

**Template for Submission of Scientific Information
to Describe Areas Meeting Scientific Criteria for
Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas**

Title/Name of the area: *Varanger*

Abstract (*in less than 150 words*)

An important breeding and staging area for seabirds and waterbirds in the region, with total numbers exceeding 187,000 individuals. An important staging ground for almost the entire Norwegian winter population of the Vulnerable and OSPAR listed threatened and/or declining species Steller’s Eider *Polysticta stelleri*. Key species are the Vulnerable Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*, Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*, Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* and Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*.

Introduction

(To include: feature type(s) presented, geographic description, depth range, oceanography, general information data reported, availability of models)

Varanger is an important breeding and staging area for seabirds and waterbirds, including almost the entire Norwegian winter population of the Vulnerable and OSPAR listed threatened and/or declining species Steller’s Eider *Polysticta stelleri* (2,700-4,000 individuals). Internationally significant numbers of the Vulnerable Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* (11,000 – 16,000 breeding pairs) and Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (47,500 – 62,500 breeding pairs) regularly breed in the area. It is also an important staging ground for numerous waterbirds and seabirds, including the Vulnerable Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (2 – 10 individuals), Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* (200-400 individuals) and Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* (1,000 – 5,900 individuals). *Varanger* is also an important staging area for the Near Threatened Yellow-billed Loon *Gavia adamsii* and Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*. The site contains six areas classified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas by BirdLife International (IBA names: Varangerfjord (including Hornøya and Reinøya), Persfjorden – Hamningberg, Neiden- & Munkefjord, Båtsfjord, Syltefjordstauran, and Berlevåg (BirdLife International 2019a-f).

Location

(Indicate the geographic location of the area/feature. This should include a location map.)

Varanger is located in Finnmark, Norway (coordinates 70.12N/29.52E) (Figure 1)

Feature description of the proposed area

(This should include information about the characteristics of the feature to be proposed, e.g. in terms of physical description (water column feature, benthic feature, or both), biological communities, role in ecosystem function, and then refer to the data/information that is available to support the proposal and whether models are available in the absence of data. This needs to be supported where possible with maps, models, reference to analysis, or the level of research in the area)

Feature condition and future outlook of the proposed area

(Description of the current condition of the area – is this static, declining, improving, what are the particular vulnerabilities? Any planned research/programmes/investigations?)

Assessment of the area against CBD EBSA Criteria

(Discuss the area in relation to each of the CBD criteria and relate the best available science. Note that a proposed area for EBSA description may qualify on the basis of one or more of the criteria, and that the polygons of the EBSA need not be defined with exact precision. And modeling may be used to estimate the presence of EBSA attributes. Please note where there are significant information gaps)

| CBD EBSA Criteria (Annex I to decision IX/20) | Description (Annex I to decision IX/20) | Ranking of criterion relevance (please mark one column with an X) | | | |
|--|--|--|-----|--------|------|
| | | No information | Low | Medium | High |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| Uniqueness or rarity | Area contains either (i) unique (“the only one of its kind”), rare (occurs only in few locations) or endemic species, populations or communities, and/or (ii) unique, rare or distinct, habitats or ecosystems; and/or (iii) unique or unusual geomorphological or oceanographic features. | X | | | |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> | | | | | |
| Special importance for life-history stages of species | Areas that are required for a population to survive and thrive. | | | | X |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> This is an important breeding and staging ground for numerous seabirds and waterbirds, including almost the entire Norwegian winter population of the Vulnerable Steller’s Eider <i>Polyicta stelleri</i> , and internationally important numbers of staging Lesser White-fronted Goose, Long-tailed Duck and Velvet Scoter. It is also an important breeding ground for the Vulnerable Atlantic Puffin and Black-legged Kittiwake, as well as an important staging site for the Near Threatened Common Eider and Yellow-billed Loon. | | | | | |
| Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats | Area containing habitat for the survival and recovery of endangered, threatened, declining species or area with significant assemblages of such species. | | | | X |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> This site contains internationally important numbers of six Vulnerable and declining species: Lesser White-fronted Goose, Steller’s Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Velvet Scoter, Black-legged Kittiwake and Atlantic Puffin. It is also important for the Near Threatened Common Eider and Yellow-billed Loon. The Black-legged Kittiwake and Steller’s Eider are also listed by OSPAR as threatened and/or declining species. | | | | | |
| Vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity, or slow recovery | Areas that contain a relatively high proportion of sensitive habitats, biotopes or species that are functionally fragile (highly susceptible to degradation or depletion by human activity or by natural events) or with slow recovery. | | | | X |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> The area is of high importance to Steller’s Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Velvet Scoter, Atlantic Puffin and Black-legged Kittiwake, all species listed as Vulnerable because of rapid population declines (BirdLife International 2019g). These species are threatened by bycatch in gillnet fisheries, invasive species, and climate change (BirdLife International 2019g). The Black-legged Kittiwake and Steller’s Eider are listed by OSPAR as threatened and/or declining species. Steller’s Eider is very sensitive due to the adverse effects of human activity – the adults have low survival rate and produce few broods during the life time, leading to low resilience (OSPAR 2009). | | | | | |
| Biological productivity | Area containing species, populations or communities with comparatively higher natural biological productivity. | x | | | |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Biological diversity | Area contains comparatively higher diversity of ecosystems, habitats, communities, or species, or has higher genetic diversity. | x | | | |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> | | | | | |
| Naturalness | Area with a comparatively higher degree of naturalness as a result of the lack of or low level of human-induced disturbance or degradation. | x | | | |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> | | | | | |

Sharing experiences and information applying other criteria (Optional)

| Other Criteria | Description | Ranking of criterion relevance (please mark one column with an X) | | | |
|---|-------------|--|-----|--------|------|
| | | Don't Know | Low | Medium | High |
| <i>Add relevant criteria</i> | | x | | | |
| <i>Explanation for ranking (must be accompanied by relevant sources of scientific articles, reports or documents)</i> | | | | | |

References

(e.g. relevant documents and publications, including URL where available; relevant data sets, including where these are located; information pertaining to other relevant material, models, etc.)

BirdLife International (2019a) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Varangerfjord (including Hornøya and Reinøya). Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 27/08/2019.

BirdLife International (2019b) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Persfjorden – Hamningberg. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 27/08/2019.

BirdLife International (2019c) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Neiden- & Munkefjord. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 27/08/2019.

BirdLife International (2019d) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Båtsfjord. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 27/08/2019.

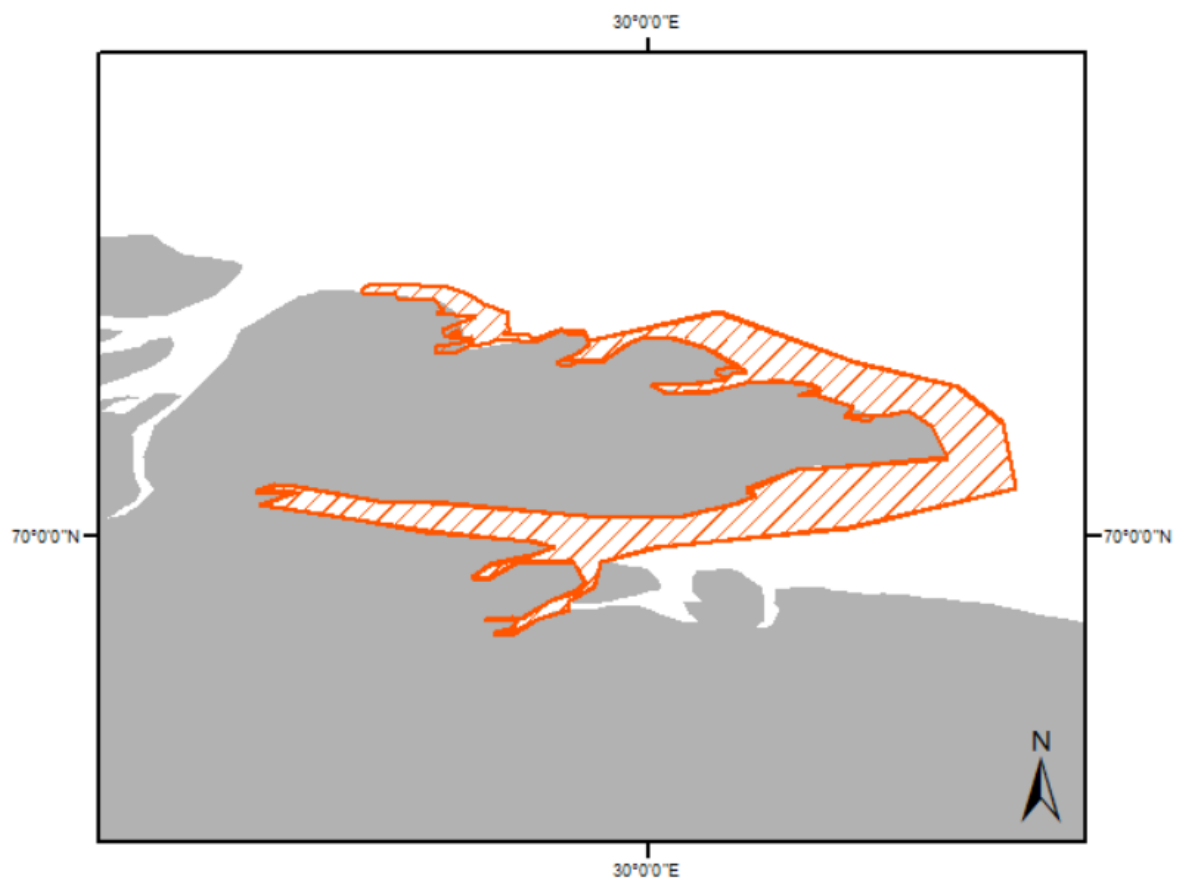
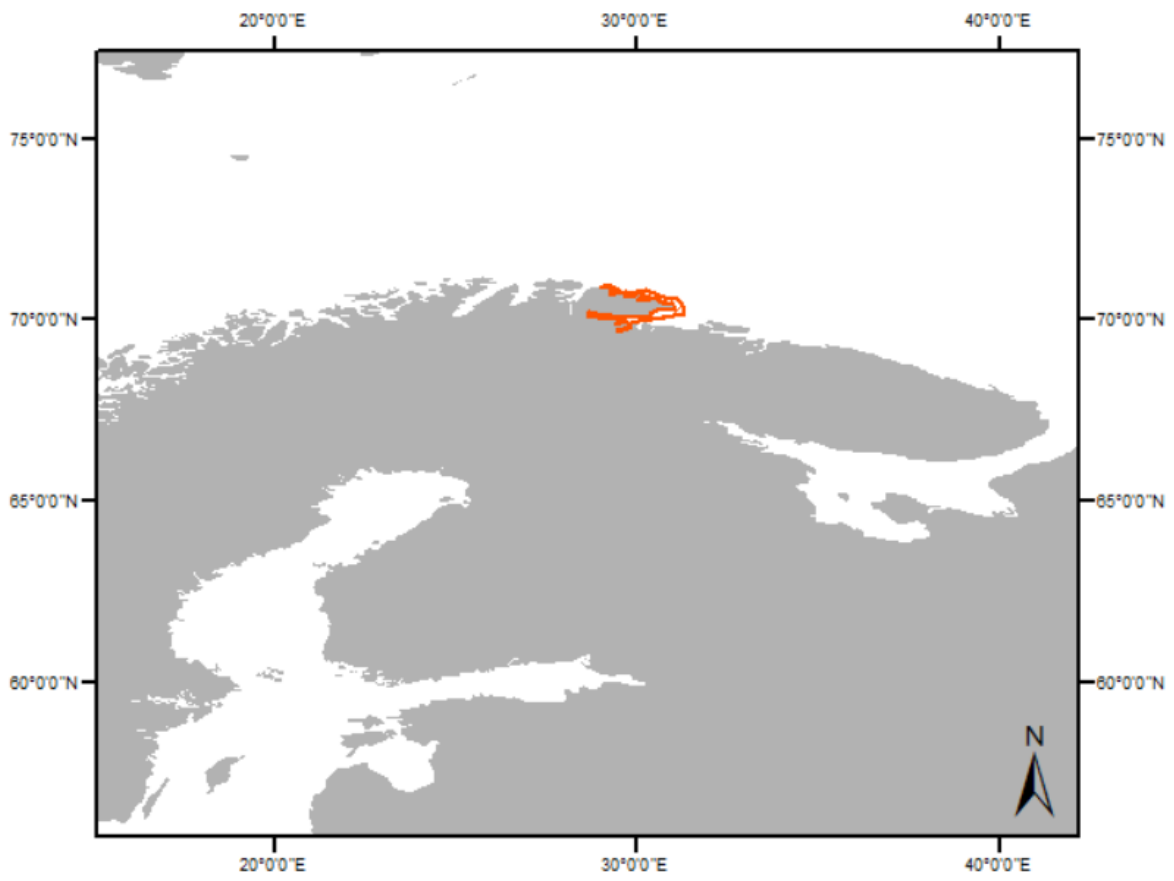
BirdLife International (2019e) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Syltefjordstauran. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 27/08/2019.

BirdLife International (2019f) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Berlevåg. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 27/08/2019

BirdLife International (2019g) IUCN Red List for birds. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 27/08/2019.

OSPAR Commission (2009). Background Document for Polysticta stelleri Steller's eider. 17p.

Maps and Figures



Location of *Varanger*, more details of individual IBA location at:

Varangerfjord (including Hornøya and Reinøya):

[http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/varangerfjord-\(including-horn%C3%B8ya-and-rein%C3%B8ya\)-iba-norway](http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/varangerfjord-(including-horn%C3%B8ya-and-rein%C3%B8ya)-iba-norway)

Persfjorden – Hamningberg: <http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/persfjorden--hamningberg-iba-norway>

Neiden- & Munkefjord: <http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/3140>

Båtsfjord: <http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/32077>

Syltefjordstauran: <http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/3143>

Berlevåg: <http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/45629>

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