

Key Biodiversity Areas in Canada

The Need to Identify Key Biodiversity Areas in Canada

One of the most effective ways to safeguard wildlife and wild places is through the improved management and protection of areas of special importance. Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. The new KBA Standard provides criteria to identify and recognize these areas, developed by an IUCN Task Force and recommended for use in Canada by the Pathway to Target 1 National Advisory Panel (NAP). KBAs bring together a range of efforts developed for different elements of biodiversity (birds, plants, mammals, ecosystems, etc.) under one roof for the first time, creating a comprehensive, robust and quantitative tool. Areas may be recognized as key because they contain rare or threatened species or ecosystems. They may also be areas where animals gather in large numbers for part of the year, intact areas that are undisturbed by industrial development, or areas of irreplaceable habitat. The identification of KBAs in Canada will allow for more informed conservation efforts, including as part of land-use planning and economic development.

2-year work plan (2019-2021)

- Through the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative, the utility and importance of KBA information for Canadian biodiversity conservation was acknowledged by federal, provincial, territorial, Indigenous and municipal representatives. This work was identified as a priority in 2018.
- The identification of KBAs began in 2019, drawing on biodiversity expertise from across all jurisdictions, and will produce a KBA database and new range maps for focal species, among other products.
- Work is underway to adapt the global KBA standard to the Canadian context, supporting the recognition of nationally important areas. The Canadian project will reflect Indigenous knowledge and values in the KBA identification process.
- Outreach and capacity building are ongoing. This will improve uptake of the tool and provide opportunities for the active involvement of provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners.

Who is involved

The Canadian KBA Coalition coordinates the identification of KBAs in Canada and is open to environmental NGOs, Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments, Indigenous leaders and academic and other expert institutions. These organisations¹, as well as other affiliated groups such as COSEWIC, are providing support and expertise to assist in identifying KBAs and are important partners helping to gather information, communicate the importance of KBAs and promote appropriate measures to conserve them. Coordination is provided by WCS Canada as the Secretariat of the initiative.

Canadian leadership

The Canadian KBA Coalition is leading the way internationally on KBA work with one of the first comprehensive national programs in the world to move forward with identifying KBAs. Foundational support has been provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Learn more at www.kbacanada.org or write to the Canada KBA Coordinator at crudsepp@wcs.org

¹ Currently WCS Canada, Bird Studies Canada, NatureServe Canada, Nature Conservancy of Canada, WWF Canada, Nature Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Québec Centre for Biodiversity Science, CPAWS, the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas, and the Pathway to Target 1 National Steering Committee. Other organisations are in the process of joining.