

Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) transition to Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) in Canada

KBA Program summary

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), BirdLife International and 11 other international organizations have come together to create a new system for identifying areas important to the persistence of biodiversity and wildlife populations. Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are important for many reasons: they harbor threatened and geographically restricted biodiversity; they have high ecological integrity; they support biological processes such as breeding, migration, and staging; and/or are irreplaceable. In 2016 the IUCN released a [Global Standard for the Identification of KBAs](#), outlining the specific criteria that can trigger a site as a KBA. Following the release of the global standard, Canada was one of the first countries to adapt the document into a [National Standard for the Identification of KBAs in Canada](#).

IBA to KBA Crosswalk

IBAs are foundational in determining KBAs in Canada, given the considerable conservation work done in IBAs, investments made since designation (~25 years), and the similarity of IBA and KBA criteria. Canada's 581 IBAs support significant populations of at-risk species and aggregations of birds. IBAs are recognized internationally and have been important for engaging stewards through the [Caretaker Network](#), establishing conservation reserves, and guiding land-use decisions. Identifying KBAs gives us additional biodiversity knowledge about areas we already know are important for birds. Maintaining the value of these sites may promote existing management practices, enhance stewardship, help designate new protected areas, or make changes to land-use plans. While KBA designation does not carry formal protection or management requirements, the information can be used to advance or support conservation goals, and help mitigate impacts of habitat loss and degradation, overexploitation, and climate change.

Birds Canada has undertaken an analysis to "crosswalk" our IBAs to the new KBA criteria, the results of which can be viewed on this [interactive map](#). Our first step was to update population estimates for all birds in Canada using Partners in Flight, Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, and IUCN numbers. We then updated bird data for all IBAs across Canada using the NatureCounts database (includes all Birds Canada programs, and eBird data). We found ~17 million observations in our 581 IBAs. Then, we applied the new KBA criteria to all IBAs, and found 50,000 observations that met KBA thresholds. Through this analysis, 438 presumptive KBAs were identified, out of which 228 are data deficient because data are not up-to-date (> 8-12 years old) or have low repeatability (< 3 seasons of observation).

Partners and roles

Canada's national KBA standards are implemented by the KBA Canada Coalition, which includes representatives from Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCS), NatureServe Canada, and Birds Canada. WCS and NatureServe Canada are working on top-down and bottom-up assessments for, and coordinating the identification of new KBAs with non-bird species and ecosystems. Birds Canada is focusing on the re-assessment of Canada's IBAs using the new KBA criteria, reaching out to local experts, Indigenous groups, government, and more to help refine and approve boundaries, fill in data gaps, and nominate qualifying IBAs as new KBAs. Birds Canada is also leading the development of a new website and registry tool to communicate the progress of identifying KBAs in Canada, and the importance of these sites. This website launched recently, and you can view it here: www.kbacanada.org.