

Environmental Studies Program: Studies Development Plan | FY 2025–2026

Field	Study Information
Title	Maintenance of the Northwest Atlantic Seabird Catalog (AT-25-01)
Administered by	Office of Renewable Energy Programs
BOEM Contact(s)	David Bigger (David.bigger@boem.gov), Timothy White (timothy.white@boem.gov)
Procurement Type(s)	Interagency Agreement
Performance Period	FY 2025–2030
Final Report Due	N/A
Date Revised	January 26, 2024
Problem	Continued support for developing and maintaining the integrity of databases housing marine bird data is needed to support the review energy development projects.
Intervention	Acquire and integrate new avian datasets into database.
Comparison	N/A
Outcome	Database that is accessible to the public.
Context	Atlantic OCS

BOEM Information Need(s): The development of offshore renewable energy facilities has the potential to impact bird species. Compiling data collected by marine bird surveys is key for making the decisions related to offshore energy proposal reviews. Continued support for developing and maintaining the integrity of databases housing marine bird data, in addition to conducting the analyses and syntheses necessary to support the review of offshore energy proposals, will allow BOEM to use the most recent and best available information for decision-making.

Background: With the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, BOEM was delegated responsibilities for alternative energy activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). This responsibility includes offshore wind energy projects. Experience from onshore wind development suggests that the careful siting of facilities is critical to minimizing impacts to bird species. Over the past 15 years, BOEM, the U.S. Geological Survey, NOAA, and other organizations, have generated a vast array of marine bird biological data.

Resource stewardship and public accountability obliges the BOEM to reap the full benefits of these investments, for use both internally and by our conservation partners. However, the full benefit can only be achieved with effective and efficient long-term data management, including data sharing, as well as the capacity to conduct data analyses. Furthermore, there is demand for access to this data, both within BOEM and by our agencies' partners, all of whom are having to make decisions about offshore energy projects and fulfill their responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act and other legal requirements. Meeting these needs will require sustained institutional support of data management and data syntheses and organizational

commitments to developing a culture that fully embraces knowledge management, data sharing, and collaboration with partners.

Since 2007, BOEM funded a series of studies to compile existing observational datasets of seabirds and shorebirds. These efforts provided the foundation to develop predictive models that describe past and future the distribution and abundance of almost 50 species on the Atlantic. The current geospatial database represents the most comprehensive accumulation of observations available along the Atlantic coast and is invaluable as a foundation for future field efforts. However, the database is most valuable if it is readily accessible to the public, maintained, and annually updated. BOEM is already incorporating the requirement that investigators submit their data to the catalog as a repository for sharing and compiling observations. The long-term maintenance requires dedicated funding to ensure that it is maintained. This study will establish an agreement with the National Center for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) to maintain the database for the next five years.

Objective(s): Provide access to and updating of the Northwest Atlantic Seabird Catalog to support energy siting decisions and other seabird research activities along the Atlantic coast and OCS, as well as expansion into other regions.

Methods: NCCOS will be the primary source for the database and responsible for maintaining and updating the database and ensuring the valuable datasets are available to the public for the next five years. Tasks associated with this responsibility include:

- Acquiring and integrating new avian tabular datasets with surveys of the OCS into the database. This includes the expansion of the geographic scope to include the Caribbean and other U.S. regions (e.g., Gulf of Mexico).
- Conducting QA/QC and standardization of legacy datasets, especially auxiliary information like flight height, etc.
- Providing public access to the data, including documentation.
- Standardizing legacy datasets as needed.
- Maintaining and updating or create a new segmentation algorithm.

Specific Research Question(s): N/A

Current Status: N/A

Publications Completed: N/A

Affiliated WWW Sites: [Offshore Wind Archives - NCCOS Coastal Science Website \(noaa.gov\)](#)

References: None