Swamp, Bottomland Hardwood Forest, Cove Forest, Depression Meadow, Marl Forest, Piedmont Seepage Forest, Pine Savannah, Southern Mixed Hardwood Forest, Tidal Freshwater Marsh, Upland Depression Swamp Forest.

CATEGORY 4: SITES WHERE BIRDS REGULARLY CONCENTRATE IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS WHEN BREEDING, IN WINTER, OR DURING MIGRATION

4a. The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, at least 1,000 waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans) over a short period of time during any portion of the year. Feral or highly sedentary populations (of Canada geese, for example) should not be included when applying this criterion.

4b. The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, at least 1,000 pelagic seabirds over a short period of time during any portion of the year, and is not limited to terrestrial areas.

4c. The site is regularly an important migratory stopover or wintering area that is known or thought to hold at least 1,000 shorebirds over a short period of time.

4d. The site is a "bottleneck" or migratory corridor that is known or thought to hold at least 1,000 raptors (seasonal total). The area may be large enough to include topographic features that funnel birds through a particular site.

4e. The site is a "bottleneck" or migratory corridor that is known or thought to hold at least 500 colonial waterbirds (including herons, egrets, ibises, terns and skimmers) during any portion of the year.

4f. The site is known or thought to hold an exceptional number or diversity of landbirds during migration season. Exact numerical thresholds are unknown at present, but the site should clearly be an outstanding "migrant trap" or staging area. Please provide any quantitative data available when nominating such a site.

4g. The site is known or though to hold a significant proportion of a species' statewide or regional population at one time during some portion of the year. This includes any site holding more than 1% of the regional or flyway population of a species, or when a site holds significantly higher numbers of a species than any other site.

CATEGORY 5: SITES IMPORTANT FOR LONG-TERM AVIAN RESEARCH OR MONITORING (IMPORTANT BIRD RESEARCH AREAS)

An indicator of such a site will be a long record of data collection, usually resulting in publication in statewide or national ornithological journals. Only outdoor sites will be considered.