

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Ongoing Studies

Region: Headquarters

Planning Area(s): North Atlantic and Mid Atlantic

Title: Surveying for Marine Birds in the Northwest Atlantic (NT-09-03)

BOEM Cost: \$808,200

Period of Performance: FY 2009-2015

Conducting Organization(s): U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (M09PG00004).

BOEM Contact: [Elizabeth Burkhard](#)

Description:

Background: With the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, BOEM was delegated responsibilities for alternative energy activities on the Outer Continental Shelf. This responsibility includes offshore wind energy projects. Experience from onshore wind development suggests that the careful siting of facilities is critical to minimize impacts to bird species. Additional information is needed about which species of birds are present in areas of Federal jurisdiction, greater than three nautical miles offshore.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the College of Staten Island/City University of New York (CSI/SUNY), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, and the FWS have been working in partnership to collect data on marine bird distribution and abundance in portions of the offshore environment in the Atlantic Ocean. Through the efforts of graduate students from CSI/SUNY, ecologists collected data on seabirds while aboard four research vessel cruises. Space for two seabird ecologists at a time is available through collaboration with NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service.

Objectives: The objectives are:

1. To identify what species are present/absent, and
2. To determine areas where they tend to congregate and areas where they are absent or scarce.

This study will collect information on what species are found where in what seasons, and where they tend to congregate. Additionally, verification of where such "clusters" are NOT found is important information. Distance from shore, water depth, and bottom type where clusters are found will be collected as well.

Methods: Conduct field observations from Maine to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina for the presence/absence of birds offshore. Birds will be identified to species where possible. Trained observers with vision-enhancing equipment will conduct the observations from shipboard.

Importance to BOEM: The development of offshore alternative energy facilities has the potential to impact bird species. The data collected in this study is needed to help define the presence or absence of various bird species offshore. This information will be critical in decisions regarding placement of offshore facilities.

Current Status: Interagency agreement awarded on February 06, 2009. Cruises on ships of opportunity occur year-round and include the EcoMon and Herring Acoustic cruises conducted by NOAA as well as cruises by other groups occasionally. Data collected in 2009, 2010 and most of 2011 has been summarized and the 2012 season of surveys is underway. Additional surveys will occur in 2013 and 2014 with the final report due in February 2013.

Final Report Due: February 05, 2013

Publications: None.

Affiliated Web Sites: None.

Revised Date: May 15, 2012

ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System

All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:

<http://www.boem.gov/Environmental-Stewardship/Data-and-Information-Systems.aspx>