# HOW CAN INTEGRATING KBAs INTO NBSAPs HELP TO DELIVER THE GBF?

KBA
KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

*Anolis solitarius* © Paul Tavares

KBA PARTNERS:

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The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was finalised in December 2022. Countries must now re-align their existing National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to reflect the mission, four goals and 23 targets of the GBF (CBD/COP/15/L.27). **Countries are required to update their NBSAPs or develop national targets by COP16 in Turkey in October 2024.**

Conserving Key Biodiversity Areas is central to delivering the GBF's overall 'nature positive' mission to take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. This document looks at the relevant Goals and Targets in the GBF for Key Biodiversity Areas and suggests relevant results/targets that should ideally be integrated in country NBSAPs.

# WHAT ARE KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS (KBAs)?

KBAs are **sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity** in terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine environments. If KBAs are not effectively conserved we will fail to meet the primary objective of the GBF, to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

**KBAs help governments to prioritise their conservation actions**, particularly in the designation and recognition of new or expanded protected areas or OECMs and identification of areas for restoration. As the most comprehensive network of areas of biodiversity importance globally, KBAs should be incorporated in spatial planning and are currently used by the private sector to guide investments and de-risk their portfolios.

*Pan troglodytes* © Dirk Froebel

# HOW DO KBAs SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOAL A?

***Goal A:*** *The integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050; Human induced extinction of known threatened species is halted, and, by2050, extinction rate and risk of all species are reduced tenfold, and the abundance of native wild species is increased to healthy and resilient levels; The genetic diversity within populations of wild and domesticated species is maintained, safeguarding their adaptive potential.*


*Lepidochelys olivacea* © Erik Daniel Erikson

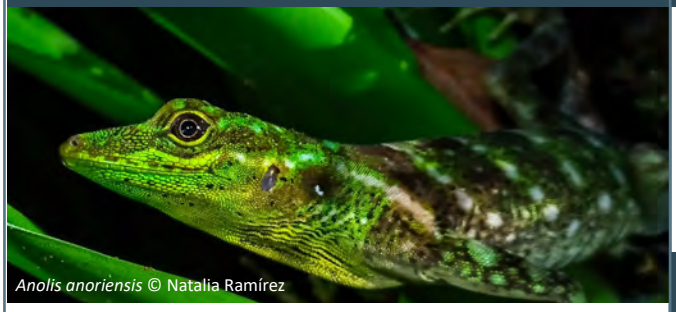
**KBAs help to achieve this goal by identifying the most important sites for the global persistence of biodiversity,** at the species, genetic, population, or ecosystem level. KBAs can show us where ecological integrity, connectivity and representative ecosystems should be maintained, enhanced or restored, and where populations of species must be conserved to halt extinctions, reduce extinction risk, and recover population abundance.

**KBAs can guide where to invest efforts that can have the most significant impact necessary to achieving this goal**, through effective conservation, protection, or restoration.

## TARGET 1

*Ensure that all areas are under participatory integrated biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land and sea use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.*

### Objective:


*Anolis anoriensis* © Natalia Ramírez

Land-use and sea-use changes are one of the major drivers of biodiversity loss. More effective and widespread biodiversity inclusive spatial planning allows for the consideration of the most important areas for biodiversity. This facilitates more effective and coherent management, protection, and restoration of ecosystems.

### GBF Indicator:

- *Percentage of spatial plans utilizing information on Key Biodiversity Areas* is a complementary indicator for this target in the Monitoring Framework of the GBF.

### Similar indicators from other Multilateral Environmental Agreements:

- Resolution 081 from the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 calls upon governments to make comprehensive assessments of their KBAs and incorporate them in national spatial plans for biodiversity, and then incorporate these in their NBSAPs.

## Key notes for KBAs on Target 1:

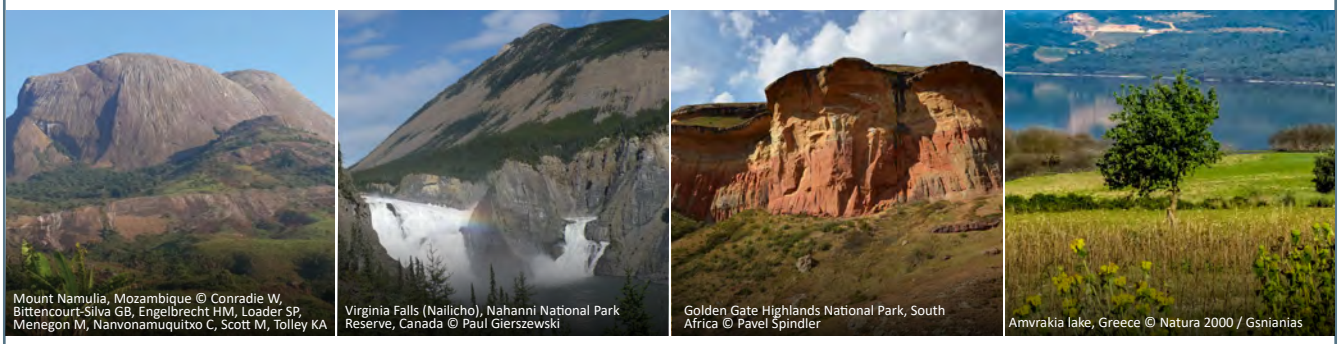
- KBAs enable governments and other actors to identify and prioritise the most important areas for biodiversity, which should be a core component of any spatial plans to ensure they are biodiversity inclusive.
- Spatial mapping of biodiversity through KBA assessments and their integration into spatial plans across government sectors can greatly reduce negative environmental impacts of urban and agricultural expansion, infrastructure development (including energy and transport), forestry, fisheries etc.
- KBAs provide countries with the best available evidence to incorporate globally significant areas for biodiversity alongside other aspects of conservation and development in their long-term planning.

## Actions:

1. **Identify KBAs (including sites of high ecological integrity) and incorporate them into national spatial planning.**
2. **Monitor KBAs to quantify loss or degradation of areas of high biodiversity importance.**

## Examples:

Mozambique | Canada | South Africa | Greece



Mount Namulia, Mozambique © Conradie W, Bittencourt-Silva GB, Engelbrecht HM, Loader SP, Menegon M, Nanvonamuquitxo C, Scott M, Tolley KA

Virginia Falls (Nailicho), Nahanni National Park Reserve, Canada © Paul Gierszewski

Golden Gate Highlands National Park, South Africa © Pavel Spindler

Amvrakia lake, Greece © Natura 2000 / Gsnianias

Each of these countries has made or is in the process of making comprehensive assessments of their KBAs. Mozambique has identified KBAs and incorporated them in their National Territorial Plan which guides development. South Africa previously had a detailed spatial plan for biodiversity developed using systematic conservation planning methods but found that applying the KBA criteria helped them identify additional areas of importance that they had missed. Canada is mapping its KBAs for multiple taxonomic groups and ecosystems, working closely with Indigenous peoples. Greece has also committed in legislation to identify KBAs for spatial planning for 30by30.

## Other resources:

Integrated Spatial Planning Workbook

# TARGET 2

*Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.*

## Objective:

*Balaenoptera musculus* © Tony Cheng

Restoring both converted and degraded ecosystems will be key to achieving this target. A significant increase in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems is needed to meet Goal A. To reach this requires net gain (or at least no net loss) across all ecosystems through spatial planning and restoration.

## GBF Indicator:

- *Status of Key Biodiversity Areas* is a **complementary indicator** for this target in the Monitoring Framework of the GBF. Using monitoring data from the **World Database of KBAs**, this indicator will be measured as the '*proportion of KBAs in favourable condition*'.

*Calidris ferruginea* © Abubakar S. Ringim

## Key notes for KBAs on Target 2:

- To effectively meet this target, the focus must be on quality as well as extent of restoration, KBAs can guide the most important areas to restore, buffer and reconnect to meet the objectives of Goal A, including reducing the extinction rate.
- KBA monitoring, supported by remote sensing as well as ground data, can inform restoration goals by identifying outcomes (why we want to restore) and process (what to restore and how).
- The KBA dataset can be combined with other ecosystem function and services data sets to identify the most important areas for both biodiversity and people.
- KBA National Coordination Groups (NCGs), established in each country to coordinate KBA identification and promotion of KBA data in national planning and decision-making, provide a forum to integrate activities across all stakeholders (government, civil society, academia, private sector, and Indigenous people and local communities) in helping to guide where restoration occurs and how.

## Actions:

1. **Establish inclusive KBA NCGs to ensure equitable representation and participation in national restoration processes focused on areas of biodiversity significance.**
2. **Monitor KBAs to identify degraded sites that are priorities for restoration.**
3. **Develop restoration targets for degraded KBAs with the objective of improving the condition of the species' populations or ecosystems for which the KBA is important.**

## Examples:

Philippines

Batanes Island of Winds, Philippines © EdseastresD600

Kenya

Aberdare National Park, Kenya © Nina R

Organisations in the Philippines and Kenya are using KBAs to prioritise those areas that should be restored, with particular focus on KBAs that provide ecosystem functions and services. The consistent monitoring of these sites by KBA Partners and volunteers has also facilitated improved management plans and targeted restoration actions.

## Other resources:

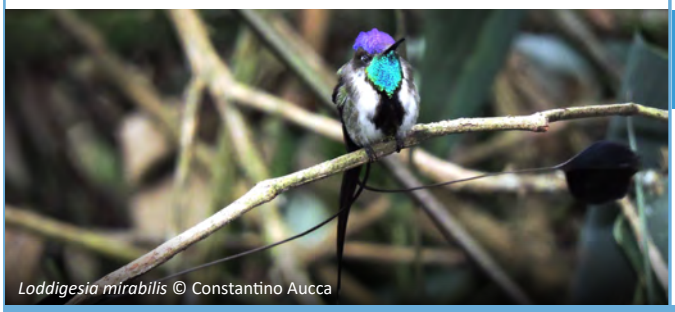
Nature restoration for green recovery and beyond: principles and best practice from BirdLife's experience

# TARGET 3

*Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories.*

## Objective:

To achieve Goal A and safeguard ecosystem diversity, reduce the rate and risk of extinction and improve species population abundance, as well as maintain and enhance many ecosystem services and nature's contributions to people, protected area and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) coverage needs to be expanded across all ecosystems, with appropriate prioritization and improved management. The focus must be on biodiversity outcomes rather than spatial area since an increase in coverage alone will not be sufficient. New protected areas and OECMs must be located in globally significant areas for the persistence of biodiversity as a first priority.



*Loddigesia mirabilis* © Constantino Aucca

## GBF Indicator:

- *Protected area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas* is a **Component Indicator** of the GBF and has been recommended as a disaggregation of the Headline Indicator on protected areas.
- This metric was also used as a Headline Indicator for Aichi Target 11.
- *Status of key biodiversity areas* and *Extent to which protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) cover Key Biodiversity Areas that are important for migratory species* are both Complementary Indictors in the Monitoring Framework of the GBF.

## Similar indicators from other Multilateral Environmental Agreements

- *Protected area coverage of key biodiversity areas* is an official SDG indicator under **SDGs 14** and **15**.

## Key notes for KBAs on Target 3:

- KBAs represent the largest and most comprehensive network of "areas of particular importance for biodiversity" and have been identified in all countries worldwide and on the High Seas.
- KBAs are guiding the placement of protected areas and OECMs to ensure that these cover the most globally significant sites for biodiversity, enabling achievement of Goal A. Data show that protected area networks have previously tended to be designated in remote areas, at high elevations, and in locations that are less suitable for agriculture, rather than places of importance for biodiversity. As a consequence, 39% of KBAs do not overlap with any protected area or OECM, and 42% have only partial coverage. On average, only 44% of each site is covered by protected areas or OECMs.
- The indicator of protected area coverage of KBAs provides strong synergies across both the GBF and the Sustainable Development Goals, and a metric which can be applied across marine, coastal, terrestrial, and freshwater ecosystems, and regionally.
- The identification of a site as a KBA does not imply any particular management regime. Most are likely to be best conserved through protected areas or OECMs, but other approaches to safeguard the biodiversity at these sites may be appropriate in some cases.
- The **World Database of KBAs** contains the largest dataset of sites of biodiversity importance across the world, and can help identify candidate protected areas and OECMs, including in underrepresented ecosystems such as freshwater and marine.

## Actions:

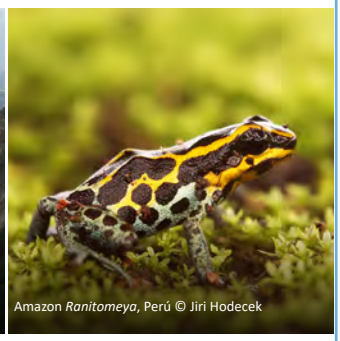
1. Establish KBA National Coordination Groups to convene relevant stakeholders and coordinate identification of KBAs, and monitoring and promoting the conservation of these sites.
2. Update and expand current KBA inventories by applying the KBA criteria comprehensively, including across all species groups and ecosystems where data exist.
3. Use KBAs to guide designation and expansion of new protected areas and recognition of OECMs to achieve 30% area coverage of all ecosystem types by 2030.

## Examples:

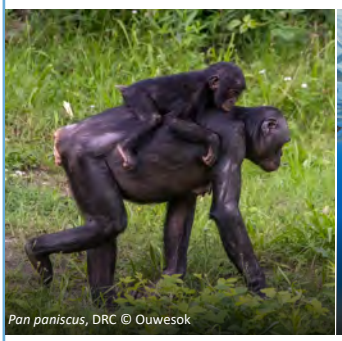

Sangay-Podocarpus Corridor, Ecuador © Jim Muchmore


*Acropora cervicornis*, Colombia © Robin White


Inter-Andean Dry Valleys , Mizque River, Bolivia © Rodrigo Soria


Amazon *Ranitomeya*, Perú © Jiri Hodecek

Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Canada, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Uganda, have all recently established KBA National Coordination Groups and have undertaken (or are undertaking) national assessments of their KBAs across multiple species groups (including all vertebrate classes, plus invertebrate, plant and fungi groups where data exist) and are using these sites to guide where 30% expansion occurs. Greece is establishing a KBA National Coordination Group and has incorporated KBAs in legislation to guide expansion of protected areas and OECMs, while the EU's Biodiversity Strategy recognises that the KBA criteria are useful for guiding expansion of protected areas to achieve 30% by 2030.


*Pan paniscus*, DRC © Ouwesok


*Negaprion brevirostris*, Congo © Rafi Amar


A chimpanzee in Kibale National Park, Uganda © Ralph Earlandson


Broad Scarlet - *Crocothemis erythraea*, Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique © Judy Gallagher

## Other resources:

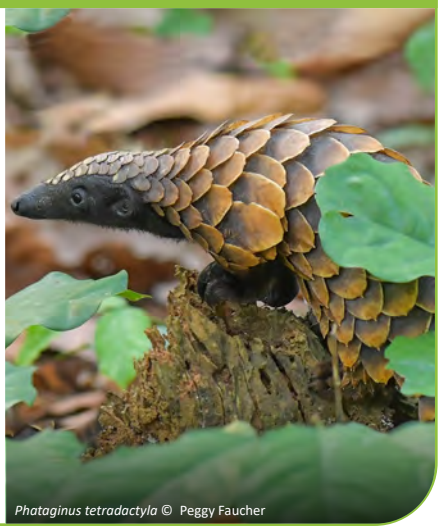
[IUCN toolkit for identifying OECMs]

# OTHER RELEVANT TARGETS

The identification and monitoring of KBAs can support implementation of other targets, including:

## *Target 4. Urgent actions to halt extinction of species.*

KBAs conserve globally significant percentages of populations of species, with AZE sites in particular the last refuges of one or more Endangered or Critically Endangered species, so will be critical to achieve this target. Globally, identified KBAs (9% of the terrestrial surface; identification is ongoing) account for 47% of the global STAR score. Action to conserve and restore KBAs will reduce species extinction risk and abate undiagnosed threats, reducing the need for emergency action. Monitoring can also identify sites for intensive management, where despite establishment and management of the protected or conserved area, declines may be continuing.



*Phataginus tetradactyla* © Peggy Faucher

## *Target 5. Sustainable harvesting of species.*

*Pouteria sapota* © Miguel Angel Mota Ayala

Some species for which KBAs have been identified may be the focus of use, harvest or trade, as may be other species occurring within KBAs. Monitoring of KBAs will help identify if negative impacts are occurring, while management of these sites should ensure that any use, harvest or trade is sustainable.

## *Target 6. Invasive species.*

Many KBAs, particularly on islands, are threatened by invasive alien species, and such KBAs represent potential priorities where eradication of invasive alien species may deliver disproportionate biodiversity benefits. Furthermore, efforts "preventing the introduction and establishment of priority invasive alien species" should also consider particularly targeting such efforts to avoid the unintentional introduction and establishment of invasives in KBAs. Monitoring of threats to KBAs contributes to the tracking of impacts of invasive species, and the effectiveness of actions taken to eliminate or mitigate these impacts.

*Philornis downsi*, Galápagos, Ecuador © María Fernanda Silva

## Target 7. Pollution risk.


© Natallia Boroda on Freepik

Monitoring of threats to KBAs includes monitoring of pollution and could contribute to measurement of pollution levels and impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem function.

## Target 8. Climate change and ocean acidification.

KBAs, particularly forest KBAs tend to be areas of high carbon storage. In Ecuador, for instance, KBAs hold 50% of the country's carbon. Through the protection and restoration of KBAs, bolstered by spatial plans, significant co-benefits for climate and biodiversity can be achieved.


Galápagos, Ecuador © Juan Carlos Sánchez

## Target 14. Mainstreaming biodiversity.


Cotopaxi, Ecuador © Juan Carlos Sánchez

The process of identification of KBAs through the formation of multi-stakeholder KBA National Coordination Groups can raise awareness of these sites of global importance for biodiversity and promote their integration into national policy and spatial planning. Promoting the use of such spatial plans can support mainstreaming across government sectors and other stakeholders.

## Target 15. Private sector disclosure of risks, dependencies, and impacts on biodiversity.

Services based on KBA data are provided through the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) to companies to help them assess and minimise their risks and impacts and to understand their dependencies on nature. KBAs are specifically referred to in the safeguard policies of multilateral development banks and in disclosure requirements such as those developed through the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and Science Based Targets Network (SBTN).


© Arthur Hidden on Freepik

## *Target 21. Making the best available biodiversity data available to decision makers.*

NCG Colombia© Felipe Villegas/Instituto Humboldt

The establishment of National Coordination Groups in identifying and delineating KBAs brings together diverse stakeholders, including scientists, conservation practitioners, government, Indigenous peoples and local communities. This process builds collaborative structures that encourage data sharing for the goal of identifying, monitoring and conserving KBAs, and brings together relevant biodiversity data for a country.

## *Target 22. Indigenous peoples and local communities.*

The purpose of establishing National Coordination Groups is to ensure the effective participation of diverse stakeholders/ constituencies in the decision-making process that guides the identification of KBAs. Local communities and Indigenous peoples also contribute to monitoring KBAs in some countries, such as Kenya.

© HectorEmilio on Freepik

# NEXT STEPS FOR INCORPORATING KBAs IN NBSAPs

The following specific actions have been identified for achieving the goals and targets of the GBF in each country and are recommended for incorporation into revised NBSAPs:

1. **Establish a KBA National Coordination Group, bringing together relevant stakeholders, including from government, academia, civil society and Indigenous Peoples and local community representatives, to coordinate the process of KBA identification.**

   The establishment of a KBA National Coordination Group ensures a diversity of experts work on the identification, monitoring and conservation of KBAs, including consideration of a full range of taxonomic groups and ecosystems where data are available, and that the criteria are applied appropriately to the national circumstances and priorities, following scientifically rigorous and internationally approved criteria. Indigenous peoples and local communities are encouraged to be incorporated in the process to include local knowledge as well as to identify potential management actions consistent with the rights of IPLCs.

*Dendrobates truncatus* © Esteban Alzate


*Aotus griseimembra* © Chris Bell

**2. Update and expand current KBA inventories by applying the KBA criteria comprehensively, including across all species groups and ecosystems where data exist, and publish these in the World Database of KBAs.**

Without knowing the most important areas to protect, conserve and restore to halt biodiversity loss and species extinctions, it will be impossible to meet the objectives of Goal A. Key Biodiversity Area Assessment provides the framework for identifying these crucial areas, which can then be incorporated into the delivery of multiple targets of the GBF. The process also brings together relevant biodiversity data in each country which are useful for spatial planning and other processes.

**3. Incorporate KBAs in national spatial plans for biodiversity and integrate these across government sectors to support the delivery of Target 3 and minimise negative impacts and pressures on biodiversity.**

Once KBA identification is complete, comprehensive spatial planning should incorporate KBAs and incorporated across government sectors to ensure that sites of particular importance for biodiversity in each country are effectively conserved through protected area and OECM networks or other approaches, and that integrity, buffer areas and connectivity can be effectively managed. It also allows for the management of pressures originating outside KBAs but potentially affecting them.


*Myliobatis aquila* © Jean-Paul Cassez

**4. Use KBAs to guide the expansion and identification of new protected areas and recognition of OECMs, so that Target 3 delivers the aims of Goal A to halt biodiversity loss and species extinctions.**

KBAs represent the most comprehensive network of systematically identified “areas of particular importance for biodiversity”, and thus are crucial in guiding the placement of new and expanded protected areas and the recognition of OECMs.

**5. Monitor KBAs to assess threats and impacts on the biodiversity for which the KBA is important.**

Ongoing monitoring is crucial to meeting all the GBF targets, including understanding the condition of key species or ecosystems at KBAs, the threats to them, and the effectiveness of management responses.

6. **Prioritise degraded KBAs for restoration to improve the condition of the species' populations or ecosystems for which the KBA was identified.**

   The identification and ongoing monitoring of KBAs allows for the prioritisation of restoration actions, both at a landscape level, as well as in specific sites. Management plans can be developed based on KBA data to improve the specific aspects of the site that are internationally significant.

7. **Work with the private sector to minimise their impacts on KBAs.**

   - Companies in each country should be encouraged to use data on KBAs to screen their potential risks to biodiversity, and to guide nature positive actions. Tailored services to support these needs are available through the **Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool** (IBAT).

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

Cajas-Mazán, Ecuador © Juan Carlos Sánchez