

PROTECTING OUR PLANET

THE ROLE OF KBAs



KBA
KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

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KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS (KBAs)

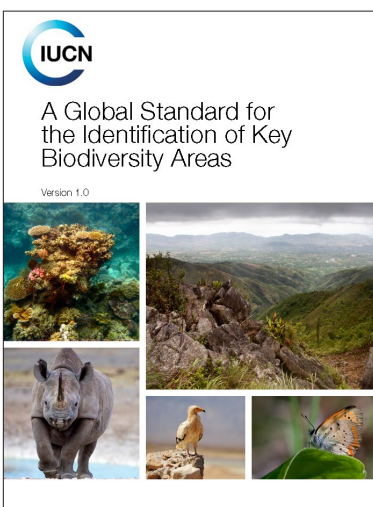


Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) **play a pivotal role in safeguarding the world's biodiversity** in terrestrial, inland water, and marine environments. These sites contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity.

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.

COMPREHENSIVELY IDENTIFYING KBAs



A comprehensive assessment of KBAs utilizes a [global standard](#) and considers as many **species groups and ecosystems** for which data exist or can be collected. 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 are **forming 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 in a bottom-up process, 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 where possible.**

THE PROCESS OF MAKING A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF KBAs

A comprehensive assessment of KBAs is crucial for achieving a number of targets in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and related processes is to be realised. To know where to act to reduce the risks of species extinction and ecosystem collapse (Goal A of KMGBF), to develop conservation plans (Target 1), to appropriately site new Protected and Conserved Areas (Target 3), to prioritise sites for restoration (Target 2) or urban greening (Target 12), 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.

Key benefits of the KBA 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 influence conservation.
4. International recognition of KBAs leads to them being used by governments and the private sector.
5. 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.
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.

Malebo site © Niklas Weber/BINCO

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KEY RESULTS OF NATIONAL KBA ASSESSMENTS

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 many sites are still in the process of being proposed, preliminary data indicate that the process significantly increases the number of globally significant sites in a country, indicating that we are missing many important sites that are needed to halt extinctions and reduce biodiversity loss in our current mapping of biodiversity. 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.

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 KMGBF goals. KBAs provide our best tool for ensuring that we target sites that contribute to stemming and reversing the global loss of biodiversity.



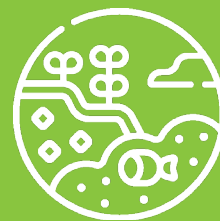
10 countries

Have made or are completing comprehensive assessments of their KBAs



Maasai Mara National Reserve © Susan Jane Golding

Aplastodiscus arildae, Estadual de Caparaó Park, Brazil © Lucas Rosado



More than 1,000 sites

Re-assessed or identified as new global KBAs across these countries

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