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The Maine Important Bird Areas Program

GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION:

In an effort to further the conservation of birds and their habitats, Maine Audubon, with assistance from its conservation partners and guided by a diverse steering committee, initiated a statewide Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program. The primary goals of the Maine IBA Program are to 1) identify key areas that contribute to the conservation of important bird populations or communities, 2) work cooperatively with land owners and managers to conserve these areas through habitat management and/or land acquisition/easement, 3) promote public and private participation in bird conservation efforts, and 4) provide public education and community outreach at areas where public access allows. The IBA Program in Maine seeks to identify the top 100 areas in the state considered most important for overall bird conservation, but will not necessarily identify *all* areas important for birds in the state.

DEFINITIONS:

An IBA is an area that provides important habitat for one or more species of breeding, wintering, or migrating birds. IBAs generally support birds of conservation concern (including Threatened and Endangered species), large concentrations of birds, and birds associated with unique or exceptional habitat. They may also have high historic research value for bird conservation. Areas may be protected or unprotected, and either in public or private hands. IBAs may be of any size, but are usually discrete and distinguishable in character, habitat, or ornithological importance from surrounding areas. Where possible, IBAs should be large enough to supply all or most of the needs of birds during the season for which the IBA is important. Area boundaries may be either natural (e.g., rivers, ridges, islands, watersheds) or human-made (e.g., roads, property boundaries).

NOMINATION PROCESS AND IBA SELECTION:

Selection of approximately 100 IBAs in Maine will be made from a pool of potential IBAs nominated by citizens, landowners, Audubon chapter members, government personnel, conservation organizations and sporting groups. The Maine IBA program will rely heavily on public participation throughout the nomination process, and will be actively soliciting IBA nominations from a wide variety of people.

Because nominations will require information about birds using an area, landowner permission for access will be absolutely necessary for collecting data on bird abundance. The Maine IBA

Program is committed to working cooperatively with land owners and managers who are interested in managing IBAs for bird conservation.

The nomination process will be open for at least a year and depending on responses may remain open for a longer period of time. Nominations will be reviewed by the Maine IBA Technical Committee, a group of almost two dozen natural resource professionals and citizens with expertise and knowledge about Maine's bird populations. There will be several rounds of IBA selection out of the pool of nominations in the coming years.

It should be stressed that the IBA Program seeks to identify the most important and highest priority areas across the state for bird conservation. Every area that supports an Endangered or Threatened species will not necessarily qualify as an IBA. Rather, areas that are nominated will be compared to each other and those deemed most important relative to the others will be selected as IBAs. Review of Maine IBAs will be necessary over time as bird conservation concerns change and as species lists used as the basis for IBA criteria are updated (e.g., Endangered and Threatened species, special concern species, Partners In Flight priority ratings, see below).

CRITERIA:

An area can be nominated for an IBA if it meets at least one of the three primary criteria below. Two additional secondary criteria are also included that may strengthen the case for nomination. Selection of IBAs will then be decided based on how well they meet the criteria. Some areas will obviously meet several criteria. *These criteria are not absolute and should be viewed as guidelines only.* Other factors, such as relative importance or a unique combination of characteristics, may be considered when making final IBA selections. Additionally, as lists that are the basis for criteria are updated over time, so too will the character of potential IBAs. IBAs may be dropped as bird populations and the associated IBA criteria change over time, and new IBAs added.

PRIMARY CRITERIA:

1. AREAS FOR THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Areas that regularly support breeding or non-breeding birds listed as Endangered or Threatened at either the state or federal level. The area should have regular and/or recent records for species (within the past 10 years). There is no minimum number to meet the criteria but ideally areas should include at least 1% of the state population (if known) in a season, or be the 3-5 areas in the state with the highest regularly occurring numbers. The list of species includes:

Harlequin Duck	Upland Sandpiper	Razorbill
Bald Eagle	Roseate Tern	Atlantic Puffin
Golden Eagle	Arctic Tern	Sedge Wren
Peregrine Falcon	Least Tern	American Pipit (breeding)
Piping Plover	Black Tern	Grasshopper Sparrow

2. AREAS FOR SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

Areas that regularly support substantial breeding or non-breeding species that are of conservation concern due to vulnerable and/or declining populations either locally, regionally, or globally. These include all species on the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's special

concern list, regular breeders or migrants ranked by Partners in Flight as Category IA (High Continental Priority/Regional Responsibility), priority species as identified by the National Shorebird Conservation Plan, and additional species that in the expert opinion of the Technical Committee warrant conservation concern. The area should have regular and/or recent records for species (within the past 10 years). There is no minimum number to meet the criteria, but ideally areas will have at least 25 breeding pairs, 5% or more of the state population (if known), or be one of the 2-3 areas in the state with the highest regularly occurring numbers. Areas may also be considered under this criterion if they include a substantial mix of these species. The list of species will be revised and updated as priority and special concern species change over time. The current list of species includes:

Leach's Storm-Petrel	American Woodcock	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Great Cormorant	Red-necked Phalarope	Blackburnian Warbler
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Laughing Gull	Prairie Warbler
Least Bittern	Common Tern	Bay-breasted Warbler
Barrow's Goldeneye	Black-billed Cuckoo	Louisiana Waterthrush
Northern Harrier	Eastern Screech-owl	Canada Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Long-eared Owl	Scarlet Tanager
Northern Goshawk	Short-eared Owl	Eastern Towhee
Red-shouldered Hawk	Whip-poor-will	Field Sparrow
Yellow Rail	Three-toed Woodpecker	Vesper Sparrow
Common Moorhen	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
American Coot	Loggerhead Shrike (migrants)	Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Willet	Yellow-throated Vireo	Bobolink
Whimbrel	Bicknell's Thrush	Eastern Meadowlark
Ruddy Turnstone	Wood Thrush	Rusty Blackbird
Purple Sandpiper	Blue-winged Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Dunlin	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Short-billed Dowitcher	Cape May Warbler	

3. AREAS WITH SUBSTANTIAL CONCENTRATIONS OF BIRDS AND/OR HIGH SPECIES DIVERSITY

Areas that regularly support high concentrations of one or more species in the breeding or non-breeding season or during migration. The area should have regular and/or recent records for species (within the past 10 years). The guidelines below suggest thresholds for minimum numbers but should not be viewed as absolute. Numerical estimates should be based on a short period of time, e.g. one-time counts such as daily surveys, not cumulative totals over a season (with the exception of raptors, see below). Exotic and feral species are not included.

A. WATERBIRDS: The area regularly supports at least 100 waterbirds (at one time) if inland or at least 500 waterbirds (at one time) if coastal, during some part of the year. (For IBA purposes, “waterbirds” include non-colonial breeders that may migrate or winter in large groups, including loons, grebes, geese, dabbling/diving ducks).

B. SEABIRDS: The area regularly supports at least 1,000 gulls, 200 terns, or 200 alcids, pelagics and/or in-shore seabirds (at one time) during some part of the year. Pelagic areas are the actual location being used by seabirds, not the point of land from which an observer counts seabirds. Smaller concentrations of less common gulls such as Laughing or

Bonapartes will be considered. Human-made food sources for gulls such as landfills, sewage outflows, etc. will not be considered. (For IBA purposes, “seabirds” are colonial breeders as well as those wintering or migrating at sea in large concentrations, including cormorants, eiders, alcids, gulls, terns, storm-petrels, and other pelagic birds (e.g., shearwaters, jaegers, gannets)).

C. SHOREBIRDS: The area regularly supports at least 100 small shorebirds (“peeps”) and/or 40 medium/large shorebirds (at one time) if inland, or at least 1,000 “peeps” and/or 100 medium/large shorebirds (at one time) if coastal, during some part of the year. (Mainly non-breeders that migrate through the state in large numbers, including plovers, sandpipers, snipe, woodcock, phalaropes).

D. WADING BIRDS: The area regularly supports 60 breeding pairs or 50 foraging wading birds (at one time). (Mainly colonial nesters and/or those that congregate for feeding or staging, including herons, egrets and ibises).

E. RAPTORS: The area is a regular seasonal migration corridor or “bottleneck” for at least 1,000 individuals over the course of the season.

F. MIGRATORY LAND BIRDS: The area is an important and regular stopover or seasonal concentration site for migratory landbirds (e.g., warblers, other non-passerine migrants, etc.), supports exceptionally high densities of breeding species as shown from point counts or other surveys, and/or represents a “migrant trap” relative to surrounding areas. Strong consideration will be given to areas with consistently high overall species diversity.

G. EXCEPTIONAL ABUNDANCE/DIVERSITY: The area is recognized within Maine as having an exceptional concentration and/or diversity of bird life which is clearly outstanding relative to other areas, though may not meet the thresholds described above. Includes areas that do not necessarily harbor large numbers of birds but provide important habitat for many more species, unique species assemblages, or more individuals than most other areas.

SECONDARY CRITERIA:

4. AREAS FOR SPECIES ASSOCIATED WITH RARE, VULNERABLE OR EXEMPLARY HABITAT TYPES

Areas that support species assemblages dependent on rare or unique habitat types or natural communities within the state, or areas that are exceptional, high-quality, representative examples (e.g., large and intact) of other habitat types or natural communities and contain associated species assemblages.

5. AREAS IMPORTANT FOR RESEARCH/MONITORING:

Areas that are important for long-term avian research and/or monitoring projects that contribute substantially to ornithology and bird conservation.