

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Ongoing Studies**

**Region:** Headquarters

**Planning Area(s):** Atlantic

**Title:** Compendium of Avian Information: Part 2

**BOEM Cost:** \$228,788

**Period of Performance:** FY 2011-2013

**Conducting Organization(s):** USGS (M11PG00059)

**BOEM Contact:** [Dr. James Woehr](#)

### **Description:**

Background: With the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the 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 siting of facilities is critical to minimize impacts to bird species, particularly migratory birds. In the initial Avian Compendium study, available information contained in Atlases, Census compilations and in databases held by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, State environmental agencies, academic institutions or non-governmental organizations such as the Audubon Society or the Sea Duck Joint Venture was collected. This information was compiled, synthesized, standardized, and incorporated into a comprehensive Geodatabase to assist BOEM scientists and decision-makers regarding potential impacts from wind energy development on the OCS. The need for this information was identified during the BOEM Alternative Energy workshop and in the Worldwide Synthesis and Analysis of the Existing Information Regarding Environmental Affects of Alternative Energy Uses on the OCS.

This initial compilation can serve as a basis for future studies by identifying key species of concern and data gaps. Since the BOEM jurisdiction generally begins at 3 nautical miles (nmi) offshore, the focus was, and will continue to be, on avian species likely to be at risk from activities occurring greater than 3 nmi. The initial study and the proposed follow-up study focus on the Atlantic Coast, from Maine to Florida.

New, significant sources of avian information are being generated by assessment and research efforts that would improve the value of the database, increasing the depth of its species and geographic coverage, and providing the basis for more extensive modeling of seabird occurrence.

Objectives: The objectives of the proposed follow-up study are: to incorporate new sources of avian information that are being collected in the Atlantic in anticipation of offshore wind development into the database developed in Part 1; to standardize the information collected to make it comparable; to add data provided by Tufts University on

beached birds; and to model seabird data based on biophysical parameters to be able to predict occurrence of seabirds and other birds in offshore environments.

**Importance to BOEM:** The Administration's Goals for Offshore Renewable Energy include: achieving 10 gigawatts of wind capacity in the OCS and Great Lakes by 2020, completing a noncompetitive offshore wind lease in 2011; completing a competitive offshore wind lease in 2012; and continuing to implement a streamlined, yet rigorous, environmental review process to facilitate responsible OCS renewable energy development. Much of the offshore wind development is focused on the Atlantic OCS. Information about birds usage of the Atlantic offshore environment is a critical element to ensure that this development is done in such a way as to minimize environmental impacts.

Development of offshore alternative energy facilities, particularly wind turbines, has the potential to impact bird species. The Avian Compendium database provides an important information resource that can assist with assessment of Atlantic OCS species distributions and identification of knowledge gaps, and also provides the knowledge base for modeling of factors that affect avian distribution and abundance. Knowledge about the numbers and distribution of bird species that are at risk would assist the BOEM in identifying locations that are preferred for wind energy development and those that should be avoided.

**Current Status:** September 22, 2011. A kick-off meeting was held and the researchers are adding additional datasets.

**Final Report Due:** September 21, 2013

**Publications:** None.

**Affiliated Web Sites:** None.

**Revised Date:** March 13, 2012

**ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System**

**All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:**

[http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data\\_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp](http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp)