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BirdWatch Ireland

Action Plan for seabirds launched as mass seabird deaths come to light

Urgent actions that are required for the protection of Irish seabirds and the marine environment were highlighted by Minister Jimmy Deenihan as he launched a multi-stakeholder plan led by Ireland's largest wildlife charity, BirdWatch Ireland. The Minister drew particular attention to the value of marine biodiversity and a healthy marine environment for the economy of coastal communities and the nation as a whole.

Fishing interests, recreational interests and expert ornithologists were amongst the stakeholders attending the event in the National Sea Life Centre in Bray along with staff and local Branch members of BirdWatch Ireland and local Councillors. The event is one of several which were held on World Oceans Day and during European Fish Week.

Siobhan Egan, Senior Policy Officer at BirdWatch Ireland said "The Minister spoke of his strong interest in bird life and the importance of bringing together many of those with an interest in the marine environment and said that working together is a most efficient way of ensuring the most appropriate knowledge contributes to meeting Ireland's environmental responsibilities and ensures that everyone plays their part in securing healthy seas." Siobhan added that "the Minister also identified that Ireland's internationally important status for seabirds and the role of the project in addressing important issues raised by a European Court of Justice ruling against Ireland in 2007."

Peadar O'Connell, Species Policy Officer with BirdWatch Ireland and the project manager said that "Seabirds are recognised as indicators of the health of our seas but there are a lot of things we still don't know about them. The plan has taken a new approach to tackle the wide range of influences on our seas". He continued. "This is only the beginning, the true measure of success will be in getting the actions done and this will take a great effort by everyone involved."

Alan Lauder, Chief Executive of BirdWatch Ireland said that 'Action needs to be taken right now, even as we launch the plan a new European report has identified that thousands of seabirds are killed in Irish waters by getting caught on hooks of long-line fisheries. We need to bring an end to practices that damage marine wildlife and ensure that seas are managed in a way that ensures viable fisheries and wildlife.' BirdWatch Ireland, the National Sea Life Centre, fishing interests, diving clubs and other groups have joined forces under the banner of Ocean 2012, a coalition that works to highlight concerns about the impacts of overfishing on the marine environment and on coastal communities.

Notes for Editors

1. BirdWatch Ireland is the largest independent conservation organisation in Ireland and its focus is on the conservation and protection of Ireland's birds and their habitats. It is a registered charity with over 14,000 members and 25 regional branches. For more information, please visit www.birdwatchireland.ie. BirdWatch Ireland is the Irish partner of BirdLife International, a global partnership of bird conservation organisations.
2. The plan is one of ten Action Plans for birds being led by BirdWatch Ireland and aims to identify measures needed to protect Irish birds the marine environment. The *Action Planning for Irish Birds* project aims to address a number of issues raised by a European Court of Justice ruling (European Court of Justice ruling case: C-418/04) against Ireland in 2007. This ruling found against Ireland for failing to properly implement the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) and Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). The primary aim of the project is to identify and implement measures that will provide protection for priority birds in the wider countryside and to do this through wide stakeholder consultation. The project is partly supported by the Environment Fund of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. For more information on the project visit <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Ourwork/PolicyAdvocacy/ActionPlanningforIrelandsBirds/tabid/946/Default.aspx>
3. A new article just published in the journal *Endangered Species Research* entitled 'Global seabird bycatch in long-line fisheries' highlights the enormous impact long-line fisheries are having on seabirds including 50,000 birds killed off the southwest coast of Ireland every year by Spanish long-liners. Visit <http://www.birdlife.org/community/2011/06/longline-fisheries-continue-to-drive-albatross-declines/> for more information.
4. Mister Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
5. OCEAN2012 is an alliance of organisations dedicated to transforming European fisheries policy to stop overfishing and end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks. OCEAN2012 was initiated, and is co-ordinated, by the Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organisation working to end overfishing in the world's oceans. <http://ocean2012.eu/members?search=&filter=Ireland>
6. European Fish Week 2011 runs between June 4th to June 12th 2011 and aims to raise awareness of the state of European fisheries and the huge declines in fish stocks.
7. World Oceans Day was on the 8th June. World Oceans Day aims to raise awareness of the importance of the world's oceans to people's lives.

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