



Highly mobile seabirds reveal areas of conservation importance across the Atlantic Ocean

<https://doi.org/10.1111/con4.70075>



Context

- Countries have committed to **expanding the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network to 30%** of the world's ocean by 2030, more than tripling current coverage, and focusing **on areas important for biodiversity**.
- There is a need to **compile the best available knowledge** to identify these areas.
- **Seabirds** are the most **threatened** group of birds, important **indicator** species and a large quantity of **data** have been collected for these species.



What we did

- We studied **highly mobile Atlantic seabirds**, undertaking long-distance movements in the Atlantic and its adjacent seas.
- We compiled the **largest tracking dataset** (movement data) to date for the Atlantic : > 13,000 individuals from 44 species.
- We **mapped their distribution** throughout the year, **identified important areas**, evaluated the **importance of national vs international waters** and their **overlap with Marine Protected Areas**.



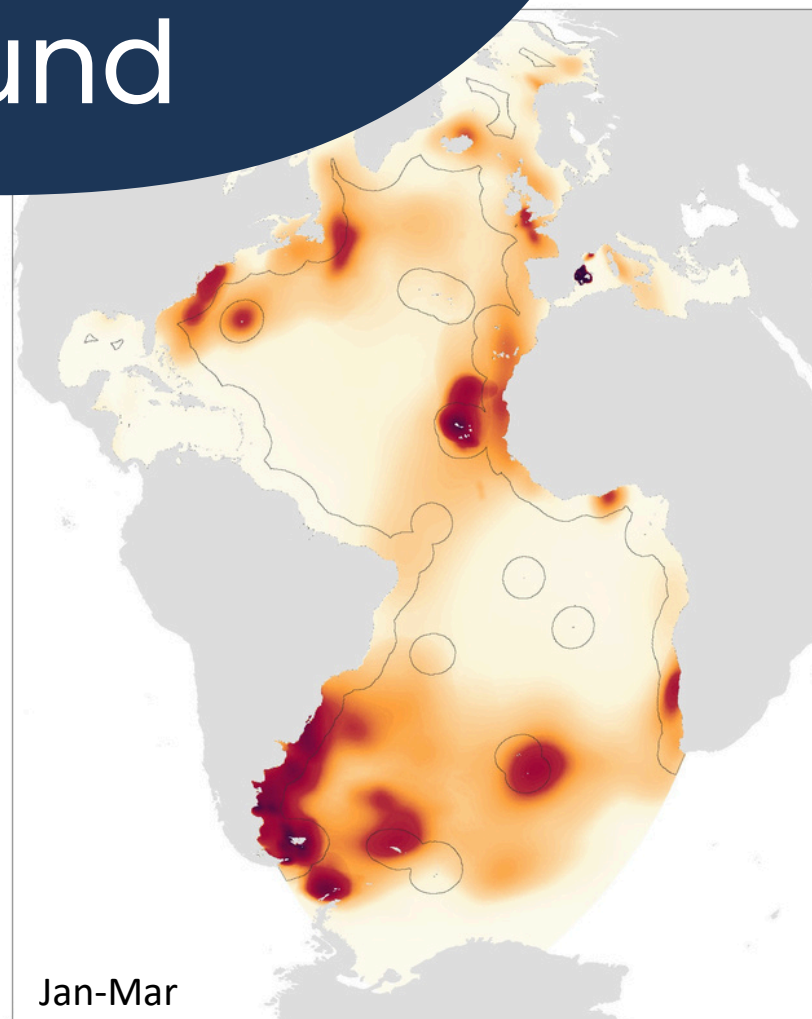
What we found

Some regions are important **year-round**

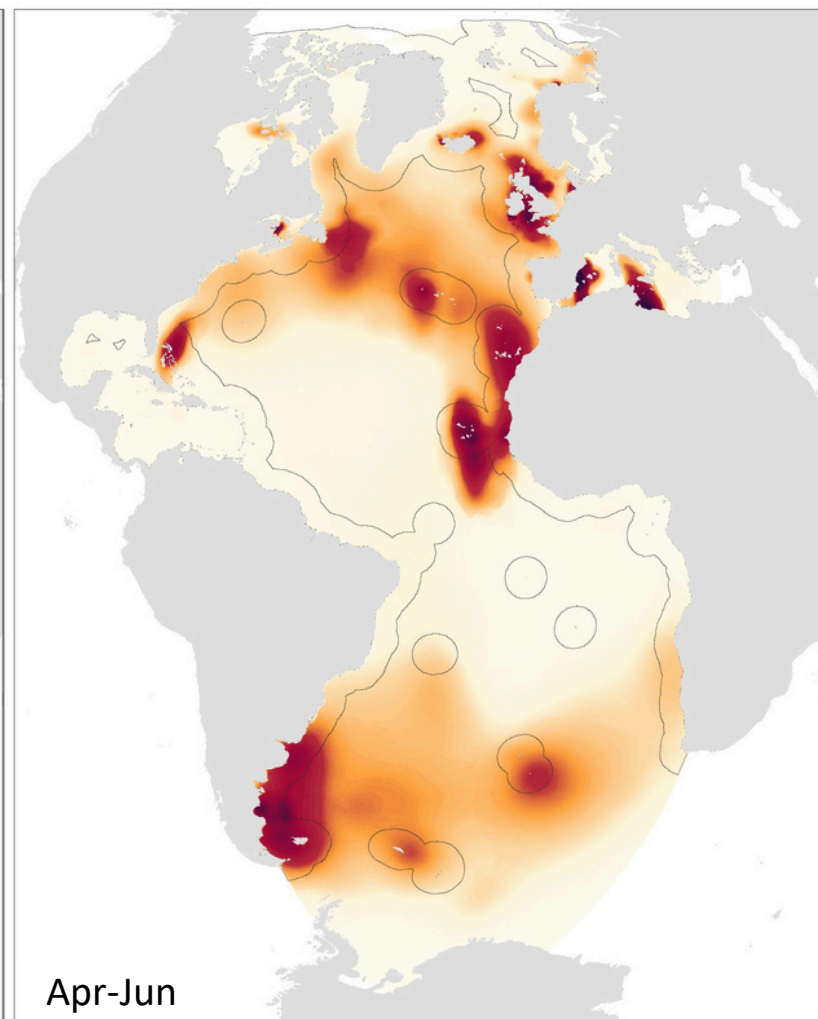
Patagonian Shelf, waters around Tristan da Cunha, Canary Current, Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

Other regions are important **seasonally**, when seabirds concentrate in particular areas to feed or breed.

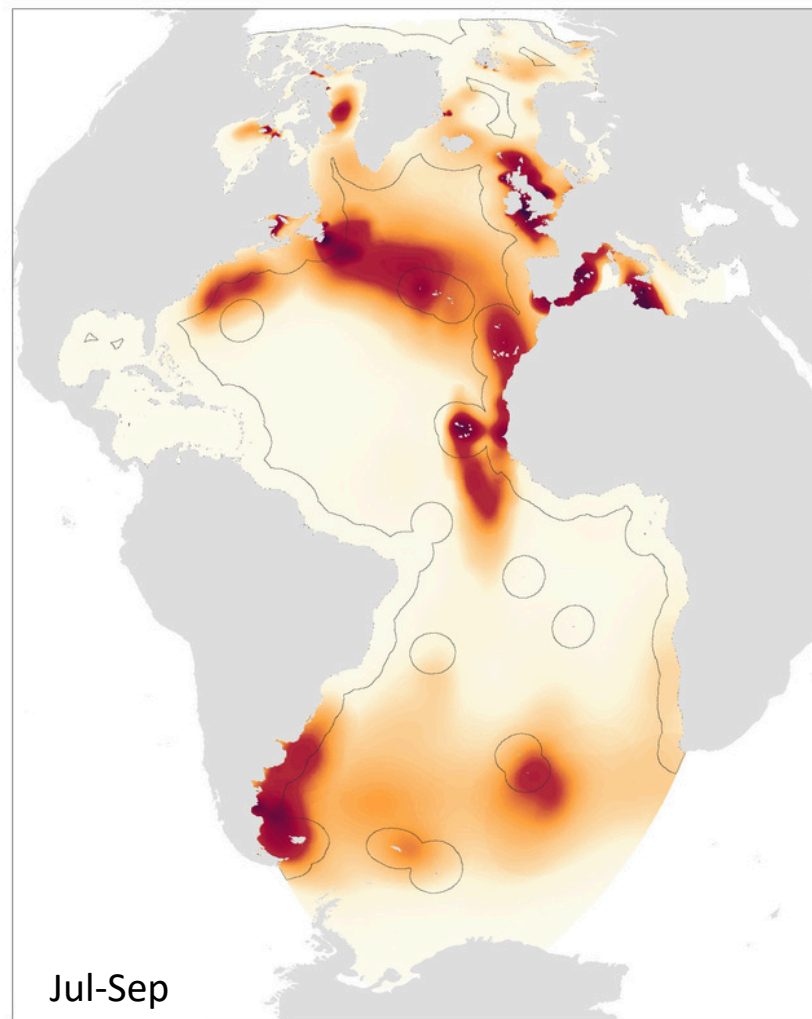
E.g., Macaronesia, some Arctic regions, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, along the Benguela Current, off the Antarctic Peninsula, Gulf of Guinea.



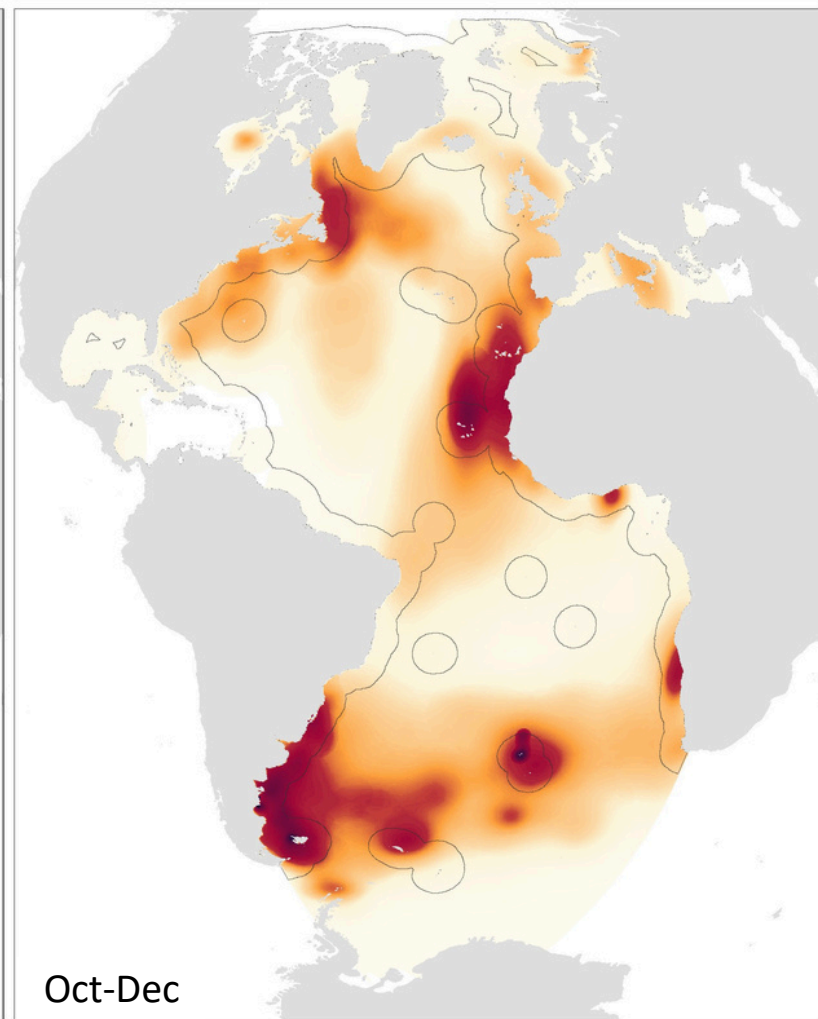
Jan-Mar



Apr-Jun

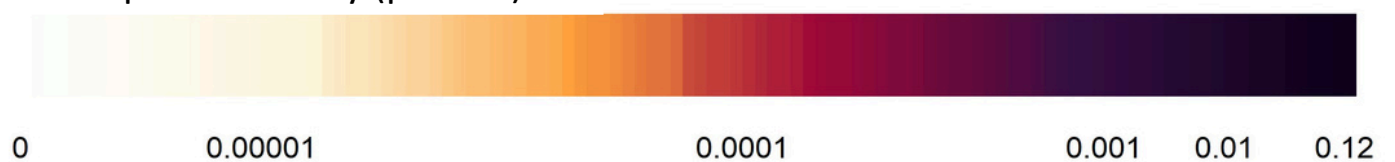


Jul-Sep



Oct-Dec

Tracked species density (per cell)

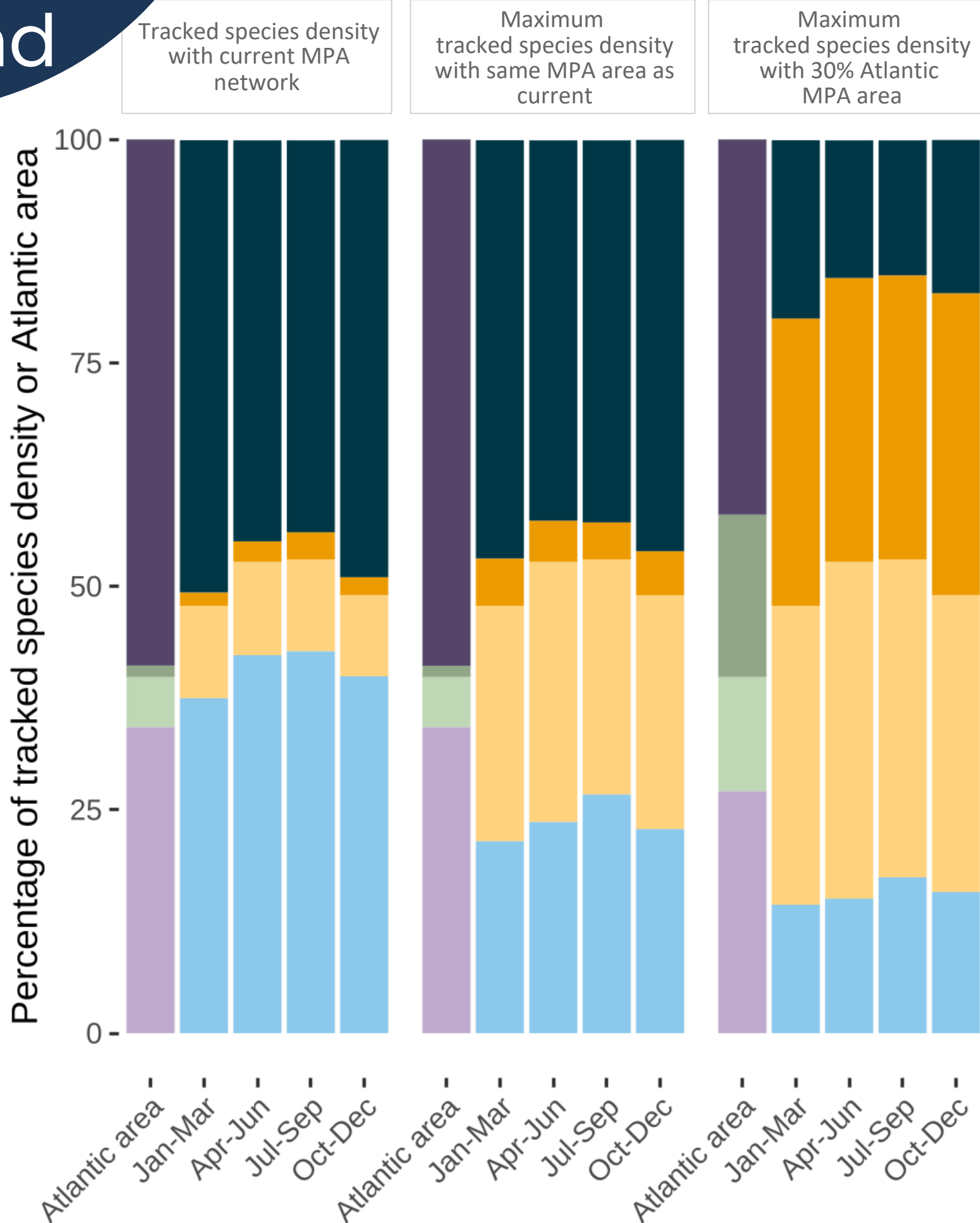


What we found

- The **High Seas are as important as national waters** for highly mobile seabirds, but **even less protected**.
- Highly mobile seabirds are **overall poorly covered by MPAs**: current Atlantic MPAs hold <14% of tracked species density, but their expansion to 30% of the ocean could protect up to two thirds.



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Why is this work important

- **First ocean-basin maps of the seasonal distribution of Atlantic highly mobile seabirds** & identification of **important regions** that deserve conservation attention.
- Shows that **expanding the MPA network strategically could better protect highly mobile seabirds** & provides knowledge layers to support such **strategic expansion and national and international spatial planning** efforts.



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Why is this work important

- These new knowledge layers can support the revision or description of new Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas, the identification of Key Biodiversity Areas. They contribute **important evidence for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the BBNJ Agreement & the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species.**
- Highlights the **need to integrate national and international waters in conservation and marine spatial planning**, and for **strengthened international cooperation** to protect highly mobile species.



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Read more

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