



Community: News and Updates



Issue 5: July 2020

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chair.kba.community@keybiodiversityareas.org

CONTENTS

[GLOBAL NEWS](#)

[Improving KBA communication between the community of practice](#)

[KBA Annual Report 2019](#)

[AFRICA](#)

[Mozambique](#)

[Madagascar](#)

[South Africa](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire](#)

[AMERICAS](#)

[Canada](#)

[EUROPE-CENTRAL ASIA](#)

[IUCN Freshwater Biodiversity Unit appoints Key Biodiversity Areas Programme Officer](#)

[ASIA-PACIFIC](#)

[Asia](#)

[India](#)

[Australia](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

GLOBAL NEWS



Improving KBA communication between the community of practice

The KBA Community has set up a Facebook group on which to post all KBA related news and updates. This will also allow all members in the group to post their news about KBAs. All members of the Google Group will receive an invitation to join this group. The group will be moderated to ensure only KBA relevant information is posted, and under specific categories.



KBA Community Facebook Group

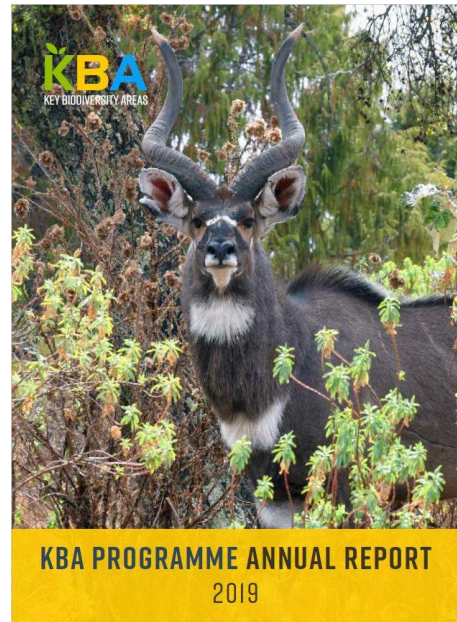


KBA Community Google Group

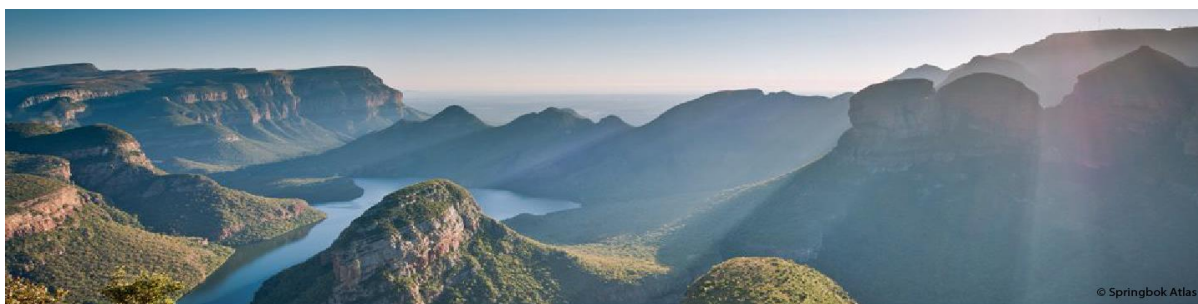
KBA Annual Report 2019

The KBA Programme is working to implement a 7-year strategy that was developed by the KBA Partnership. The first Annual report for 2019 for this Programme has recently been published and highlights activities around the world that are identifying, mapping and conserving Key Biodiversity Areas. The report describes the ongoing efforts of several countries to make national assessments of their KBAs across several groups of species and ecosystems; these are briefly touched on below.

Mozambique is using their national KBA assessment to guide protected area expansion in the country. Canada has been engaging many indigenous groups to identify KBAs which are feeding into a wide range of conservation initiatives, including expansion of protected areas. South Africa has also made an exhaustive assessment of its KBAs to build on their world-leading national spatial conservation plans, finding that the KBA approach helped identify some species at risk that had not been picked up on previously. The KBA Partnership has contributed a total of \$4.54 million to support this KBA Programme in 2019. The Annual report can be found on the [KBA Community Facebook Group](#) and the [KBA Community Google Group](#).



AFRICA



Mozambique

The Mozambique National Coordination Group are in the process of finalising their documentation for 38 KBA proposals. These are being submitted to the Regional Focal Point for West and Southern Africa, Daniel Marnewick.

Madagascar

A National Coordination Group is being established in Madagascar through a project that aims to identify marine KBAs.

South Africa

The national review and identification of KBAs in South Africa produced a draft report and KBA network at the end of May. The objectives of the KBA assessment process were to undertake a comprehensive national analysis of all relevant taxa and ecosystems in South Africa, against the full suite of KBA criteria by applying the 2016 KBA Standard, utilising the data developed as part of the South Africa National Biodiversity Assessment 2018 that has undergone rigorous peer review and data quality assurance and control.

In the preliminary results, a total of 545 KBA management units were delineated for South Africa. The KBA management units in terrestrial and freshwater environments totalled 370,000 km², which is equivalent to 30 % of South Africa's mainland terrestrial and freshwater extent. A further 173,200 km² of KBAs are located beyond the mainland due to the presence of seabird colonies. The proposed KBA network will undergo a final review by key stakeholders before being submitted to the KBA Secretariat (in Cambridge) for approval and loading onto the World Database for KBAs.

Côte d'Ivoire

For the past year, a team from the Swiss Center for Scientific Research in Cote d'Ivoire and Florida Atlantic University have been searching the canopy of Tanoé-Ehy Forest for the Critically Endangered Miss Waldron's Red Colobus, which has been lost to science since 1978. While they have not found it yet, they did find other Critically Endangered and threatened species, including capturing the first-ever video of a Roloway Monkey in the wild. The team hopes to do one final survey in the center of the swamp in Tanoé-Ehy Forest. If they don't find Miss Waldron's Red Colobus after the exhaustive search, it will be the first primate extinction in 500 years. But people who live near the forest can still accurately describe and mimic the call of the monkey, giving the team hope.

Below are the links to the first-ever wild footage of the Critically Endangered Roloway Monkey, taken by camera trap in the canopy of a KBA, Tanoé-Ehy Forest, in Côte d'Ivoire.

[Press release](#)
[Facebook video](#)
[Twitter video](#)
[Instagram video](#)

AMERICAS



Canada

The Canadian NCG (KBACanada.org) is working its way across the regions of Canada, with five regional coordinators currently leading the work to identify and delineate KBAs, supported by a centralized Secretariat at the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Canada. The regional coordinators are an important innovation in a large country that is governed primarily at the subnational level — regional experts and stakeholders can be fully engaged with this approach. About a hundred new KBAs have been delineated in recent months with many more to come. Our last in-person workshop focused on freshwater KBAs, building on work led by IUCN in [2015](#), with new sites identified for fish, insects, plants and molluscs across the country.

A number of other workshops have been cancelled due to COVID-19, but virtual workarounds are in progress. NatureServe Canada is continuing to develop [Ecosystem-Based Automated Range Maps \(EBAR\)](#) to support KBA identification, and have created 173 auto-generated ranges. These range maps will all be reviewed by experts before they are used in KBA assessments.

Adding to ongoing work on new KBAs, Birds Canada has reassessed all existing Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) using the KBA Standard: 550 sites were assessed, with 270 meeting global KBA criteria for birds. Additional taxa are being assessed within these IBAs and some IBAs that don't quite meet KBA thresholds for birds will be identified as global KBAs based on other taxa.

Within regions, the focus has been on sites that are important to species in all taxa –threatened (Criterion A), geographically restricted species (B), and species aggregations (D). Applying KBA ecosystem criteria is more complicated in Canada because it first requires a national vegetation classification and, for Criterion A2, Red Listing of ecosystems. NatureServe (US) has recently collaborated with the Canadian KBA initiative to complete Red List assessments for prairie ecosystems in Canada and will present their results at an upcoming meeting with experts. Species information will then be integrated with this work to come up with candidate KBAs. Other KBA ecosystem work in Canada is focused on developing methods for applying Criterion C at the national scale, with a particular focus on biotic integrity. Multiple working groups across the country are gathering and testing datasets and will propose a first set of Criterion C sites later this year.

KBA Canada continue to hold regular meetings with a management committee and conduct outreach through webinars. They also continue with regular updates to the Canadian KBA initiative

[website](#) as well as other forms of communications like their recently-published [blog](#) in *Canadian Geographic* on the work that they have been engaged in.



Figure 5: Experts gather in Montreal to assess Canadian freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas in February 2020.

EUROPE-CENTRAL ASIA



IUCN Freshwater Biodiversity Unit's Key Biodiversity Areas Programme Officer

Thomas Starnes in March this year began his role as the new Key Biodiversity Areas Programme Officer with the IUCN Freshwater Biodiversity Unit in Cambridge, UK. He is coordinating two projects with wide geographic scope and he is excited to make the KBA Community aware of these projects.

Project 1: Legacy freshwater KBAs

The IUCN Freshwater Biodiversity Unit (FBU) has been identifying important sites for freshwater biodiversity for over 10 years. Through regional projects, 555 sites have been identified within the Mediterranean Basin, the tropical Andes, Madagascar, Lake Victoria basin, Western Ghats and the Lower Mekong. Many of these sites were identified prior to the 2016 KBA Standard and so require revising before they can be formally proposed. As a result, the conservation benefits of many of

these sites are not currently being realised. With a project funded through Synchronicity Earth, the FBU are revising these sites against the KBA Standard and formally proposing sites which meet the KBA criteria, for inclusion in the World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (WDKBA). Ultimately, the inclusion of these sites in the WDKBA and subsequently in IBAT and other portals will lead to them being used for conservation planning and decision making. So far, they have revisited 215 freshwater KBAs in the North West Mediterranean (Darwall et al., 2014) and 49 of these have been confirmed by the KBA Secretariat, as well as 17 in the Lower Mekong.



Figure 6: *Barboides britzi*, one of Africa's smallest freshwater fish, is a newly described species endemic to Lokoli swamp forest, a potential KBA in Benin. © T. MORITZ

Project 2: Identification and Validation of West African Freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas

As part of a Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) project the FBU has recently completed the reassessment of all freshwater-dependant species in the Guinean Forests of West Africa (GFWA) hotspot and is now commencing desktop screening to identify freshwater KBAs. This project builds upon work done previously to identify freshwater KBAs through the CEPF GFWA Ecosystem Profile. There were due to be two regional workshops in Upper and Lower Guinea but in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic a decision has been taken to move to online consultation. After potential freshwater KBAs have been identified, the FBU will work together with IUCN's regional PACO office to engage with stakeholders across the region to review these KBAs through an online consultative process, potentially laying the foundations for future remote ways of working. The FBU is particularly keen to engage with new and emerging National Coordination Groups across western Africa.



Figure 7: Lokoli swamp forest in southern Benin. This small forest fragment serves as one of the last refuges for many forest dwelling species. © T. MORITZ

ASIA-PACIFIC



Asia

The Regional Focal Point, Mike Crosby, is currently conducting a questionnaire survey of BirdLife International's Partner organisations in Asia, which aims to review progress with updating their national data on KBAs and IBAs (Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas). Completed questionnaires have been received from the Partners in Hong Kong (China), Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan (China) and Vietnam. The questionnaires include a section on KBAs and covers updating data on the sites and the species which trigger the KBA criteria, improving the accuracy of the KBA boundary maps, and an assessment of the capacity building needed by the Partners. The completed questionnaires will be analysed by the BirdLife Asia Secretariat to develop a regional workplan and fund-raising plan. The plans will aim to promote a major update of the KBAs and IBAs in Asia and globally which will be launched at the BirdLife Centenary World Congress in 2022. The questionnaires received to date indicate that the BirdLife Partners are keen to participate in the KBA Programme. Many of them have provided information on the organisations in their countries that they anticipate may be interested in working in partnership with them on KBA identification and conservation and potentially joining a KBA National Coordination Group.

India

India's Manas National Park is one of the most important places on earth for biodiversity. However, back in the early 2000s, this globally recognised Key Biodiversity Area saw its last rhino killed. It was a huge blow as a thriving rhino population plays a critical role in Manas' grassland ecosystem, benefiting other species such as Asian elephants, tigers & swamp deer as well as rare endemic wildlife like the hispid hare and pygmy hog. It also benefits local communities which rely on a healthy park and the tourists it pulls in. Thankfully, a major relocation programme has restored rhinos to Manas, which is now home to 43 rhinos. The relocation programme had its many challenges as WWF-India's Amit Sharma, who had been directly involved in the decade long efforts shares in a blog below.

[Blog](#)



Figure 8: Asian one horned rhino Kaziranga India © Richard Barrett _ WWF-UK



Figure 9: Rhino mother and calf in Manas Park India © WWF India



Figure 10: Rhino release in Manas Park India © Subhamay Bhattacharyya

Australia

KBAs Australia have been busy. At a workshop held in Perth in February, the identification of Australia's Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) was the main focus. Golo Maurer, Secretary of Australia's KBA National Coordination Group attended to explore how to align IMMAs with existing and candidate KBAs. Since many IMMAs specifically refer to KBA guidelines, Australia can look forward to its first Marine Mammal KBAs in the near future.



Figure 8: Attendees at a workshop held in Perth to identify Australia's Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs).

Australia's 334 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are the jewel in the crown of Australia's unique natural beauty and riches. Sadly, these areas have not been spared the destruction of Australia's bushfire crisis, in fact, ten KBAs had around 30% and up to 100% of their area burnt. The full consequences for the species that call these areas home are, as of yet, unclear. Luckily most of these areas have a KBA Guardian or Guardian group with long-standing bird survey sites and strong relationships with local landholders and agencies. Thanks to their work we know that not all that is burnt is lost to the birds, e.g. miraculously, some of the most reliable survey sites for Rufous scrub-bird have escaped the fires. Everyone can help in getting this positive message out: There is no reason to be despondent but rather a need for good data to guide the species saving action so many Australian's donated for. Many volunteers are keen to get out into KBAs to collect this information and as KBAs become accessible safely we encourage them to record bird data surveys at established sites.

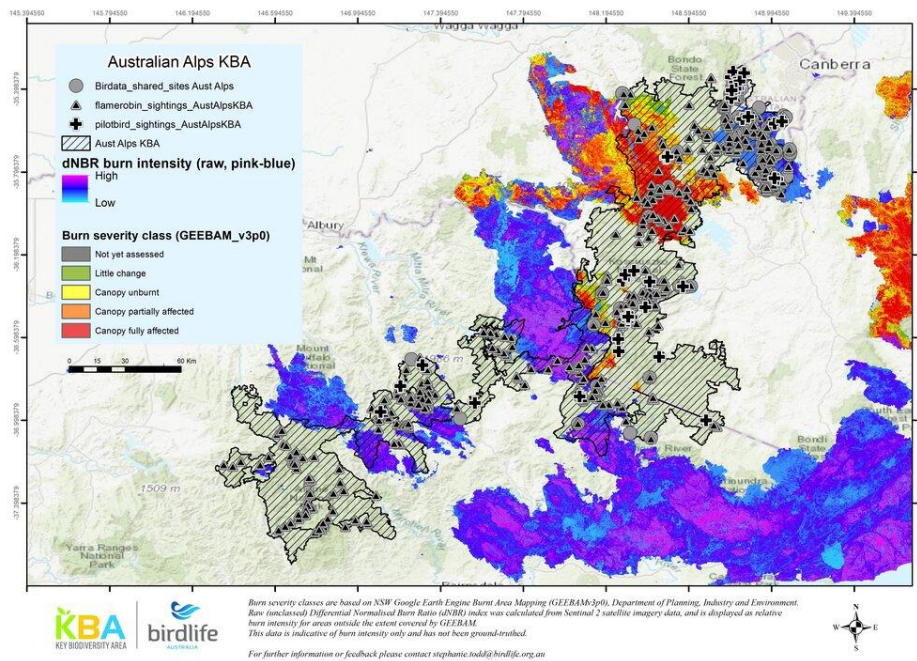


Figure 9: KBA sites affected by the bush fires in early 2020.

CONTACT US

KBA COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

The current Chair and Regional Representatives of the KBA Community are:

Africa (and Chair) – Daniel Marnewick (chair.kba.community@keybiodiversityareas.org)

Americas – Alberto Yanosky (yanosky@guyra.org.py)

Europe & Central Asia – Irina Kostadinova (irina.kostadinova@bspb.org)

Asia-Pacific – Sheila Vergara (sgvergara@aseanbiodiversity.org)

KBA REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS:

Interim Regional Focal Points have been nominated for the following regions and should be contacted if you have queries about assessing Key Biodiversity Areas or want to nominate a KBA:

Africa (southern and western Africa) - Daniel Marnewick

(chair.kba.community@keybiodiversityareas.org); (eastern and central Africa) - Tim Davenport (tdavenport@wcs.org)

Asia - Mike Crosby (Mike.Crosby@birdlife.org)

Australasia and Pacific Islands - Mark O'Brien (Mark.Obrien@birdlife.org)

Latin America and Caribbean- please correspond with both RFPs David Diaz

(ddiaz@keybiodiversityareas.org) and Miguel Fernandez

(Miguel_Fernandez@naturereserve.org)

Mediterranean countries and eastern Europe - Marcos Valderrabano

(Marcos.VALDERRABANO@iucn.org)

KBA COMMUNICATIONS:

Communications working group co-chairs Lindsay Renick Mayer

(lrenickmayer@globalwildlife.org) and Richard Lee (rlee@wwfint.org)

KBA SECRETARIAT:

For other regions (North America and Europe) please contact the head of the KBA Secretariat,

Andy Plumptre (aplumptre@keybiodiversityareas.org).

