

Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative

Assisting High Seas Conservation

High Seas in urgent need of international attention

The open oceans and deep seas represent 95 percent of the global biosphere in volume. They play an important regulating role in the Earth's climate and are home to a major part of the world's biodiversity, containing some of the most productive ecosystems, vast natural resources, unique habitats and globally rare species yet to be discovered. However, mounting pressures from intensifying human uses, climate change and ocean acidification threaten to undermine these ecosystems' biodiversity, balance and resilience. Due to their remoteness and the logistic difficulties linked to their exploration, the open oceans and deep seas remain the least known and least protected places on the planet. Currently, only about five percent has been explored, mostly near coastal areas where the continental shelf drops off abruptly into the deep sea. Open oceans and deep seas often fall outside of national jurisdiction and hence future conservation efforts in these areas will depend on international cooperation and coordination.

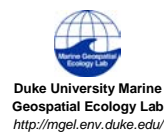
The Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative

The Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) is an international partnership advancing the scientific basis for conserving biological diversity in the deep seas and open oceans. It aims to help countries, as well as regional and global organisations, to use existing and develop new data, tools, and methodologies to identify ecologically significant areas in the oceans, with an initial focus on areas beyond national jurisdiction. This initiative began in late 2008 as a collaboration between the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), IUCN, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Marine Conservation Biology Institute, Census of Marine Life, Ocean Biogeographic Information System and the Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab of Duke University. The initiative continues to seek additional collaborators to help bring the best science and data to bear on the identification of ecologically significant areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction. GOBI is facilitated by IUCN with core support from the BfN.



Turtle
Credit: John Weller, john@lastocean.com

Initiative partners include:



Activities

The work under this initiative builds on the scientific criteria adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2008 to identify ecologically and biologically significant areas (EBSAs) in the global marine realm. It ultimately aims to help countries meet the goals adopted under the CBD and at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. These global goals relate to reducing the rate of biodiversity loss, applying ecosystem approaches, and establishing representative marine protected area networks by 2012.

Objectives

1. To establish and support an international scientific collaboration to assist States and relevant regional and global organisations to identify ecologically significant areas using the best available scientific data, tools, and methods;
2. To provide guidance on how the CBD's scientific criteria can be interpreted and applied towards management, including representative networks of marine protected areas;
3. To assist in developing regional analyses with relevant organisations and stakeholders.

Future work

The first report of this initiative, *Defining ecologically or biologically significant areas in the open oceans and deep seas: Analysis, tools, resources and illustrations*, was presented at the CBD scientific expert workshop in October 2009 in Ottawa, Canada. It provides a general overview of scientific tools, technologies and data sources that can inform the application of the CBD EBSA criteria as well as a number of illustrations on how these techniques can be applied to individual EBSA criteria. Ongoing work includes the involvement of a larger number of experts from science, governments, international and non-governmental organisations, as well as industry and traditional communities to improve the capacity to evaluate and identify EBSAs. From this broad set of areas, multiple criteria analyses will need to be applied in order to arrive at options for coherent representative networks of protected areas on the high seas.

Support

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Entemnotrochus adansonianus at 701 feet depth
Credit: Brooke et. al., NOAA OE 2005/Marine Photobank

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LEAST KNOWN AND LEAST
PROTECTED PLACES ON
EARTH”**

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