



Important Bird Area Criteria Definitions

A site meeting any one of the primary criteria (1-4) in the following categories may qualify as an Important Bird Area. Criterion 5 is a supplemental category and a site cannot qualify as an IBA for that alone. Many sites will meet several criteria. These criteria should not be considered absolute, and other factors, such as relative importance to other sites, may be weighed by the technical committee in making final site selections.

1. Species of Conservation Concern

Note: You will need to refer to the *Species of Conservation Concern* and the *Population Estimates and Criteria Thresholds* documents (available on the IBBA website) for assistance with Criteria 1a and 1b.

1a. State Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern Species

Description: Sites that regularly support significant breeding or non-breeding densities of one or more of the following species listed as endangered, threatened, or special concern in the state of New Jersey and federally listed species.

Applies primarily to breeding or wintering sites, though regular migratory areas may be considered if known to be of exceptional importance. Sites should be those where the species occurs or potentially occurs with some regularity, not areas of infrequent occurrence.

NJ Endangered Species

The site should have the presence of regular probable breeding activity or regular wintering of at least one of the species listed, and have been occupied within the last 5 years.

NJ Threatened Species

Colonial Species: The site should regularly have at least 1% of the state population in a season, and have been occupied within the last five years.

Solitary Species: The site should be one of 3-5 sites in the state with the highest regularly occurring numbers, and have been occupied within the last five years.

NJ Special Concern Species

Colonial Species: The site should regularly have at least 5% of the state population in a season, and have been occupied within the last five years.

Solitary Species: The site should regularly have at least 5% of the state population of two or more species listed below, and have been occupied within the last five years.

1b. Conservation Priority Species

Description: Species identified as conservation priorities through large-scale bird conservation plans and/or species that are considered conservation priorities by state experts but not listed as state Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern (Criterion 1a).

Colonial Species: The site should regularly have at least 5% of the state population in a season, and have been occupied within the last five years.

Solitary Species: The site should be one of 3-5 sites in the state with the highest regularly occurring numbers, and have been occupied within the last five years.

2. Regional Responsibility Species

Note: You will need to refer to the Regional Responsibility Species document (available for download from the IBBA website) for assistance with Criterion 2.

Description: This category is mainly meant to cover areas capable of supporting significant populations of breeding or wintering bird species for which New Jersey has a high responsibility for long-term conservation, even if they are not currently declining or threatened. These are species with a disproportionately high percentage of their total population in the Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) comprising NJ. Selection of sites will be based on avian assemblages within the habitat community types found within BCRs.

Generally, a site should have the presence of regular probable breeding activity or regular wintering of at least the number of species indicated on the Regional Responsibility Species document (i.e. the regular presence of at least 3 of the 11 species listed under Shrub-Scrub in BCR 28) within a given habitat, and have been occupied within the last 5 years to be considered. However, consideration will be given to sites that include a diversity of habitats, even if the individual habitat types do not have the required number of species.

3. Significant Congregations

Description: Sites that regularly holds significant numbers of one or more species, breeding or in winter. Significant numbers are not easily defined. The following are suggested to provide some logical thresholds for site selection. These numerical criteria (D1-5) are guidelines only, and other factors (quality and location of habitat, distribution and importance of species, etc.) may be considered. Except where indicated, numerical estimates should be based on a short period of time, e.g. one-time counts such as daily surveys -- not on cumulative totals. Introduced, feral, or superabundant species (Mute Swan, resident Canada Goose, Monk Parakeet, American Crow, European Starling, etc.) should not be counted.

3a. Waterfowl

The site regularly supports 500 or more waterfowl at inland sites, or 5,000 or more at coastal sites, in winter and/or in migration (staging). The designation "waterfowl" includes such birds as loons, grebes, cormorants, geese, ducks, and moorhens.

3b. Gulls and Terns

The site regularly supports 250 or more terns or at least 10% of the state population of gulls in a season. Human-made food sources for gulls (landfills, dumpsites, sewage outflows, etc.) will not be considered as IBBA's.

3c. Wading Birds

The site regularly supports 50 or more breeding pairs of wading birds or 100 or more roosting individuals. The designation "wading birds" includes such birds as bitterns, herons, egrets, and ibises.

3d. Exceptional Single Species Concentrations

The site regularly supports significant concentrations of a “colonial” species (i.e. winter roosts) but may not meet the thresholds above. Such sites should support a higher proportion of a species statewide population than other similar areas.

3e. Exceptional Diversity

The site supports an exceptional diversity of bird species. This would include sites that do not necessarily harbor large numbers of birds but that provide important habitat for more bird species than found at most sites. No absolute thresholds have been set owing to the scarcity of quantitative data, but sites should be clearly unique from other sites in the area.

4. Significant Migrant Stopover/Flyover

Description: Sites may qualify on the basis of exceptionally high numbers of birds during migration, or as “migrant traps” relative to the surrounding areas. Strong consideration will be given to areas with consistently high overall species diversity or diversity within a particular group (e.g., warblers).

4a. Raptors

The site is regularly an important stopover site, “bottleneck”, or migratory corridor for at least 3,000 raptors (seasonal total) during spring or fall migration.

4b. Shorebirds

The site is an important migratory stopover or seasonal concentration site for migratory shorebirds. The site should have at least 5% of the Atlantic flyway population or at least 3,000 individuals.

4c. Landbirds

The site is an important migratory stopover or seasonal concentration site for migratory landbirds and supports an exceptional diversity of bird species during migration. Thresholds may vary, but a site should be clearly unique from other sites in the area.

5. Long-term Research/Monitoring

Description: The site is a natural area where a long-term research and/or monitoring project is based that contributes substantially to ornithology and bird conservation.

These are generally sites with a distinguished record and/or unique potential for long-term research and monitoring, or exceptional educational value. There should be a minimum of 5 years of data collection, with data being summarized and available for public examination (i.e. via reports or peer-reviewed publications). Such sites may occur in urban, suburban, rural, or other settings.

Note: This is a secondary category, used to supplement or support a site nomination. A site cannot be nominated as an IBA solely on the basis of long-term avian research.