

### MEDITERRANEAN BASIN BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

On 16 September 2021, the Montenegrin Minister of Ecology, Spatial and Urban Planning proclaimed the creation of **Katič Nature Park**, only the second marine protected area in Montenegro.

Katič is designed to include the grass beds of *Posidonia oceanica*—known as the “lungs of the Mediterranean Sea”—as well as corals found near the island of Veliki Katič, the estuary of Vezirovo and Cape Dubovac, and some important marine caves. The total area of this new protected area is 2,745 hectares.

CEPF support has been instrumental in the creation of this protected area. Funding was provided to **Green Home**, a Montenegrin organization, which worked in partnership with the Mediterranean Center for Environmental Monitoring and the Montenegrin Ecologist Society. The organizations gathered scientific and ecological data, led negotiations with local fishermen and tourism operators, and supported the national authorities for the preparation of designation documentation. They will now be involved in the management of this protected area.



### MADAGASCAR AND THE INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

Fiscal year 2022 started with the kickoff of the Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) program funded by **the Green Climate Fund via l'Agence Française de Développement** and implemented by CEPF. The CEPF Secretariat held several inception workshops in July and August to introduce this important program to national designated authorities in each country of the hotspot and to other stakeholders. The main inception workshop was well attended, and its recording is available [here](#).

In September, a consortium led by **Conservation International Madagascar** and **Biotope, Missouri Botanical Garden, and Asity** was selected through a competitive bidding process to update the ecosystem profile of the hotspot. The consortium is conducting stakeholder interviews in Madagascar, the Comoros, Mauritius and the Seychelles. This consultative process will help identify priorities in each country in terms of Key Biodiversity Areas and Ecosystem Services (KBA+) that are essential to local populations to adapt to climate variability. If you wish to be consulted as part of this process, please send an email to [mvielle@cepf.net](mailto:mvielle@cepf.net).

In addition, the CEPF Secretariat recently consulted with the National Designated Authorities (NDA) of the Green Climate Fund of each of the four countries—including an in-person meeting with the minister of the environment of Madagascar—in order to get their input on key priorities for the project in their country, to secure their participation throughout the implementation period, and to ensure that the program aligns closely with the national designated contributions of each country as these contributions evolve over the 10-year period. The first draft of the ecosystem profile is expected to be available in January 2022 and will be reviewed by the NDAs in each country. The final version of the ecosystem profile is expected in April 2022.

Concurrently, the CEPF Secretariat also issued a call for expressions of interest to select the regional implementation team (RIT) for this new investment phase. [Applications close on December 15](#). Please share this information with relevant stakeholders, and if interested, you can find the application materials on the CEPF website using this [link](#). A new RIT consortium or organization is expected to start working in June 2022.

## CARIBBEAN ISLANDS BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

CEPF had an auspicious start to the fiscal year in the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot when, on 1 July 2021, **Conservation International signed a US\$13.9 million grant agreement with The World Bank, with funding originating from the Government of Japan**. The milestone represented the culmination of close collaboration between the CEPF Secretariat and The World Bank throughout fiscal year 2021 to prepare and receive approval of the grant. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of local civil society groups and stakeholders for conservation to protect and improve management of globally important biodiversity within 32 priority Key Biodiversity Areas clustered in seven corridors in seven countries: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Following the signature of the agreement, the Secretariat quickly mobilized to begin grant-making. On 14 July, the Secretariat held an internal kickoff meeting to launch the new region. By mid-August, CEPF signed the regional implementation team (RIT) grant agreement with **Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)**—the Trinidad and Tobago-based group that served as RIT for the first investment phase.



By early September, CEPF received the World Bank's approval of the annual budget and work plan for fiscal year 2022. In mid-September, CEPF awarded a grant to **Instituto Tecnológico De Santo Domingo**

**(INTEC)** to promote collaborative social accountability in the Dominican Republic, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia and Jamaica. Trainings for the new RIT and INTEC were held in October and November, the two teams staffed up with technical advisors and country coordinators, and the first call for proposals, for large and small grants, was issued in October, resulting in a total of 23 small and large grant proposals from selected priority Key Biodiversity Areas in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.

## EAST MELANESIAN ISLANDS BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

**Vangunu Island**, part of the Marovo Kavachi Key Biodiversity Area in the Solomon Islands, is home to the Zaira community. The **Zaira Resource Management Area (ZRMA)**, which encompasses the island's only remaining untouched forest, was established in 2009. However, the ZRMA is now under threat from international logging companies. To strengthen the ZRMA's status, the Zaira community is applying to have its land declared as a formally protected area. Several CEPF grantees and partners are working to help the community, including the Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the University of Queensland, and Live and Learn Solomon Islands. The issue has been taken to court to protect the community's rights over its land.

## INDO-BURMA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

- In **Cambodia's Preah Vihear province**, CEPF grantee **Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA)** is strengthening youth groups and empowering them to work in collaboration with older people to actively protect natural resources. Over the first year, the project has engaged with youth groups in two communes and supported them to participate in protecting community forests from being cut. Around 60 young people from each commune have joined with village elders to conduct monthly patrols. Thanks to information collected during these patrols, the local authorities intervened to resolve several cases of illegal logging and encroachment by outsiders. These achievements are significant because these forests not only underpin the sustainable livelihoods of local people and protect part of the catchment of

Tonle Sap Lake, the largest freshwater fishery in the world, but also are central to preserving the Indigenous culture of the Kui ethnic minority.



To build broad-based community support for their conservation activities, the youth groups have also been supported to implement activities to promote Kui culture, including constructing a spirit house for traditional worship, demarcating land for community collective farming and participating in traditional ceremonies. At the same time, the groups have engaged the wider youth demographic within their communities through a youth volleyball team, youth savings group and similar activities. In these ways, CIYA is helping the

Kui people to retain their cultural identity and pass traditional ecological knowledge to the younger generation.

- The most important site for globally threatened bird species in the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot is **Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary**, which lies between the Mekong and Sekong Rivers in northeastern Cambodia. CEPF has been supporting conservation efforts there since 2009, through **BirdLife International** and various partner organizations. Each year, large areas of the wildlife sanctuary are inundated. As the floods recede, water is retained in shallow pools, known as *trapeangs*, which are a key habitat for wildlife, including the Critically Endangered giant ibis (*Pseudibis gigantea*) and white-shouldered ibis (*Pseudibis davisoni*).

Historically, *trapeangs* were maintained by wallowing animals, such as gaur (*Bos gaurus*), banteng (*B. javanicus*) and wild water buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*). Unfortunately, decades of unsustainable hunting have led to severe declines in wild cattle populations, reducing the quality of feeding habitat for the ibises and other wildlife species, and threatening their long-term survival.



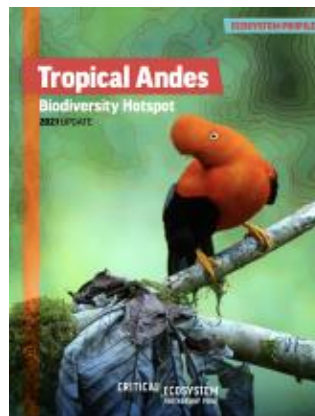
In 2020, CEPF awarded a new grant to BirdLife International to restore seasonal wetlands throughout Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary in collaboration with local communities. During the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2021, 20 *trapeangs* were successfully restored. To test different approaches, five *trapeangs* were deepened mechanically and 15

were restored manually. Manual excavation created employment for 278 people from

six participating villages. As well as monitoring the impact of *trapeang* restoration on wildlife populations, the project is also looking at the availability of fish, frogs and other wetland resources harvested by local people to determine whether restoration can make a significant contribution to food security in the context of climate change adaptation strategies. Also, during the last quarter, 2,664 cows and buffaloes belonging to 296 households were vaccinated against foot and mouth disease and hemorrhagic septicemia. A follow-up vaccination campaign will be conducted later in the year, with the aim of reaching all cows and buffaloes that are grazed within the wildlife sanctuary. Healthy livestock herds can help maintain good habitat conditions in lieu of natural densities of wild cattle. Allowing local communities to graze their livestock at *trapeangs* is a win-win for conservation and rural development and one of several measures aimed at building strong community support for conservation objectives.

## TROPICAL ANDES BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

Activities in the Tropical Andes reflected the hotspot's transition to a new funding phase. The CEPF Secretariat and profiling team, led by **Pronaturaleza** of Peru, presented the draft ecosystem profile to the CEPF Working Group in early April and held a formal meeting to receive comments on 15 April. The final version of the ecosystem profile was presented to the CEPF Donor Council on 23 April, and no-objection approval was secured on 10 June. As part of the 38<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Donor Council in May, the CEPF Secretariat presented highlights of the strong conservation results achieved during the second investment phase.



Discussions with **KfW** on providing €7 million euros for conservation in Ecuador have advanced. Following meetings with CEPF, KfW approved the project's draft environmental and social commitment plan and associated documents for inclusion into the grant agreement. Shortly afterward, KfW sent the draft financing agreements for review.

With the advancement of negotiations with KfW, CEPF issued a request for expressions of interest and held an informational webinar for parties interested in serving as the regional implementation team (RIT) for Ecuador.

Concurrent to discussions with KfW, the Secretariat held a series of meetings with **Profonampe, Patrimonio Natural, and Asociación Boliviana para la Investigación y Conservación de Ecosistemas Andino Amazónicos** regarding their interest to form an alliance to serve as the RIT for Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. The three organizations agreed to form an alliance to serve as the RIT. With the approval of the Donor Council, the CEPF Secretariat invited the alliance to submit a full proposal to serve as the Tropical Andes RIT.

In October, the Donor Council also approved the Long-Term Vision for the Tropical Andes.

## MOUNTAINS OF CENTRAL ASIA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

- The regional implementation team (RIT) for the hotspot, **WWF-Russia**, has awarded two small grants in Tajikistan to protect priority species of fruit trees. A group called Ganji Tabiat is working in Dashtijum Key Biodiversity Area, while a group called Kuhhoi Pomir is working in Shakh dara Key Biodiversity Area. Ganji Tabiat is establishing nurseries and working with 100 residents to plant the Vulnerable *Malus sieversii* and Critically Endangered *Pyrus tadshikistanica* (wild



relatives of apple and pear, respectively). Kuhhoi Pomir is working with community members to replant a different species of wild pear, the Endangered *Pyrus cajan*.

In the case of both grantees, an underlying issue is that people do not fully realize the biodiversity value of the place they call home. The grantees use the fruit trees as flagship species to raise local awareness, while also promoting the harvesting of species that are not globally threatened.

- The **Association of Nature Conservation Organizations of Tajikistan (ANCOT)** is working in the Baljuvan region of Tajikistan. Baljuvan is a priority Key Biodiversity Area, home to globally threatened species of apple and pear trees, and known for the iconic urial sheep (*Ovis vignei*). Of its 94,000 hectares, only 3,800 are formally protected, with the remainder used for forestry, community-based livestock grazing and hunting (through a concession to a private company). ANCOT is working with the company, Oxus Holdings, to better manage its 24,000-hectare concession, ensuring conservation on this production landscape while also improving relationships with the surrounding communities. Oxus is providing significant resources toward the grant's goals in the form of labor and transportation throughout the site. The first steps of this grant involved equipping and training teams so they understand which plant and animal species are present to better guide where grazing occurs and how hunting can be conducted sustainably.

## CERRADO BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

- The project [Cerrado Private Reserves](#), led by **Fundação Pró-Natureza (Funatura)**, aims to create 70 Private Natural Heritage Reserves (Reservas Particulares do Patrimônio Natural or RPPN in Portuguese) by the end of 2021. This would represent an increase of 26% of the number of RPPNs registered in the Cerrado. By September, there were 50 new areas with ongoing registration processes at the federal and state environmental agencies, with a combined area of 11,411 hectares.

The initiative to create an RPPN is a voluntary act of individuals or legal entities that own rural or urban properties that demonstrate a potential for nature conservation. RPPNs are conservation units of private domain. This conservation purpose is recorded on the property's registration plate. Once an area becomes an RPPN, although the right of ownership can be sold, the status of a privately protected area is perpetual. They represent an important opportunity for new conservation units to be created in the Cerrado, with civil society engaged in protecting these areas.

The increased creation of RPPNs brings benefits not only for the flora and fauna, but for all of society, which depends on the ecosystem services produced by the Cerrado, such as water production and climate maintenance.

To show the results achieved by the project, Funatura has launched a series of short videos, available on the organization's [YouTube channel](#).

- **Acelera Cerrado** is an initiative supported by CEPF in the Cerrado that began in July. It aims to build the capacity of 40 civil society organizations active in the conservation of the Brazilian Cerrado. The program is carried out by **Impact Hub Brasilia**, and is co-funded by the Cerrado Alliance, which is composed of CEPF, Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB), Instituto Humanize, Instituto Nova Era, and Fundação Grupo Boticário de Proteção à Natureza.



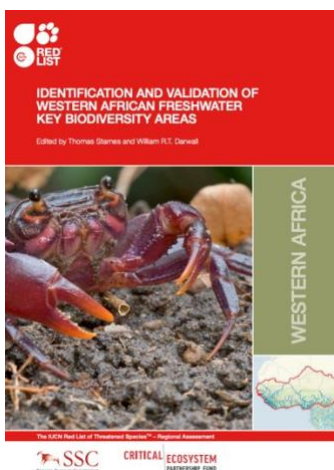
More than transmitting knowledge, Acelera Cerrado seeks to boost behavioral change. Access to quality technical knowledge is just one of the fundamental aspects of innovative capacity-building projects. The individuals responsible for implementing the changes in their organizations will be trained, using Theory U as the guiding methodology. Other innovation and leadership tools will also be used, such as Theory of Change, Art of Hosting and Communities of Practice. The program includes technical qualification and specialized mentorship in 11 topics such as financial management, legal requirements, project management, gender integration and methodologies that stimulate systemic performance.

Nonprofit organizations and social cooperatives with at least one year of formal existence can participate in the program. Eighty-four organizations applied. Shortlisted organizations, some of which have already received CEPF grants, were interviewed and the program was successfully launched in June with the selected organizations.

The Acelera Cerrado project continues through February 2022 and the activities will be performed weekly in two meetings lasting between two and four hours, which, added to the activities requested by the experts, should imply a weekly dedication of about 10 hours.

## GUINEAN FORESTS OF WEST AFRICA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

- West Africa is rich in freshwater biodiversity and regional endemism. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable gap in knowledge around freshwater priority species and sites in West Africa, aspects covered by the CEPF large grant to **IUCN** for the project "Identification and validation of West African Freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas."



The project was able to undertake and synthesize Red List assessments of 1,502 species of freshwater fishes, mollusks, odonates (dragonflies and damselflies), decapods (crabs and shrimps) and aquatic plants. The conservation status of freshwater species was found to be declining, with 14% of all native freshwater species being globally threatened with extinction. More strikingly, there is a lack of sufficient monitoring data to reveal conservation trends of freshwater species, with many species not having been observed for decades.

The report, published during the World Conservation Congress inMarseilles, identifies key threats to specific species and some 22sub-catchments as irreplaceable sites (only localities of 39 threatened freshwater species). The report makes recommendations for the conservation of these sites as Key Biodiversity Areas. It also highlights specific sites in urgent need of surveys and conservation actions for each taxonomic group. While the hope is that governments, conservation practitioners and researchers will use this data to conserve the unique freshwater biodiversity of West Africa, CEPF is now considering expanding the use of environmental DNA to address the

monitoring shortfall for freshwater biodiversity in parts of the hotspot.

The report is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

- The **UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)** was contracted to provide an end-line assessment of protected area management effectiveness, forest cover and threat change in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot. The final report draws on the baseline assessment conducted in 2017 and supplemental data obtained between 2016 and 2020.

Finalized in April 2021, it shows that for protected areas with management effectiveness tracking tools (METT), more focus is needed on improving the delivery of conservation objectives in the protected areas.

As for forest cover, it shows that this has decreased throughout the hotspot since 2000, with a higher rate of loss in the Upper Guinean Forests compared to the Lower Guinean Forests. Although the percentage of loss is much lower in the Lower Guinean Forests, both regions experienced a four-fold increase in the rate of deforestation between the two time periods (2000-2014 and 2014-2019). Several key threats (based on most frequently recorded within the threat assessments) showing as particularly prevalent within the hotspot are hunting, agriculture and aquaculture within protected areas and natural system modification. For the change in threat level, information available for a small sample of funded sites shows that most threats have either stayed the same or are becoming more significant with time.

This report, available for download [here](#), did not show a link between CEPF funding and reduced deforestation. However, this does not mean that funding is ineffective. Rather, this study highlights the need for data that measure changes in threats over time and link management inputs with conservation outcomes. This study shows that there are several vulnerable Key Biodiversity Areas that continue to have a substantial forest cover and can still be a priority for protection, particularly in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

## **WALLACEA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT**

**Yayasan Konservasi Laut Indonesia (YKLI)** is working with the communities living on Langkai and Lanjukang, two small islands about 32 kilometers off the coast of Makassar, the main city in South Sulawesi. Fishing is the only source of income for the people living on these islands, with octopus being among the highest value target species.

These two islands are part of coral reef Key Biodiversity Area called Kapoposang-Pangkep-Bulurokeng, itself part of a larger marine corridor along the Sulawesi coast. YKLI is delivering training to fisherfolk to better understand the reef and the octopus fishery with the dual goals of conserving the reef and providing sustainable catch for local people. As a first step, YKLI and 30 community members completed a "fishery profile" to assess the state of the fishery, including where fish are caught, volume of catch, composition of fishers, market price and state of live coral cover.