

KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

Safeguarding the
world's biodiversity

KBA
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KBA PARTNERS:



WHY ARE KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS IMPORTANT FOR GOVERNMENTS?

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 persistence of biodiversity.

KBAs offer governments 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).



They 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.

HOW ARE KBAs IDENTIFIED?

The IUCN Global Standard to identify KBAs includes specific criteria based on scientifically derived thresholds (as with the IUCN Red List). This provides a standardised metric that can be used for prioritisation and comparison between countries and regions. These 11 criteria are under **five overarching conservation objectives**:

- A. Threatened biodiversity** (species or ecosystems);
- B. Geographically restricted biodiversity** (species or ecosystems);
- C. Ecological integrity** (species & ecosystems);
- D. Biological processes** (species); and,
- E. Irreplaceability** (species & ecosystems).



Effectively conserving the KBA network will be essential to achieving goals and targets in the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework of preventing species extinctions, halting biodiversity loss, and recovering abundance of biodiversity over the coming decades. However, we cannot protect what we don't know is there. The World Database on KBAs provides the largest dataset of sites of global significance for biodiversity conservation across the world and is the foremost database for site level data for many species and ecosystems.



HOW CAN KBAs HELP?

Guiding conservation and land use planning

- Identifying, mapping, and documenting KBAs is a crucial first step for any national conservation planning, as it identifies sites which contain globally significant populations of species or extents of ecosystems for which a country has global responsibility.
- KBAs can guide any expansion of the network of protected areas or OECMs to achieve Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) of 30% by 2030
- KBAs should be incorporated into biodiversity-inclusive spatial plans (Target 1 of the GBF) to ensure that these sites are not earmarked for development or land use change.
- KBAs are being used to guide where to make offsets for impacts by the private sector, to support long-term financing of these sites.

Directing finance

- Global Environment Facility (GEF), Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF), and Rainforest Trust (RT) are all KBA partners that provide funding for the conservation of KBAs. GEF will only finance new protected areas if they meet KBA status. CEPF targets all its funding at KBAs, and RT is using KBAs to identify where it will invest in conservation.
- The European Union (EU) recognises that the KBA criteria are useful for guiding expansion of protected areas to achieve 30% by 2030.
- USAID is actively financing the identification and conservation of KBAs in several countries and is willing to do elsewhere if governments request this.
- KBAs are used to inform safeguarding policies as KBAs indicate critical habitats (as per the International Finance Corporation's **Performance Stand 6**), manage risk (through the **Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool**) and guide nature-positive investment decisions. Banks are increasingly using KBAs to identify areas of risk to projects they finance.

Facilitating and improving international reporting

- Both the Sustainable Development Goals (14 & 15) and the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework use 'protected area coverage of key biodiversity areas' as key indicators that countries need to report.
- The GBF states that sites incorporated in spatial planning (Target 1) and in achieving 30% by 2030 (Target 3) should be in areas of importance for biodiversity. KBAs can help identify these sites in a country. [IUCN Resolution WCC2020_081](#), strongly supported by governments and conservation institutions, calls for KBAs to be an integral part of national spatial plans for biodiversity.
- KBA assessments can also guide the placement and recognition of internationally designated World Heritage Sites and Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance.
- KBA criteria are quantitative with specific thresholds, which makes KBAs comparable between countries and regions of the world facilitating transparent and comparative reporting in multilateral agreements.



KBA identification, delineation, monitoring, and conservation are ideally made through the **establishment of National Coordination Groups**, a bottom up, country led process, which incorporates government departments, conservation community, taxonomic experts, and civil society in their identification.

To date, 24 countries have established these KBA National Coordination Groups with about 30 more seeking funds to do so. Comprehensive assessments of KBAs across multiple taxonomic groups have been made in Canada, Mozambique, Uganda, and South Africa and are ongoing in Bolivia, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Gabon, Peru, Republic of Congo, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

Go to <https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/> to find out more.

