



# ATLANTIC MARINE BIRD COOPERATIVE

Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative (AMBC) Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Working Group: *Detecting avian displacement from offshore wind energy and developing a framework to offset impacts to birds*

**Facilitator:** Holly Goyert, PhD, Director of Net Positive Initiative at Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI)

**Attendees:** ~80 attendees; please reach out to Holly for participant list, to update contact information.

**Focus:** Offshore wind development and its effects on marine bird species.

## Introduction and Key Topics

### 1. Avian Displacement Detection:

Methods to identify and quantify bird displacement caused by offshore wind infrastructure.

- a. In April 2021, AMBC MSP sent a [letter to BOEM](#): a technical review of the BOEM avian survey guidelines, recommending development of post-construction monitoring guidance to detect effects of OSW on birds, focusing on displacement.
- b. This led to development of the [NY E-TWG Specialist Committee on Avian Displacement](#), which developed:
  1. Guidance for Pre- and Post-Construction Monitoring to Detect Bird Distribution and Habitat Use Changes and
  2. Recommendations for Evaluating Existing Bird Survey Data for OSW Site Characterization.
- c. To continue that effort, the RWSC has now established a Marine Bird Distribution Working Group

### 2. Compensatory Mitigation and Net Positive Strategies:

Approaches to offset negative impacts on bird populations, ensuring long-term species conservation.



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- a. In August 2023, AMBC MSP sent [a letter to BOEM and USFWS](#) requesting guidance on avian compensatory mitigation and voluntary conservation offsets from both BOEM and USFWS.
- b. This led to formation of a National Offshore Wind Team, a State of the Science [Workshop](#) on Compensatory Mitigation for Offshore Wind, and development of a framework internal to the USFWS.
- c. The core group from the AMBC MSP that has been active in this topic has been working on a Perspectives paper providing a bit more detail on what topics to consider in development of an open stakeholder workshop and publicly-released framework.

## Collaborations and Associated Talks

### Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC) involvement.

- Presentation on Marine Bird Distribution Working Group by Patrick Roberts (USFWS).
- Marine Bird Distribution Working Group activities, including links to NYSERDA's displacement guidance methods.

### Observational Survey Emphasis

- Strengthening data quality for displacement assessments:
  - Individual observational data, radar imagery, behavioral monitoring, and remote visual surveys.
- Objective: Improve understanding of offshore wind impacts to guide conservation measures.
- Scope: Regional and national engagement.
- Schedule: Monthly meetings, every 3rd Tuesday at 2:00 PM, with open, voluntary participation.

### Working Group Activities

- Discuss marine bird distributions and related data.
- Host webinars and presentations on data collection and analysis methodologies.



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- Develop products such as guidance documents and standardized monitoring protocols.
- Form small teams focused on specific product development (e.g., standardized surveys, data management guides).

## **Working Group Goals**

1. **Implement Displacement Surveys:**  
Launch dedicated projects to refine survey methodologies and interpretation.
2. **Standardize Survey Data Treatment:**  
Establish data management and analytical standards to ensure consistent, comparable results.

## **Near-Term Focus Areas**

- Draft a justification statement highlighting the necessity of displacement-focused surveys in monitoring programs.
- Advance power analysis efforts; a funding proposal is currently under review by BOEM ESP.
- Improve data management standards and analytical guidance; actively seek funding opportunities.
- Consider establishing a review panel to assist developers in creating effective monitoring plans.
- Integrate open-source machine learning techniques for displacement data processing; a related presentation is scheduled for February.

## **Additional Discussions**

- The group remains open to new participants, presentations, and collaborations.
- **From David Bigger (BOEM):**  
Discussion on the group's potential leverage under changing administrative contexts.



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## SeaSCRIBE2

- **Update** from Andrew Gilbert, BRI
- **SeaSCRIBE2 Release and Features:**
  - A data collection application for offshore wildlife surveyors designed for efficient, standardized data entry.
  - Captures geo-referenced effort and observation data, environmental conditions, and behavioral notes.
  - Supports tagging images and audio clips to specific observations.
  - Exports data in JSON or CSV formats, with integrated reporting tools.
- **Recent Updates:**
  - Now compatible with iOS and Android.
  - Manual has been updated.
  - Feedback, suggestions, or bug reports can be sent to: [seascribe.boem.gov](mailto:seascribe.boem.gov).
- **Integration Considerations:**
  - Potential integration with eBird for broader usage.
  - eBird currently lacks the rigor required by this group's scientific standards.
  - Move toward more effort-based data collection and specialized protocols.
  - Some data private so can't necessarily share data with everyone but could be shared once collected.
  - Could give pelagic birders more incentive to log observations – beholden to backing up the device.
  - eBird is platform of choice. eBird has own pelagic survey methodology, which could be at odds with data rigor. Would be great to have the option of direct portability – Sea McKeon, ABC
  - Chris Haney has used eBird pelagic protocol, and inadequate for meeting agency requirements.



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- Though can add metadata through eBird comments (and distance measures now), eBird without distance bins and metadata/effort data
- The eBird team, and Michael Schrimpf, are working on this. It's a long process. (Emily Runnells)

## Workshop Summary: Compensatory Mitigation for Avian Species Impacted by Offshore Wind

- **Overview** by Holly Goyert, on behalf of Kyle Baker (BOEM) who was invited and planned to present but then was unable to attend the AMBC MSP breakout session.
- **Workshop Link:** <https://www.boem.gov/environment/environmental-studies/state-science-workshop-compensatory-mitigation-offshore-wind>
- **Goals:**
  - Provide background on compensatory mitigation.
  - Develop a shared understanding of the stepped approach to compensatory mitigation.
  - Explore mitigation strategies for offshore wind (OSW) impacts.
  - Discuss potential program administration methods.
- **Workshop Structure:**
  - Small table discussions.
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) presentation on calculating debits.
  - Panel discussions from Carbon Trust, onshore wind eagle program, onshore wind bat program, mitigation banking initiatives, and program implementation strategies.
  - Breakout groups to explore a regional, joint mitigation approach.



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## Resource Equivalency Analysis and Compensatory Mitigation Planning for Piping Plover, Rufa Red Knot and Roseate Terns

- **Presenter:** Scott Johnston (USFWS); Contributor: Stephanie Vail-Muse (USFWS), unable to attend.
- **Background and FWS Position:**
  - Offshore Wind Energy Development (OWED) poses risks to federally listed, proposed, and at-risk species (e.g., piping plover, rufa red knot, and roseate tern) due to collisions with turbines.
  - Under ESA Section 7 regulations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) can include compensatory mitigation measures in biological opinions to offset incidental take impacts.
  - BOEM and BSEE are the lead federal agencies, USFWS is the cooperating agency
  - Relevant regulatory processes: ESA, MBTA, NEPA, NHPA
  - BOEM trying to streamline consultations, estimating potential take, great working relationship
- **Compensatory Mitigation Program Development:**
  - The program uses the FWS Mitigation Policy and Endangered Species Act guidelines.
  - Focuses on species-specific conservation objectives and metrics to quantify benefits.
  - Mitigation can involve habitat restoration, species management, and threat control, with a priority on projects offering the greatest benefits.
  - REA new tool in mitigation world (started out in NRDAR). Trying to come up with more transparent process for implementing
  - AMBC MSP writing letter spurred on more attention to this topic.
  - Number of people on the call today, including West coast (Josh Adams, Aspen Ellis, Doug Forsell – one of first seabird biologists on East coast)



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- Started with Northeast and 3 listed species. Will expand to more of a regional approach to include non-ESA species (others managing that team that will be coming up soon).
- Continuous collaboration with developers. Similar projects – lock step with each other in terms of adequate projects
- RFI for ILF in December – what information they would need from USFWS to start a program
- **Finalize compensatory mitigation program internal guidance** (December). – keeping internal between BOEM and USFWS so on the same page, but that sort of thinking needs to be delivered externally.
- PRM would have to write check to entity and work with USFWS to manage and monitor that project.
- **Stakeholder Perspectives:**
  - Developers seek a consistent and transparent mitigation process.
  - Conservation groups and agencies request detailed descriptions of appropriate mitigation measures.
  - Interpretations – offsets for how long and where?
  - Can't document take – all estimated.
  - **AMBC could help inform when RFI comes out to inform internal guidance** (David Bigger) – it will be widely distributed to consultants, bankers, etc. to NGOs. Good opportunity for this group to share insights.
  - Joan Walsh: how to adapt take estimates to get to data deficiencies for ROST. New information (pilot) on birds coming north from Brazil. Flexibility to generate data, close down uncertainties
  - Requirements in BiOps to keep re-running SCRAM.
  - BCPE – data deficiency.
  - Timeline – RFI December – RFP process and timeline? May not need to run RFP.
  - **These things need to be regional**



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- Variability across beaches for REKN – within DE Bay and abroad in South America – different treatments and fitness
- Agreement between developer and consultant – can NFWF play role as 3rd party? NFWF doesn't play similar roles? IDEA program has potential but up to them. Would be excited if had 1 group interested. Wouldn't surprise if minimal.
- Sent out via various networks.
- **Mitigation envelope:** Where is the potential habitat – new areas that need better restoration? Doesn't always have to be brand new habitat. Mix of net conservation benefit and compensating for ESA species. Have that menu
- CA draft PEIS – compensatory mitigation during COP rather than post-approval
- BOEM curious to see how it works out.
- **Discussion:**
  - Collaboration with developers is critical for program acceptance.
  - Expansion opportunities include modeling the program for other regions or incorporating non-listed bird species.
- **Program Expansion:**
  - Initially focuses on the Northeast and listed birds but aims to include non-listed birds regionally.
  - Encourages ongoing collaboration with developers to mitigate impacts.
- **Timeline and Next Steps:**
  - **July:** Brief headquarters to gain support.
  - **April–August:** Develop program guidance detailing objectives, metrics, and implementation.
  - **July–August:** Engage with developers to highlight benefits and responsibilities.
  - **August:** Release an RFP for a mitigation instrument to identify sponsors.
  - **September:** Finalize guidance and select a nonprofit sponsor to manage funds and projects.





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- **October:** Launch the program, enabling developer participation.

## Next Steps & Working Group Directions

### Where to Go from Here:

- The working group will continue refining displacement detection methods and advancing compensatory mitigation frameworks.
- Participants are encouraged to suggest new focus areas, propose presentations, or volunteer for sub-teams tackling specific tasks (e.g., data standardization, machine learning tools).

### Resource Sharing & Participation:

- Meeting records, participant lists, and proposal documents are available for review and input.
- The group remains open, seeking broader representation from developers, state agencies, and additional NGOs.

### Anticipated Actions:

- Respond to the upcoming RFI on mitigation frameworks.
- Finalize internal guidance and work toward public-facing documents.
- Pursue funding to support analyses, workshops, and consensus-building exercises.
- Remain engaged with evolving regulatory contexts and technological advancements.