KBA
KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

KBA PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT

2019

Following the publication of A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in 2016, the KBA Partnership established a KBA Secretariat in 2018 and is rolling out a programme of action to identify, map, monitor and conserve these globally important sites. This first report of the KBA Programme highlights some of the main actions taken and what has been achieved in 2019.

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FOREWORD

The Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Partnership was formally launched in September 2016 at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Honolulu. The KBA Secretariat was established in March 2018 and the KBA Programme developed and launched soon after. As chair of the KBA Partnership committee for the first four years of the programme I have been encouraged to see how quickly countries around the world are grasping the aims of the KBA programme and engaging with the identification and mapping of these globally important sites. This first report of the activities and achievements highlights how quickly governments, the conservation community and the corporate sector are recognising KBAs and working to roll out programmes to conserve them.

South Africa, as ever a leading nation in conservation planning, has already undertaken a massive assessment of KBAs for thousands of vertebrate and plant species. What their analysis shows is that despite having one of the most comprehensive spatial conservation plans of any country in the world, they have found it useful to apply the KBA criteria because it has identified sites they had missed in their systematic conservation planning work.

Canada and Mozambique are using KBA assessments to roll out ambitious national plans to expand their protected area estate to meet their commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Aichi Target 11 in particular, and more countries are beginning to see the value of identifying sites that have a global importance for conservation as well as sites of national importance for biodiversity.

I am pleased to see that we already have 11 nations that have formally established KBA National Coordination Groups to promote and oversee KBA assessments, and that we have interest from an additional 30-40 countries. We very much want KBAs to be identified within countries and once identified, recognised in national policy and ultimately effectively conserved.
As a long-time advocate for conservation of species and sites, I see the work of the KBA Partnership, KBA National Coordination Groups, and each of the governments, businesses and local civil society groups as a pressing need for our world. This work will develop the blueprint that guides where we should be investing in conservation. I encourage us all to engage with the programme as it grows over the coming year.

Simon Stuart,
Chair KBA Partnership Committee

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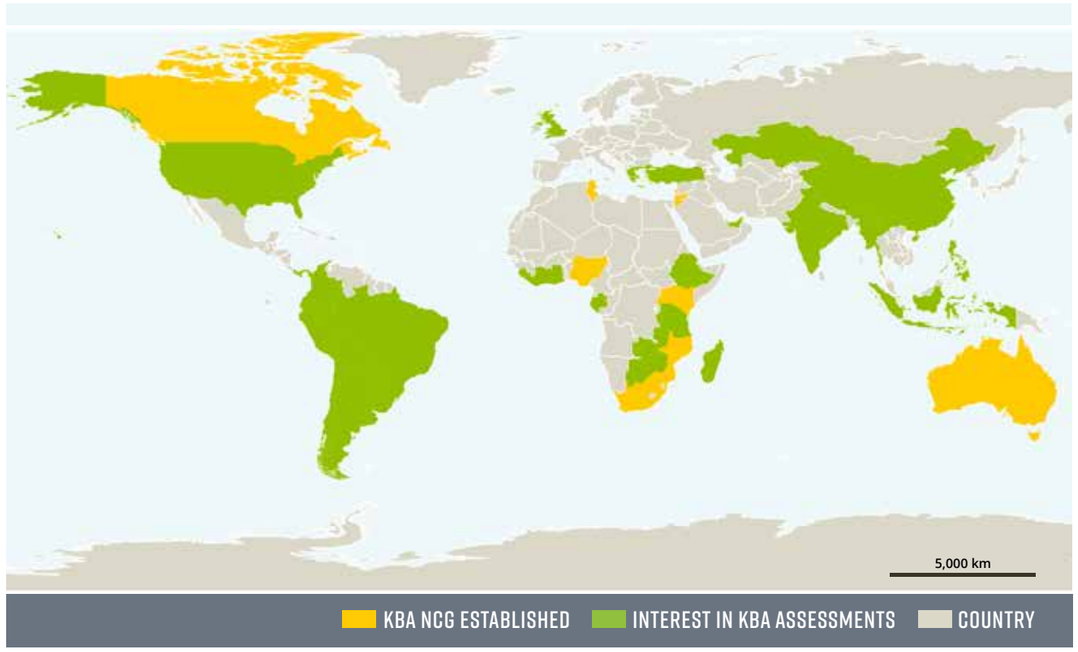
KBA PROGRAMME

The Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Programme is an ambitious attempt to identify, map, monitor and conserve the critical sites for global biodiversity across the planet. Led by 13 international conservation organisations, the KBA Partnership, this programme aims to support each nation of the world to identify KBAs within their country. The ultimate outcome will be a blueprint of sites for conservation that contain globally important populations of species or extent of ecosystems. Knowing, with precision, the location of those places that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity is critical information for a wide range of end users across society, from national decision makers to private companies, as well as for use by international conventions and, ultimately, to direct conservation actions to halt further losses and address existing and emerging threats.

A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas **(KBA Standard)** published by IUCN in 2016 establishes a consultative, science-based process for the identification of globally important sites for biodiversity worldwide. Sites qualify as global KBAs if they meet one or more of 11 criteria in five categories: threatened biodiversity; geographically restricted biodiversity; ecological integrity; biological processes; and, irreplaceability. The KBA criteria have quantitative thresholds and can be applied to species and ecosystems in terrestrial, inland water and marine environments. These thresholds ensure that only those sites with significant populations of a species or extent of an ecosystem are identified as global KBAs.

The vision of the KBA Programme is a comprehensive network of sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity is appropriately identified, correctly documented, effectively managed, sufficiently resourced and adequately safeguarded. A seven-year strategic plan was developed in 2018 which guides the KBA Programme and provides indicators to measure progress. This report summarises some of the key achievements made towards the implementation of the KBA Programme and strategy in 2019.

KBAs can be used by countries to better plan to maximise the biodiversity conserved and minimise negative impacts on the same biodiversity leading to more effective conservation. Identified by species population size, their genetic diversity, ecosystem extent and threat status, KBAs are globally important sites for the persistence of biodiversity. Their identification and conservation can increase the representativeness of species, ecosystems and genetic diversity conserved in a country and helps guide countries in targeting conservation actions, including the expansion of protected and conserved area networks. National spatial conservation planning that incorporates an assessment of KBAs will improve national biodiversity strategy and action plans and help with the mainstreaming of biodiversity. KBAs are used as indicators of the SDGs and CBD Aichi targets and are being used to guide where industries can minimise their impacts on biodiversity. Where KBAs are fully integrated in policies they can be used to mainstream biodiversity conservation nationally and lead to more effective conservation, the green listing of species and sites and ultimately improved biodiversity persistence and eventual recovery.



GOVERNMENTS ENGAGING WITH KBAs

A key aim of the KBA Programme is that KBAs are identified by national experts within countries. Some governments have readily engaged with KBAs in 2019. Canada's and Mozambique's governments have launched a process to identify KBAs across multiple taxonomic groups throughout their countries. South Africa, which had an extensive spatial plan for conservation based on a systematic conservation planning approach, has also made a comprehensive assessment of its KBAs in 2019. A total of eleven KBA National Coordination Groups (KBA NCGs) were established in 2019. These are groups, usually comprised of members from governments, civil society organisations, academia and other stakeholders, which are established to oversee a process of KBA identification nationally. Independent proposers of KBAs are encouraged to work with their KBA National Coordination Group so that any KBA identified is recognised both nationally as well as globally through the World Database of KBAs. These groups will help monitor KBAs over time and work to have KBAs recognised in national policy and legislation.

Key Biodiversity Areas are already being used by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as indicators for progress in achieving the Aichi Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as well as by the UN for monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the percentage of KBAs covered by protected areas is a key indicator for both inter-governmental processes. KBA Partner engagement in the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework during 2019 has been advocating the wider use of KBAs in tracking progress towards achieving the targets for the next 10-year strategic plan for biodiversity. If KBAs were identified for all species and ecosystems and effectively conserved, this would effectively halt the extinction of most species. Spatial mapping of biodiversity through KBA assessment approaches could be used to greatly reduce negative impacts of urban and agricultural expansion together with infrastructure development and industries if the maps are integrated across government sectors.

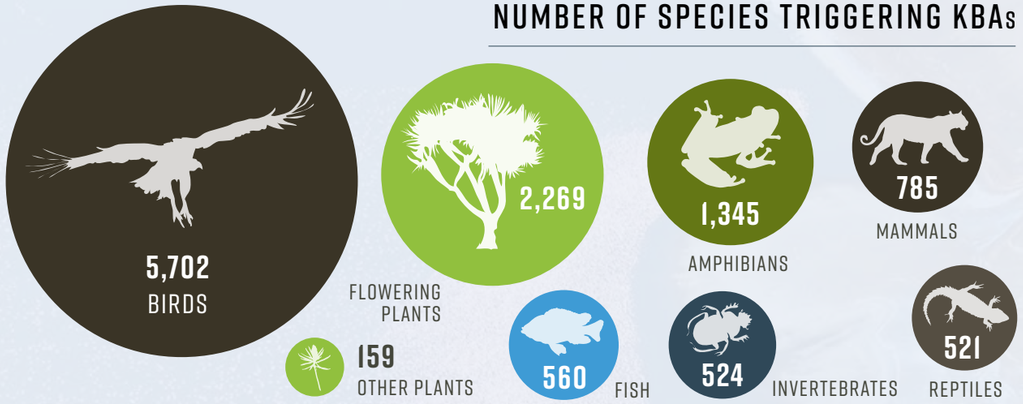
ENGAGEMENT BY THE CORPORATE SECTOR TO CONSERVE KBAs

Businesses are being encouraged to recognise KBAs as likely Critical habitat and to avoid negatively impacting these sites. In 2019 the International Finance Corporation (IFC) updated its Performance Standard 6 guidelines for IFC clients. KBAs are classified as likely Critical Habitat in these guidelines which means that companies ideally avoid projects within KBAs or aim to achieve net positive impact where they do operate within or adjacent to a KBA. Similarly, the Equator Principles Financial Association started a process to update its guidelines for businesses and also drafted new text to encourage data sharing, including data relevant to KBAs.

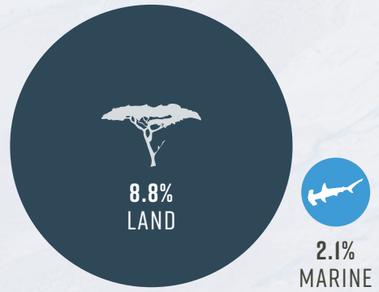
Data from the World Database of KBAs is provided to the private sector through the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT), a database that helps companies assess their risk of negative impacts on biodiversity (https://www.ibat-alliance.org/). It brings together data on KBAs, protected areas from Protected Planet, and from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Companies can access these data in one place and access national and site reports of species and sites that are likely to trigger Critical Habitat. The number of subscribers to IBAT is increasing year on year and companies are regularly engaging with the KBA Secretariat to follow up on more detailed information about sites within the vicinity of planned operations. In 2019, the existing financial institution clients were scoping projects of the order of $300-400 billion and using IBAT as a screening tool.

The KBA Partnership has established a KBA Consultative Forum that regularly consults members of business and finance institutions to obtain feedback on the KBA Programme.

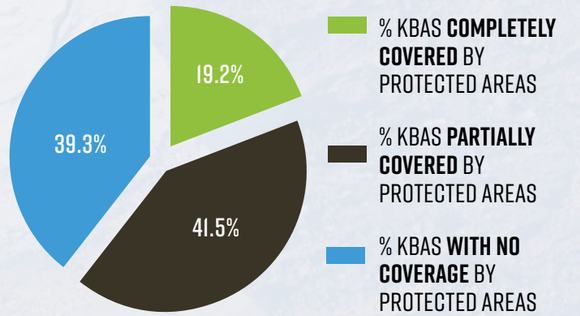
NUMBER OF SPECIES TRIGGERING KBAs



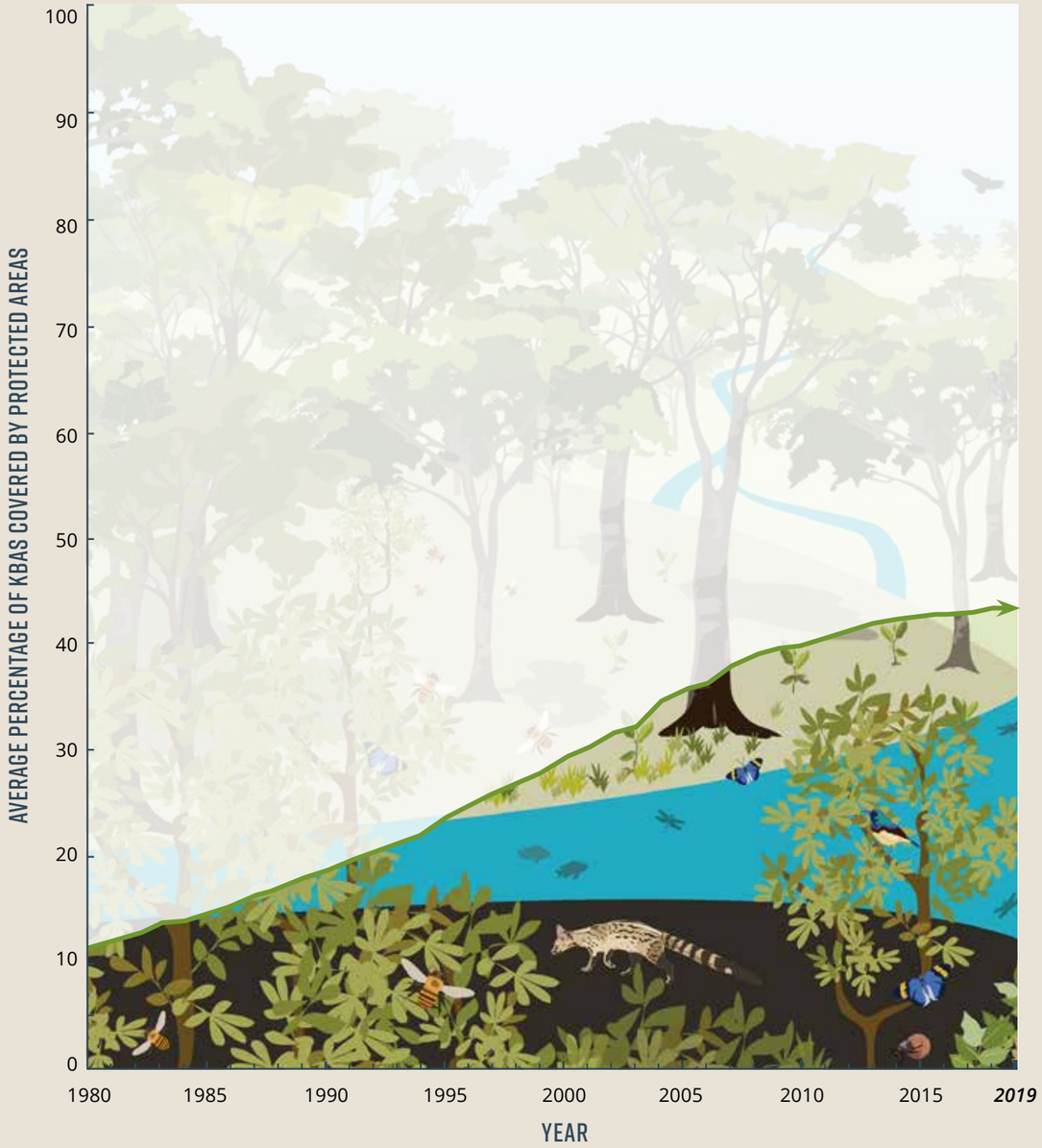
PERCENTAGE OF EARTH'S SURFACE COVERED BY KBAs



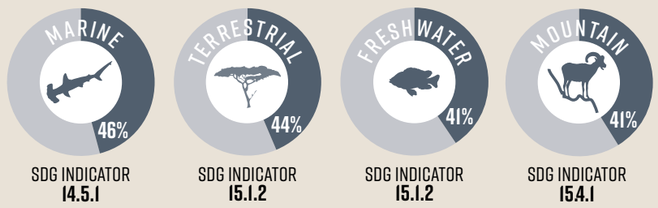
PERCENTAGE OF KBAs PROTECTED



WORLDWIDE COVERAGE OF KBAs BY PROTECTED AREAS



2019 COVERAGE FOR SDG INDICATORS



COUNTRIES USING KBAs TO EXPAND THEIR PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS NETWORK

In 2019 Mozambique, South Africa and Canada started a comprehensive assessment of KBAs for multiple taxonomic groups across their nations. These are the first national applications of the KBA Standard across multiple taxonomic groups. Groups assessed include terrestrial vertebrates (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians) as well as fish, plants and several invertebrate groups. Each country has also developed ecosystem maps and used these to assess whether any sites meet KBA status for threatened or geographically restricted ecosystems.

Canada has established a KBA National Coordination Group with government, Indigenous groups, scientists and members of the conservation community and are mapping KBAs to feed into a wide range of conservation initiatives, including expansion of protected areas. Due to its large size and jurisdictional complexity, Canada is taking a regional approach and is training groups within provinces and territories to apply KBA criteria using local data and expertise. Mozambique has established a KBA National Coordination Group with government, scientists and members of the conservation community and is using the KBA mapping to expand their protected area network to achieve the 17% coverage by protected areas on land and 10% on the seas proposed in the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Aichi Target 11. Resulting KBAs identified will be be assessed as potential protected or conserved (OECM) areas by their respective governments. South Africa already had a fairly comprehensive spatial plan based on a systematic conservation planning approach and has been using the data they had compiled for that national planning to apply the KBA Criteria. South Africa established a KBA National Coordination Group also, and has been using an initial desktop analysis to identify where there are gaps in their existing spatial conservation plan. The analysis has highlighted that there are quite a few non-threatened geographically restricted species whose important sites were not identified in the systematic conservation planning. As a result, South Africa is looking at how to expand conservation action to ensure these species are also conserved.

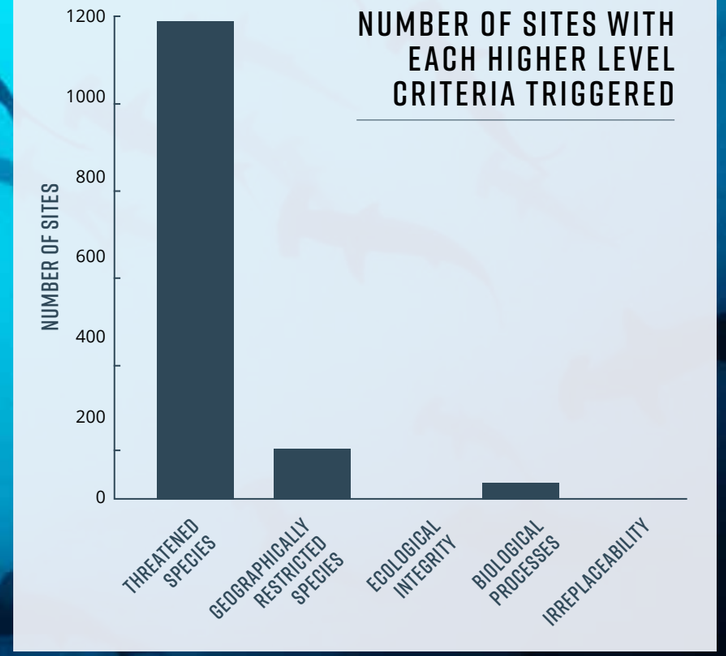
TOOLS DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT PROPOSALS OF KBAs

The World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (WDKBA) currently contains information on 16,366 KBAs, 13,000 of which were primarily identified for birds, building on the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas Programme of BirdLife International. In 2019, all 853 Alliance for Zero extinction sites, sites that contain the only known population of a critically endangered or endangered species, were incorporated in the database, because they each meet one of the KBA criteria (A1e). An additional 510 proposals for new sites were received and reviewed for their KBA status. The WDKBA provides the global repository of KBAs and is used to support many other global platforms such as the Integrated Biodiversity assessment tool (IBAT), and the United Nations Biodiversity Lab, a tool developed to support countries to compile their 6th National Reports to CBD.

The WDKBA is in the process of being redesigned and updated to enable more advanced querying of KBA data as well as providing simple dashboards that summarise data at global, regional and national scale. It is also being re-programmed so that KBAs can be proposed online with simple tools to help users make proposals and a review process established. In the interim a KBA proposal form was designed that automatically calculates the criteria for a user, and is being applied in several countries. Standard lists of range-restricted species, bioregion and ecoregion restricted species and taxonomic groups were developed, which are needed to apply two of the criteria (B2 and B3). A total of 510 proposed KBAs were reviewed by the KBA Secretariat in 2019.

A KBA Assessment Parameter Database was also developed separately to undertake preliminary scoping of KBAs around the world to develop shortlists of potential sites where KBAs may occur for terrestrial vertebrates. These lists can save proposers time in searching through many species in a country by helping identify those species that are likely to trigger a KBA. Lists and reports for a country can be obtained from the KBA Secretariat.

THERE ARE NOW **16,366** **KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS** IN THE WORLD DATABASE



This figure refers to a subset of sites assessed against the new Global Criteria published in 2016.

TRAINING NATIONAL TEAMS TO IDENTIFY KBAs

Training materials have been developed, tested and refined at training workshops and will soon be finalised as a set of 14 power point modules and 40 practical exercises to take trainees through the process of applying the criteria and mapping boundaries of sites. These will be made available to a wider community through an online training course as well as the redesigned KBA website (www.keybiodiversityareas.org). A set of more detailed training materials are also being developed to train people to the level that they can then go on to run their own training programmes. This will help build a cadre of people in different parts of the world who can then support KBA assessments and run training courses in their region.

The first Guidelines for using A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas were released in 2019. Developed by the KBA Standards and Appeals committee these guidelines greatly expanded the support available for interpreting and applying the KBA criteria. A separate document was also produced to provide guidance on the KBA proposal process, the need for independent review and how this occurs, and the value of having KBAs recognised in the World Database of KBAs. Two webinars were also held in 2019 to help countries in the application of the KBA criteria and also in the establishment of KBA National Coordination Groups. More webinars will be developed in 2020.

Multiple training workshops were carried out in Europe, Asia, Latin America, North America and Africa to develop the competence and ability of KBA proposers and KBA National Coordination Groups to apply the KBA criteria and delineate sites. A total of 16 comprehensive training sessions were made for people from 22 countries, many of whom are now applying the criteria and identifying KBAs.

KBA training course hosted by NatureKenya

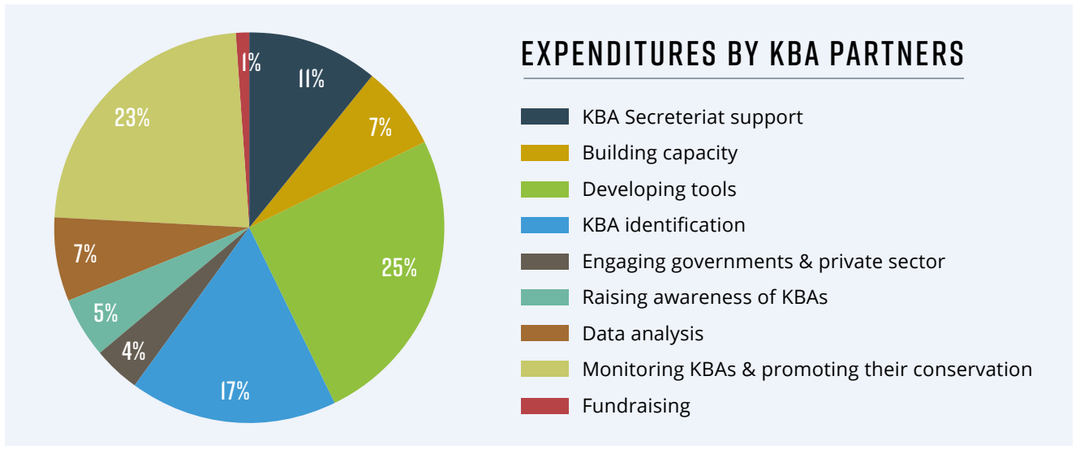
KBA PROGRAMME FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2019

In 2019 the KBA Partners who are signatories to the KBA Partnership (excluding GEF) supported the KBA Programme with more than $4.54 million dollars* in both direct financing and in-kind contributions (staff time mainly). The pie chart below shows the split between some of the main objectives in the KBA Strategic Plan: support to the functioning of the KBA Secretariat; building capacity through the development of guidelines and training materials; developing tools to help with KBA identification such as the World Database of KBAs; supporting the identification of KBAs in countries; engaging governments and businesses about the importance of KBAs; raising awareness about KBAs and development of the KBA website; research to better inform KBA assessments; monitoring of KBAs and promoting their conservation; and finally fundraising for the KBA programme. KBA Partner support to the conservation management of KBAs where they work around the world is not included here, but would be increase the total significantly.

The KBA programme has developed a five-year budget that estimates the costs needed to fully revise the World Database of KBAs, website, establish the structures for KBA proposal and review and to support countries to make comprehensive assessments of KBAs. This averages $1 million per year with an estimate of additional costs of between $150,000-500,000 per country to make a national assessment of KBAs for each country (costs varying with costs of staff time and meetings). The costs of monitoring and conserving KBAs that are identified will also vary greatly, dependent on in-country costs and the level of threat to the sites.

We are looking for partners who want to support the KBA Programme and contribute to identifying and conserving these sites of global importance for biodiversity. Contact the head of the KBA Secretariat (aplumptre@keybiodiversityareas.org) if interested.

* *This amount refers to partner contributions to the programme of identification, mapping and monitoring KBAs. A much larger amount is invested by each partner to conserve KBAs around the world.*



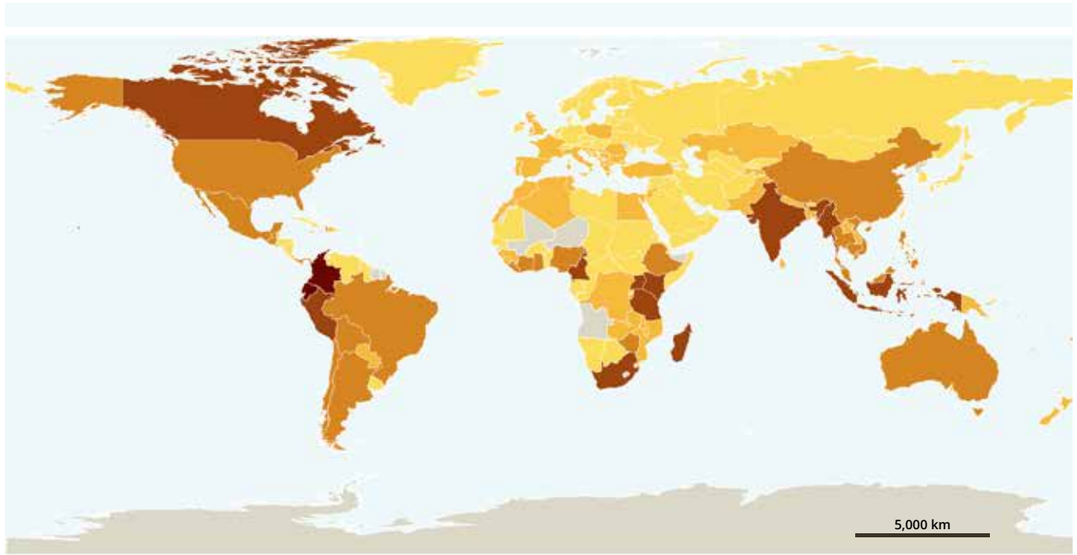
KBA PARTNERSHIP AND SECRETARIAT

In 2019 the KBA Partnership expanded to 13 Institutions by welcoming the American Bird Conservancy. This partnership has a broad reach with offices and national partners in most countries around the world. In 2018 the KBA Secretariat was established, with a base in the David Attenborough Building at Cambridge University and co-hosted by BirdLife International and IUCN. A KBA Partnership Committee meets twice a year to plan joint actions and the work of the KBA Secretariat.

The KBA Secretariat includes the Head and KBA Data analyst based in Cambridge together with a team of KBA Regional Focal points on different continents. The Regional Focal Points' role is to support countries to assess their KBAs as well as provide the first review of proposed KBAs to confirm that proposals meet the KBA criteria. Once reviewed KBAs are then nominated to the KBA Secretariat for validation and confirmation, before they are incorporated in the World Database of KBAs. This review process is needed, to ensure accurate and up to date assessments, given the different ways KBAs are being used by governments, businesses and inter-governmental processes, and assures that the quality of the KBA dataset is maintained.

KBA Community Representatives are also present on four continents to help raise awareness of KBAs, provide support to proposers or KBA National Coordination Groups, and to provide representation in the governance of the KBA programme for the wider set of stakeholders involved in KBA identification and conservation. The Chair of the KBA Community established a google list serve, a newsletter and ran several webinars in 2019 to increase awareness of KBAs.

KBA Partnershp meeting hosted by the South Africa National Biodiversity Institute



KBA SECRETARIAT AND KBA COMMUNITY











Andrew Plumptre is Head of the KBA Secretariat, has worked in Africa for more than 30 years and helped Uganda make an assessment of its KBAs. He believes that mapping the KBAs of the world will develop the blueprint for future conservation action.

Daniel Marnewick is chair of the KBA Community and Regional Focal Point for southern and west Africa, working for BirdLife South Africa.

Alberto Yanosky, Community representative for the Americas, believes the task is huge but the output of putting important sites for nature on each nation's map is very satisfying. Nature is asking us this favour.

Irina Kostadinova is Community Representative for Europe and Central Asia, working for the BirdLife Partner in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds.

Sheila G. Vergara, Community representative for Asia is Director of Biodiversity Information Management, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, and engaged in KBA work to contribute to conservation decision and policy development in the ASEAN Region.

Daniele Baisero, Data Analyst for the KBA Secretariat, has extensive experience with spatial biodiversity analyses at a global scale. He is currently developing innovative tools to assist in identifying KBAs for all biodiversity across the world. He believes in visionary approaches.

Tim Davenport, Regional Focal Point for East and Central Africa has been working in Africa for more than 27 years. He works on KBAs because he is convinced that the KBA model perfectly combines science and national interests, to enable conservation policy.

David Diaz, Regional Focal Point for Latin America, enjoys the science and challenges of the criteria application, and how a participative bottom-up approach brings together people from so many different backgrounds, to establish KBAs, in the real world.

Miguel Fernandez, Regional Focal Point for Latin America. His work is focused on transforming and elevating the understanding among the public, media and decision makers of the importance of understanding the fundamental patterns of life's diversity.

Marcos Valderrabano, Regional Focal Point for the Mediterranean, North Africa, and Middle East, finds his the KBA process fascinating, particularly how it manages to bring people from different backgrounds together, setting up the basis for a productive dialogue.

Mike Crosby, Regional Focal Point for South East Asia has been working with the BirdLife International Partnership on the identification, documentation and conservation of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (or IBAs) since the late 1990s.

Mark O'Brien, Regional Focal Point for Australasia and Pacific islands, enjoys working with experts across a range of taxa and believe that KBAs provide great opportunities for focussing conservation efforts and controlling developments here in the Pacific.

Contact the KBA Secretariat at aplumptre@keybiodiversityareas.org

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

Penny Langhammer, Co-Chair of the Technical Working Group and Executive Vice President of Science and Strategy at GWC, has been one of the key drivers in establishing the KBA criteria and Global Standard.

Olivia Crowe, Co-Chair of the Technical Working Group and Global Science Coordinator (IBAs & KBAs) for BirdLife International, leads the technical working group with Penny to provide guidance on the technical methods for applying the KBA criteria.

STANDARDS & APPEALS COMMITTEE

Charlotte Boyd is chair of the Standards and Appeals Committee which is independent of the KBA Secretariat. This committee publishes the guidelines and resolves issues over interpretation of the KBA Standard.

KBA COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN 2019

Chair KBA Committee: Simon Stuart

Chairs Technical Working Group: Penny Langhammer & Olivia Crowe

Chair Standards and Appeals Committee: Charlotte Boyd

American Bird Conservancy: Mike Parr & Amy Upgren

Amphibian Survival Alliance: Helen Merideth & Penny Langhammer

BirdLife International: Melanie Heath, Stu Butchart, Olivia Crowe & Zoltan Waliczky

Conservation International: Rachael Neugarten & Lian Pin Koh

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund: Olivier Langrand & Jack Tordoff

Global Wildlife Conservation: Wes Sechrest & Penny Langhammer

Global Environment Facility: Mark Zimsky

International Union for the Conservation of Nature: Jane Smart & Tom Brooks

NatureServe: Healy Hamilton

Rainforest Trust: Karl Didier & Mark Gruin

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: Dieter Hoffmann & Chris Magin

Wildlife Conservation Society: Sue Lieberman & John Robinson

World Wide Fund for Nature: Wendy Elliot & Marco Lambertini