

CONSERVING THE RIGHT PLACES TO ACHIEVE THE BIODIVERSITY PLAN



KBA
KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

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CONSERVING THE RIGHT PLACES TO ACHIEVE IMPACT

The Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework or Biodiversity Plan aims to halt extinction and reduce biodiversity loss by 2050. If this is to be achieved we need to make sure that the right places are conserved to maximise our impacts. Conserving the sites that are globally or regionally significant for biodiversity together with their connectivity (Plumptre et al. 2024)¹ provides our greatest chance of succeeding. Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) **play a pivotal role in safeguarding the world's biodiversity** in terrestrial, inland water, and marine environments. These sites contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity.



THE BIODIVERSITY PLAN

For Life on Earth

KBAs offer governments, communities, funders, companies, and NGOs a powerful tool to prioritise their conservation actions, particularly in the designation of new Protected Areas or Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and the identification of areas for restoration. As a spatial dataset they should be incorporated in spatial planning for biodiversity and used to avoid risks from major investments (e.g. infrastructure or mining).

KBAs are **identified at the 'site' scale**, and are **intended to be manageable**, ensuring they can be realistically conserved in the long term. This is a key difference compared to hotspots, ecoregions, wilderness areas, etc., which tend to be much larger and describe broad regions of importance. KBAs identify and prioritise the sites that are most important to invest in for biodiversity conservation.

¹ Plumptre, A.J., et al. (2024) Targeting site conservation to increase the effectiveness of new global biodiversity targets, *One Earth*, 7, 11-17



KBA Reserva Provincial Laguna Brava, Argentina © Silvianac

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COMPREHENSIVELY IDENTIFYING KBAS

A comprehensive assessment of KBAs utilizes a [global standard](#) and assesses as many **species groups and ecosystems** for which data exist in a country. To make a comprehensive assessment of KBAs, scientific experts and other knowledge holders need to assess available biodiversity data within a country, potentially gathering new biodiversity data for some parts of a country, that can help them apply the KBA Criteria.

Most countries **form a KBA National Coordination Group (KBA NCG)** before they start the process of making a comprehensive assessment of their KBAs. These groups usually consist of members of government agencies, scientific institutions (such as universities, museums and herbaria), and the conservation community (including KBA partners where present in country), bringing them together to identify globally significant sites often for the first time. Forming a KBA NCG in a country helps coordinate the KBA process but also provides a body of people and institutions who can help ensure that the **KBAs identified are also recognised within the country and incorporated into national policy and legislation**. It also ensures that the process is led by the country and sites are not identified by external processes. **KBA NCGs ensure that government, the conservation and scientific sectors, and often representatives of IPLCs and private sector** come together to identify the right places for conservation **combining all their expertise and knowledge**.



DRC Taxonomic experts & KBA Project Coordinator © WWF DRC



KBA NCG meeting Peru © ECOAN

CONSERVATION IMPACT FROM MAPPING AND CONSERVING KBAs



Andean bear © Juan Carlos Figueroa

A comprehensive assessment of KBAs is crucial for achieving a number of targets in the Biodiversity Plan and related processes. To know where to act to reduce the risks of species extinction and ecosystem collapse (Goal A of the Biodiversity Plan), to develop conservation plans (Target 1), to appropriately site new Protected and Conserved Areas (Target 3), to prioritise sites for restoration (Target 2) or tackling threats (Targets 5,6,7 & 8), mainstreaming biodiversity (Target 14) and engaging the private sector in biodiversity conservation (Target 15), we need **a comprehensive understanding of where the sites of particular importance for biodiversity are located** and what their defining biodiversity features are. Comprehensive assessments of KBAs brings together biodiversity data nationally to ensure it is used for conservation meeting Targets 20 and 21.

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Benefits of making a comprehensive assessment of KBAs

Key benefits of the KBA assessment process include:

1. KBA National Coordination Groups create support for KBAs in country and their recognition and longer term support; e.g. Mozambique incorporated KBAs in their National Territorial Plan.
2. The process compiles all available biodiversity data in country so that planning uses the latest information.
3. Support from the scientific community in country is garnered, as KBA identification provides a mechanism to use biodiversity data to further conservation.
4. The KBA approach encourages countries to focus on all features of biodiversity (threatened biodiversity, geographically restricted biodiversity, ecological integrity, biological processes and irreplaceability) that are important for global persistence.
5. International recognition of KBAs leads to them being used by governments and the private sector.
6. The process creates a common objective for government, the conservation and scientific community in country, focusing groups around a common agenda.
7. It works well at engaging government departments and the longer-term support for sites as a result.
8. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have seen the process as one way to help them gain some recognition of their territorial lands.
9. The monitoring needed for sites is focused on the biodiversity elements that are globally significant.
10. The process provides a robust way to identify '**areas of importance for biodiversity**' to guide 30% by 2030 planning.

The costs of making a comprehensive assessment of a country's KBAs is affected by various factors: availability of data; size of the country; numbers of scientists with data that need to be involved; costs of operating in the country etc. On average in the global south a comprehensive assessment of KBAs has costed between \$300-500,000 USD for a 2-3 year project. This is a relatively cheap investment that brings the benefits listed above when compared with other conservation planning projects.

Andringitra National Park, Madagascar © Leonora Enking

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KEY RESULTS OF NATIONAL KBA ASSESSMENTS

Thirty KBA NCGs have been established with about forty more seeking funding to do so. To date, **10 countries** have made or are completing comprehensive assessments of their KBAs across multiple species groups and ecosystems. More than 1,000 sites will have been re-assessed or identified as new global KBAs across these countries. While no country considers their KBA assessment to be complete, given data availability for some elements of biodiversity, they recognise that the **process has significantly improved their ability to make sensible decisions** about where to conserve. The results of the KBA assessments are being incorporated in country National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and national legislation is being made to ensure their conservation and use in guiding 30% by 2030 in several countries.



10 countries

Have made or are completing comprehensive assessments of their KBAs



128% increase

In the number of new sites recognised as important for conservation

Where KBAs have been comprehensively assessed in ten countries we have seen an average of a **128% increase in the number of new sites that are recognised as important for conservation**, indicating that currently the conservation community is unaware of about half of its globally significant sites. A knowledge of where KBAs occur in a country provides the basis for national spatial planning and helps a country set its priorities for where it will invest in conservation. The 30 x 30 planning to achieve the 30x30 target needs to ensure that protected and conserved areas are established in the right places if we are to achieve the Biodiversity Plan's goals. **KBAs provide our best tool for ensuring that we target sites that contribute to stemming and reversing the global loss of biodiversity.**



KBA Augrabies Falls National Park, South Africa © Allan Watt

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FUNDING KBA IDENTIFICATION, MONITORING AND CONSERVATION

For many large donors the investment in a comprehensive assessment of KBAs in country is best packaged as part of a larger programme. Projects that tackle the following objectives can all incorporate KBA identification:

<i>Panthera onca</i>, Brasil © Vladimirczech	1 Identification of where 30% by 2030 should occur: Many countries are planning to expand their protected and conserved areas to achieve 30% coverage by 2030 as they start implementing the Biodiversity Plan. A comprehensive assessment of KBAs is needed to identify the ‘areas of particular importance for biodiversity’ required to achieve Target 3 of the Biodiversity Plan. A KBA assessment can be budgeted as part of a programme to identify 30% by 2030.
2 Identification of OECMs: Many countries are also working to identify Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) as part of their planning for 30% by 2030. One of the criteria for OECMs is that they are established in areas of importance for biodiversity. A KBA assessment can therefore be used to help guide where OECMs needs to be established as part of the 30% by 2030 planning.	Maasai Mara National Reserve © Susan Jane Golding
© evening_tao	3 Spatial planning for biodiversity: Target 1 of the Biodiversity Plan requires all Parties to develop spatial plans for biodiversity. KBA identification is a critical component of spatial planning as it will identify sites that are not only nationally important but also globally and regionally important for biodiversity. KBAs are recommended to be part of spatial planning processes by <u>World Conservation Congress 2020 Resolution 081</u>.
4 Prioritising the tackling of threats to biodiversity: Given their global and regional significance, KBAs should be priority sites for restoration (Target 2), tackling invasive species (Target 6), Tackling pollution impacts (Target 7), tackling climate change (Target 8) and ensuring sustainable management (Target 5). Projects focusing on these and other threats can build in KBA assessments to guide where they should prioritise action.	© lachetas

Twenty countries that have established KBA National Coordination Groups, but not made comprehensive KBA assessments, are seeking funding to do so. These include four countries in West Africa, four in East and Southern Africa, four in the Middle east and north Africa, five in Australasia and Pacific, two in Europe and China. In addition there are fourteen countries currently forming KBA NCGs, four in West Africa, three in Europe, one in East and Southern Africa, three in the Middle East, two in South East Asia and one in the Pacific Islands. Finally there are 26 countries in Central/South America, South East Asia and Africa that are interested in forming KBA NCGs and starting to seek the funds to make assessments of their KBAs.

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Financing options and what can be achieved

- a.** An investment of \$15,000 USD would help support the work of a KBA Regional Focal Point to raise awareness of KBAs in a region and to support KBA proposals and their review.
- b.** An investment of \$25,000 USD would support the establishment of a KBA NCG and development of proposals to raise funding for a comprehensive assessment. It could also support scientists from a taxonomic group to identify or re-assess sites for their country.
- c.** An investment of \$50,000 USD would support the formation of a KBA NCG in a country and support their actions to raise awareness of the need to identify KBAs in country and develop proposals to make an assessment of KBAs.
- d.** An investment of \$300-500,000 USD could support the national assessment of KBAs in one country, including the recognition of sites in national processes.
- e.** An investment of \$1,000,000 can support 2-3 national assessments together with supporting the World Database of KBAs (WDKBA) and review process needed to confirm and publish KBAs.
- f.** An investment of \$5,000,000 would support the assessment of KBAs across 10-12 countries as well as support the development of a monitoring platform for the WDKBA.
- g.** An investment of \$10,000,000 would support the assessment of KBAs across most of Sub-Saharan Africa, or South East Asia, or South & Central America.
- h.** An investment of \$50,000,000 would enable countries to assess their KBAs across much of the global South.

Costs of KBA Secretariat and database running costs are \$1,000,000 per year (Covers 3 Cambridge staff – Head, Validation expert & data analyst, Training officer; Communications officer, 7 RFPs and 4 community representatives; database maintenance and annual development costs; TWG co chairs). Of this, IBAT will be covering \$400,000 in 2024.

Additional costs that would be useful:

- 1.** Support to KBA Monitoring in the field- \$500,000 to get a programme started in countries that have made comprehensive assessments – small grants made to countries from this pot.
- 2.** Building a monitoring platform in the KBA database- \$1,500,000
- 3.** Support to countries to undertake additional field work to collect data at sites that might meet KBA status but needs confirming- \$500,000 to provide a pot for smaller grants for specific field work (\$25,000 per grant).



KBA PARTNERS:

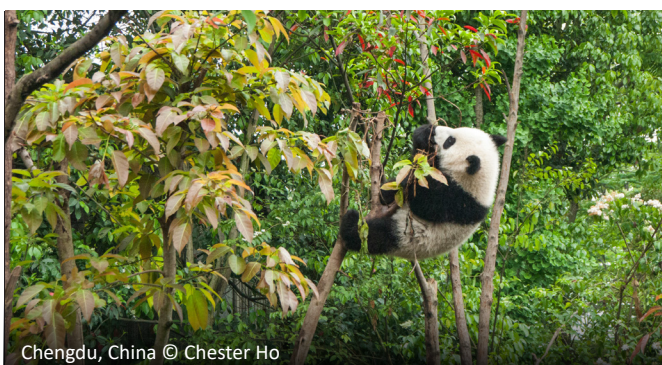
Priority regions and countries within region for investment

- 1 West Africa** – KBA NCGs occur in Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon with interest in forming them in Liberia and Sierra Leone



- 2 East Africa** – KBA NCGs occur in Uganda, Kenya and Zanzibar & Pemba. There is interest in forming NCGs in Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Somaliland

- 3 Southern Africa** – KBA NCG exists in South Africa and Mozambique and both countries have made a comprehensive assessment of KBAs. An NCG exists in Malawi and is forming in Namibia. Interest shown to set one up in Zimbabwe and Zambia.



- 4 SE Asia** – KBA NCG in China is making a comprehensive assessment of their KBAs. Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Philippines have all expressed an interest in forming a NCG and making comprehensive assessments

- 5 North Africa & Middle East** – UAE has made an assessment of many KBAs. Tunisia has a NCG that needs support as they haven't made a comprehensive assessment yet. Saudi Arabia, Oman, Senegal and Algeria are interested in forming NCGs.



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Galapagos Islands, Ecuador © Pedro Szekely

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South America – Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru have all made comprehensive assessments of their KBAs recently and are seeking funding to support their monitoring. Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Guyana are all interested in making comprehensive assessments of their KBAs.

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Central America and Caribbean – Honduras will be starting a process to re-assess and identify new KBAs. Panama and Mexico have expressed an interest in forming KBA NCGs and assessing their KBAs. Several of the Caribbean nations use KBAs in their planning and have interests in re-assessing their sites as well as support for monitoring them.

*Bolitoglossa diaphora*, Honduras © Tom Kennedy

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Pacific Islands and Australasia – Australia, Fiji, Pulau, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and the Papua New Guinea have all established KBA NCGs and had some training in KBA identification. They are seeking funding to make more comprehensive assessments and monitor their KBAs.



Great Barrier Reef, Australia © Richard Ling



Puffin Rock Vigur Island, Iceland © Regan Vercruysse

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