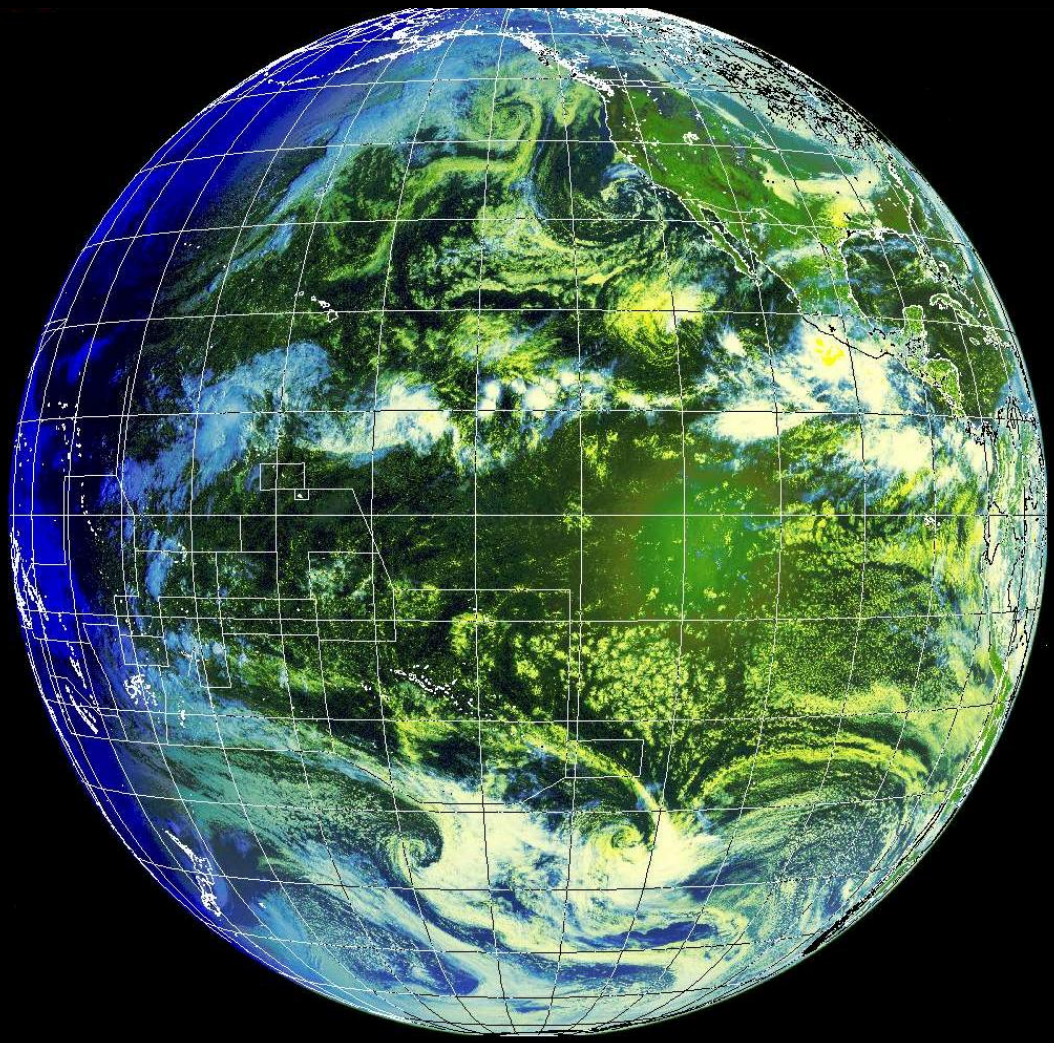

From Proteus and IBAT to a common vision for biodiversity data

Developing a common vision

- BirdLife International
- Conservation International
- IUCN – The World Conservation Union
- UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre

The issue

- Large companies, governments and development funders are now very aware of the need to take biodiversity issues into account when planning major development projects
- Failing to give proper consideration to biodiversity can result in serious damage to species and ecosystems
- This may cause short- and long-term economic loss, disruption of ecosystem services, collapse of local livelihoods, and reputational damage to the organisations responsible
- Where biodiversity issues exist, project design needs to take these into account at the earliest stages, yet at these early stages, there are often very few biodiversity data available: by the time they have been collected, plans may be at an advanced stage and expensive and difficult to modify
- Data are often inaccessible, widely scattered or at too coarse a resolution to be helpful.
- These problems could be greatly reduced if there is the greater interoperability between important existing and developing databases.

The concept

- We propose to remedy this situation through an alliance between four conservation organizations (information providers: BirdLife International, Conservation International, IUCN and UNEP-WCMC), which would work collectively with the private sector (information users) to begin with, to be followed by other information users.
- This will synthesise and interpret site-scale biodiversity information through a common internet space, allowing companies to make initial analyses of biodiversity, informing their risk assessment procedures for existing and potential operations.
- This vision is fundamentally about a set of processes, and is not focused on a single tool or group of tools (though individual projects under this vision might focus of particular tools).
- The vision will require the development of new products tailor-made for different audiences (and in the longer-term will not be restricted to the private sector).

Principles

- The vision will work for all involved if the collaboration provides more than the sum of its existing parts.
- Collaboration between the four organisations cannot work unless there is equitable access to all data (i.e., to WDPA, IUCN Red List and biodiversity assessment data, KBAs, IBAs and World Bird Database).
- There is an urgent need to create interoperability between the four current systems to bring greater usefulness to the outcomes (i.e., including to policy and decision-makers).

Who will use it?

- The new vision will be sufficiently flexible to provide information, eventually, for all those involved in projects that could damage sensitive environments – corporates, governments and development funders
- There may also be a range of other audiences, including national institutions (where the vision provides an effective way of 'repatriating' data) and convention secretariats
- Different audiences have different needs. In kick-starting this collaboration, the first priority will be to deliver relevant information to corporates, especially to those that have been involved in either or both the IBAT and Proteus projects to date.

Data users

- Provide technical input and advice on their requirements for the functionality of this new approach as it evolves, to ensure optimum utility for the business audience
- Commit to incorporate the tool into the environmental risk screening and assessment process of their companies to ensure that the best biodiversity information is in the hands of decision makers at crucial stages of managing both new projects and existing operations
- Engage peers in the business sector to expand the set of potential users, including companies from the forestry, agriculture, mining, financial and retail industry sectors

What data will be brought together?

- We will bring together and synthesise several key sets of spatially-explicit data that are authoritative, verified and kept up to date through regular monitoring
- The synthesised information will focus at the spatial scale of individual sites (e.g. Important Bird Areas (IBAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and Protected Areas (PAs)) and species ranges, rather than larger areas (e.g. hotspots, Endemic Bird Areas) or within-site details
- Datasets brought together will include:
  - Important Bird Areas – BirdLife International
  - Key Biodiversity Areas, including Alliance for Zero Extinction sites – Conservation International, IUCN and partners
  - World Database of Protected Areas – UNEP-WCMC, IUCN-WCPA and partners
  - IUCN Red List of Threatened Species – IUCN-SSC
- These represent all the major global biodiversity databases available at this spatial scale. Additional, less comprehensive, datasets that add useful functionality may be included as additional partners join the alliance

Data providers

- IUCN, CI, BirdLife International and UNEP-WCMC invest significant resources in the collection and aggregation of the underlying data that can then be used in decision-support systems for the corporate sector, governments and other information users.
- In order to participate in this partnership, all fours organisations need additional investment in the underlying maintenance of their data holdings and data systems, in addition to the development of online decision-support systems. This is essential if data quality is to be enhanced and regular updates maintained.
- An interoperable set of tools needs to be designed and implemented to synthesize data from the four systems and to make new well targeted products available to the corporate sector.

How will the data be accessed?

- Access will be free and unrestricted
- It will also be possible to access, and use, the underlying datasets, including shapefiles
- We will provide a set of carefully targeted web-based tools that facilitate both the extraction and interpretation of the synthesised datasets