

# State of Australia's Key Biodiversity Areas 2021



Save Birds. Save Life.





# Acknowledgements

BirdLife Australia thanks all the volunteers, staff of NGOs, Indigenous Ranger groups and government agencies who have contributed in diverse and inspired ways to the conservation and management of Australia's Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).

In particular, we want to thank the KBA Guardians and Guardian Coordinators for 86 KBAs for their monitoring efforts and the KBA Health-checks they conduct to give us an insight into the state of Australia's KBAs. They have been working hard to raise awareness for KBAs and make sure they are considered in conservation planning and environmental management at many different levels.

In addition to people giving their time to KBA conservation, we also enjoy the immense generosity of our financial supporters in making the BirdLife Australia's KBA Program what it is, and we thank them for their enthusiasm and for continuing to stand with us.

BirdLife Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

All photos unless stated otherwise are by Dr Amanda Lilleyman

## CITATION

Lilleyman, A., Todd, S., Maurer, G. (2023) The State of Australia's Key Biodiversity Areas 2021. BirdLife Australia, Darwin on Larrakia Country. ISBN: 978-1-875122-07-3



# Introduction

The Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) program is increasingly recognised and adopted as the global standard for the identification and monitoring of the places that sustain the diversity of life on earth. Australia's KBA estate has grown from 314 sites initially identified (in 2009) as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) to 334 sites now including KBAs for some Crayfish, Frogs, Cycads and Mammals and other threatened taxa.

The State of Australia's KBAs 2021 report provides a snapshot of threats and conservation actions for the KBA estate by summarizing annual KBA Health-checks for 86 of the country's 334 most important sites for wildlife and nature. This overview, covering KBAs in every state and territory, is possible thanks to the dedication of volunteers, agency staff and Indigenous rangers who completed annual KBA Health-checks on 'their' KBAs.

Key Biodiversity Areas are places that have been recognised as the most important areas for nature. By identifying all the world's KBAs and effectively conserving them, the species, and ecosystems they support, and the diverse benefits they provide to people, we can halt the loss of nature. We can and will reverse the impending mass extinction of species – the largest extinction crisis to face the planet since the demise of the dinosaurs.

Key Biodiversity Areas are:

- Places of global significance for the conservation of wildlife including birds
- Recognised as a focus for practical conservation action
- Linked to internationally binding agreements and industry standards

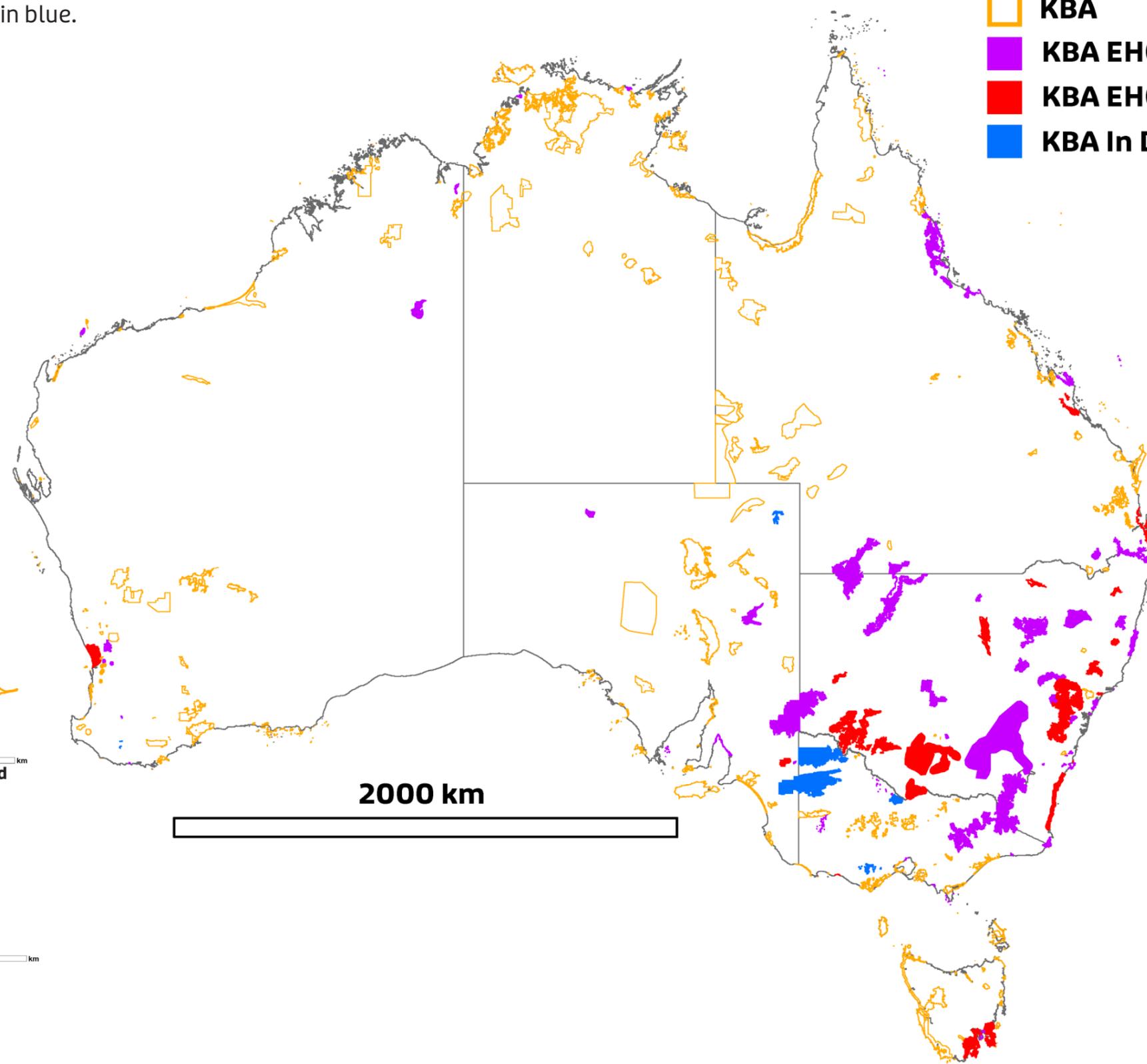
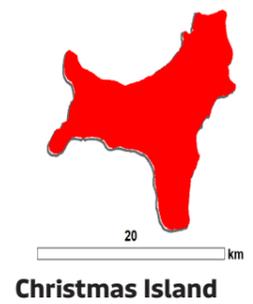
KBAs are identified using the strict, scientific Global Standard and must meet at least one of five criteria. A KBA can be declared for a site that is important for one or more biodiversity triggers, known as Trigger species:

- Threatened species or ecosystem
- Geographically restricted species, species assemblage or ecosystem
- Area of high ecological integrity
- Biological processes such as breeding or moulting aggregations, migration bottlenecks, or ecological refugia
- Irreplaceable part of ecological connectivity

Australia currently has 334 KBAs providing a home for a diverse range of species including many Australian icons; from the Wollemi Pine to the Regent Honeyeater and the Corroboree Frog to the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat.

The map identifies all KBAs across Australia, and highlights those for which Health-checks were available in 2021, KBAs In Danger and with a completed Health-check in 2021 are in red and KBAs In Danger with no Health-check for 2021 in blue.

-  **KBA**
-  **KBA EHC 2021**
-  **KBA EHC 2021 & In Danger**
-  **KBA In Danger & No EHC 2021**





## KBA Health-checks

Volunteer KBA Guardians supported by BirdLife Australia have assessed 86 KBAs in 2021 using a formal process known as the KBA Easter Health-check. In the Health-check the Guardians score a KBA's environmental health in three categories: threats (Pressure), condition (State) and conservation actions (Response). To this end they apply a simple but powerful internationally standardised protocol. It is repeatable, widely applied and detailed without being prohibitively complex. Critically, Health-checks provide an early warning system and identify conservation opportunities, helping to prevent the decline of KBAs.

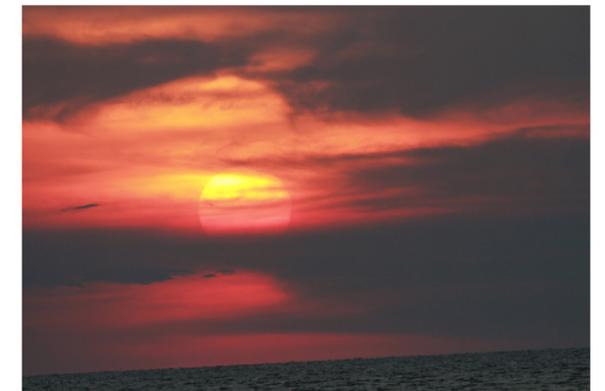
## KBA Guardians

Volunteer KBA Guardians are the basis of the success of KBA conservation, and they are as diverse as the places they care for. There is no one skill set or background that defines a KBA Guardian. However, KBA Guardians do share a love for nature, an ability to see how their skills can help wildlife and a readiness to use these powers for good. KBA Guardians can be individuals but increasingly comprise teams or local conservation groups such as Friends of Groups, BirdLife branches and more. The diversity of backgrounds and skills makes for a strong and inspiring national support network.



# KBA Guardians – local action creates conservation outcomes

Some of the most successful conservation stories come from local communities taking stewardship and becoming champions of a species or ecosystem. Developing conservation solutions from the ‘ground-up’ can be one of the best ways to save a species. According to the Book of Hope (Recovering Australian Threatened Species; Garnett et al. 2018), community contribution was a common reason for recovery of a threatened species, and having a species recovery ‘champion’ was the next most important component of successful species recovery. Think of the success of breeding seasons of Hooded Plovers, Little Terns, and Fairy Terns thanks to dedicated volunteers who put out temporary fencing and hand-made signs guided by BirdLife’s Beach-nesting bird program. Think of the volunteers that go along every week to their local Landcare site to weed and revegetate the bush. Think of the volunteers who organise festivals or events and engage with the public to educate and raise awareness of conservation issues. These are the people driving conservation change. This is important, because Australia continues to face so many unnecessary proposals for land clearing and development in areas that will decrease suitable habitat and threaten wildlife. The KBA program provides both a focus to identify the areas that need our support most and a community that helps each other out in their conservation work. This includes continuing with our Birddata surveys and keeping an eye out on what’s happening in our KBAs. We urge you to stay involved in the KBA program and use it as a two way street to continue sharing your local knowledge through the annual health-check and enjoy the support and inspiration of other Guardians’ work e.g. through our KBA blog <https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org.au/news>.



## Indigenous Grant for Bird Research and Conservation

In 2021, the recipients of BirdLife’s Indigenous Grant for Bird Research and Conservation which is focused on actual and potential KBAs for birds were the Yuku Baja Muliku Rangers of Archer Point and Annan River, just south of Cooktown in north-eastern Queensland. The traditional lands of the Yuku Baja Muliku People border the Daintree KBA in northern Queensland. The workshop focused on discovering and monitoring the threatened Red Goshawk and Rufous Owl to explore the establishment of a KBA for this species. <https://www.archerpoint.com.au/our-ranger-program/>

# Thank You!

The enthusiastic and knowledgeable work of KBA volunteers is invaluable to the conservation of nature's hotspots in Australia

**86** Easter Health-checks

**66** KBA Guardians and Guardian teams Checks

**37** BirdLife Branches, affiliates and bird clubs as KBA Guardians

**25** Indigenous Groups

**72** other community groups, Landcare, Friends, eNGOs, community groups

**>3,915** Monitoring and Conservation Volunteers

**>46,213** Monitoring and Conservation hours

# KBA health-checks in 2021

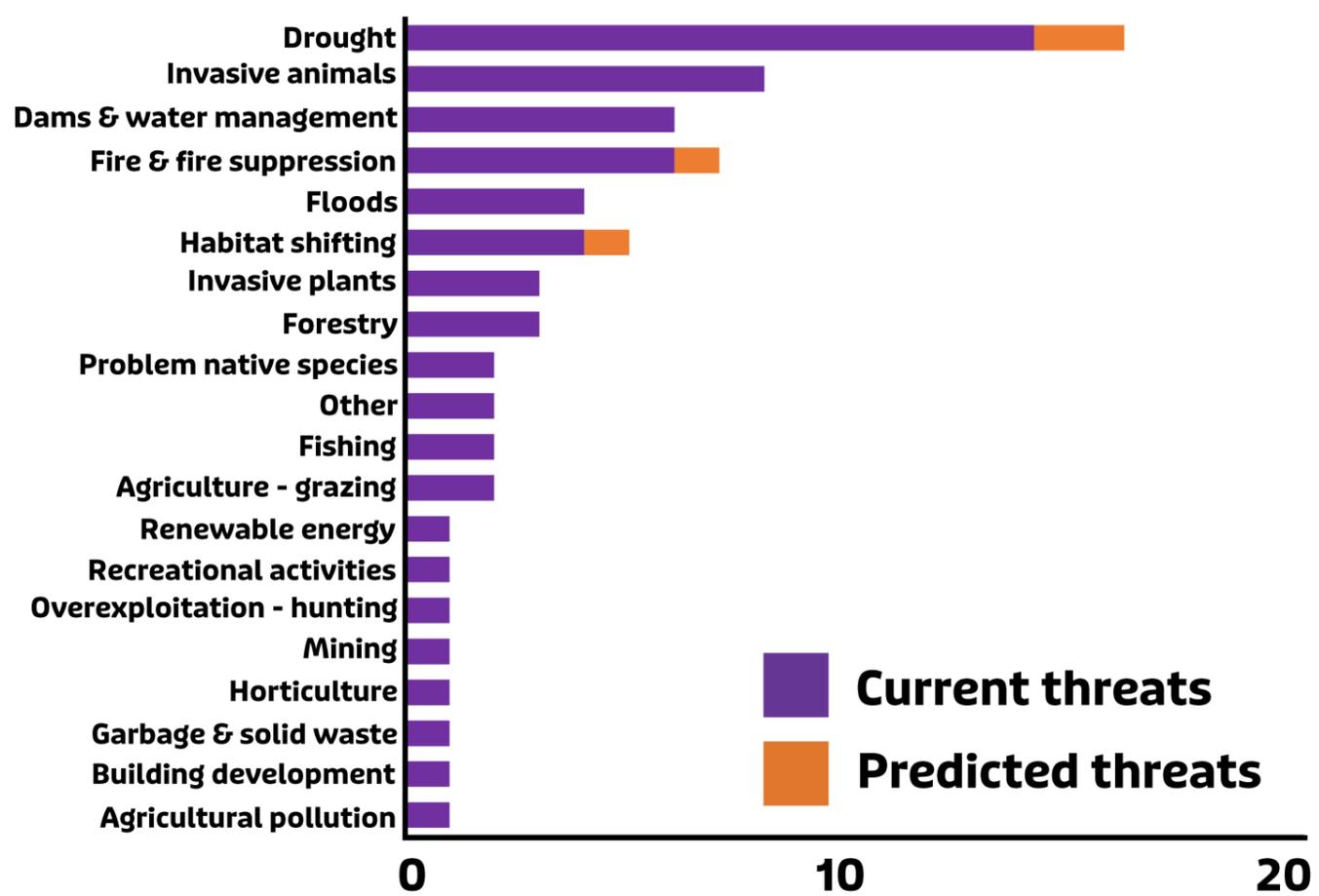
The reporting period for results in this report is from 1/4/2020 - 31/3/2021.

There were 86 health-checks completed across Australia's 334 KBAs, completed by 66 Guardians. Of these KBAs, there were 25 Indigenous groups active within them, and at least 37 different affiliates, including BirdLife branches, government departments, and community groups such as field naturalists' clubs. The efforts by volunteers across the 86 KBAs with completed health-checks was monumental - there were 1,310 volunteers who conducted monitoring and 2,605 volunteers who completed conservation actions.

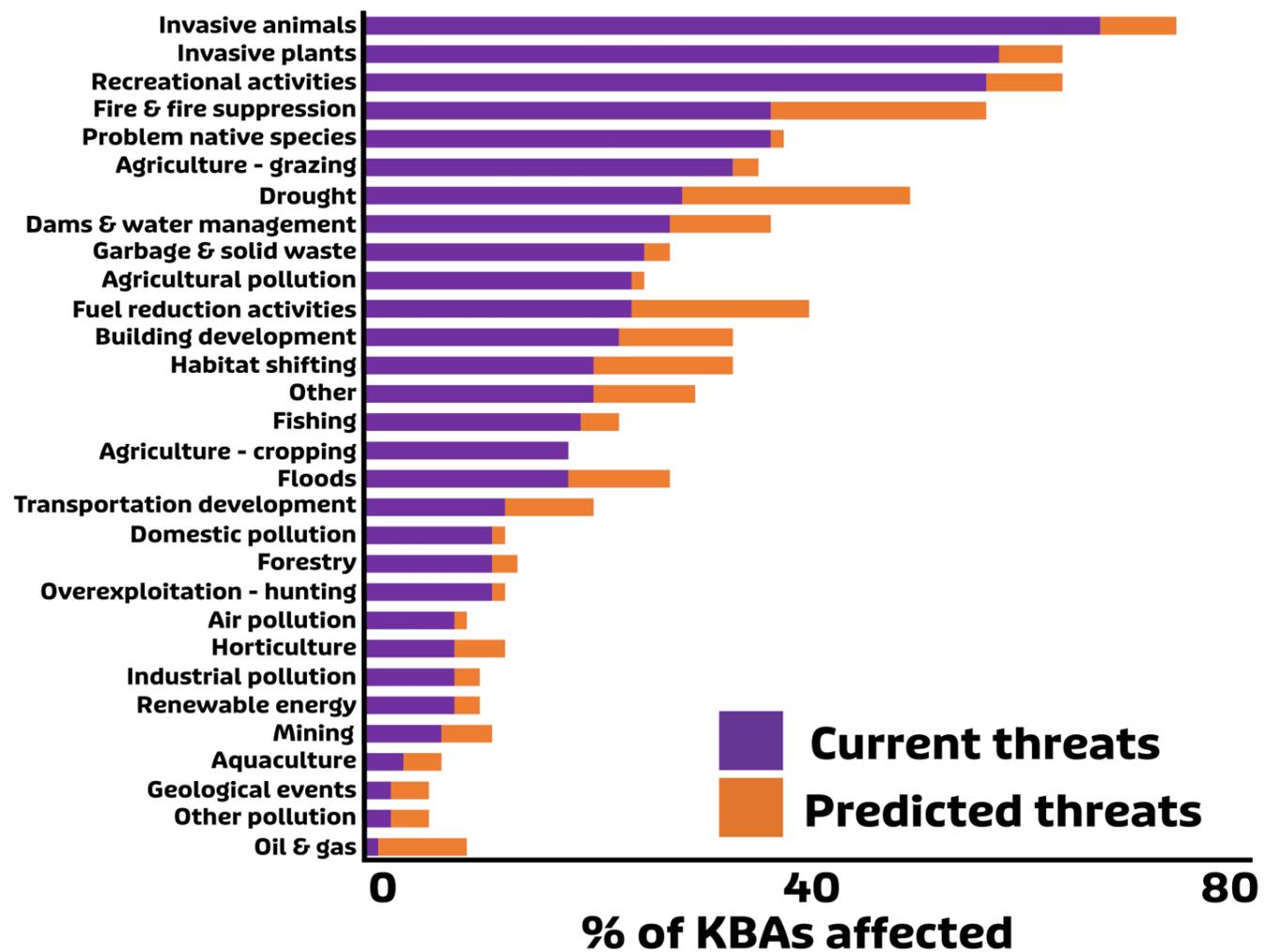
This equated to 15,897 monitoring hours and 30,316 conservation hours. Conservation actions by BirdLife and by the community across the KBAs included habitat and species management, education, advocacy, and monitoring.

In 2021, there were KBA health-checks performed for areas protecting a range of threatened bird species, including five Critically Endangered species, eight Endangered species, six Near Threatened species, and sixteen Vulnerable species.





**Number of KBAs In Danger by threat**



## KBAs In Danger

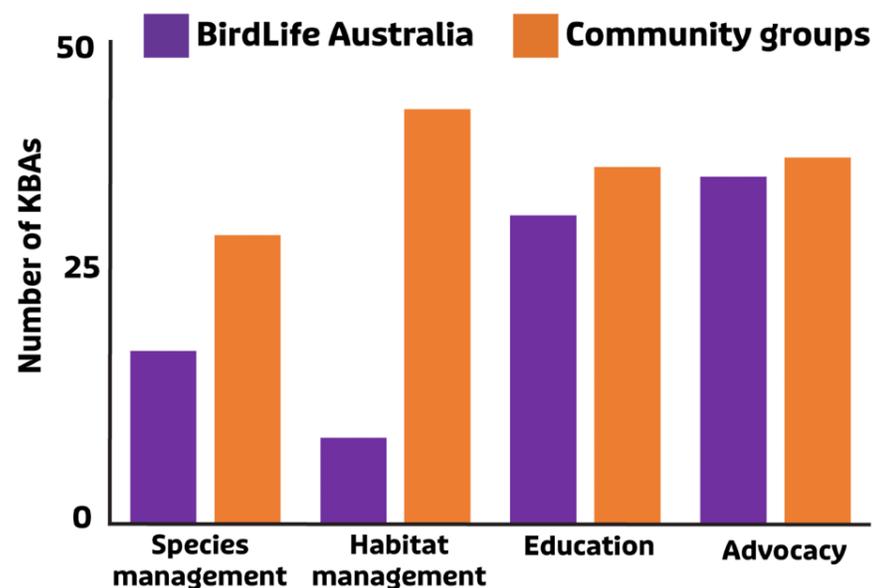
Before the 2021 Easter Health-checks, 29 of the 334 KBAs were considered 'In Danger' based on previous assessments. In the 2021 Easter Health-check period, we received health-checks for 21 of the 29 KBAs 'In Danger'.

An additional two KBAs had pressure scores above 7 and were assessed by BirdLife Australia's Research and Conservation Committee and were subsequently declared 'In Danger' in February 2022.

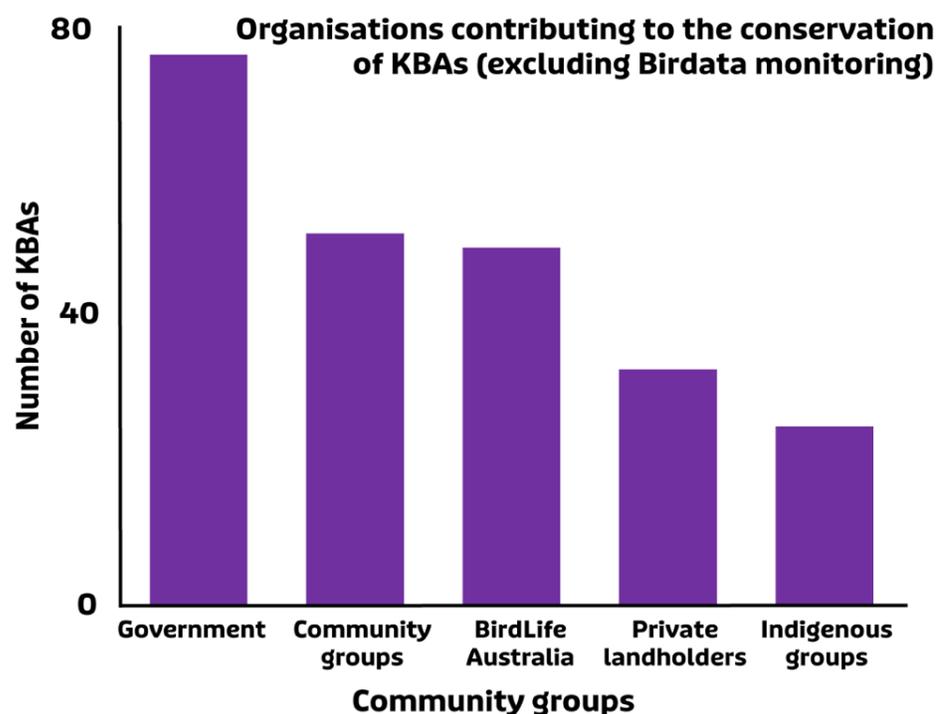


# Conservation Actions

KBAs benefit from conservation actions by a diverse range of organisations, especially from the community. KBA Guardians reported habitat management by BirdLife Australia programs and staff in 9 KBAs, species management actions in 18 KBAs, education actions in 32, and advocacy actions in 36. Meanwhile, the community was very active with community habitat management actions recorded in 43 KBAs, community species management actions in 30 KBAs, community education actions in 37 KBAs, and community advocacy actions in 38 KBAs. In 2021, nearly 90% of the KBAs had conservation actions by government, while community groups and BirdLife Australia contributed to conservation actions across 60% of the KBAs. Private landholders, too, do their bit with 33 KBAs (38%) benefiting from private landholder conservation action. This is an important part of KBA conservation given that large parts of the KBA estate are on private land. And, finally, Indigenous groups contributed to conservation actions across 29% of KBAs in 2021.



**KBAs benefitting from conservation and monitoring actions**



# Birddata monitoring: a finger on the pulse of Australia's birds in KBAs



Birddata is a powerful citizen science platform provided for free as an app or online by BirdLife Australia with bespoke monitoring tools for threatened birds through which bird survey data is gathered. Monitoring is particularly useful when surveys are repeated over time at the same location and using the same standardised methods. Fortunately, there is a large network of 'Shared Sites' across KBAs at which repeat standardised surveys are carried out and entered into Birddata.

A total of 20,796 Birddata surveys across 208 KBAs were conducted during the Easter 2020 - 2021 reporting period, by 1243 people - mostly volunteers. Of these Birddata surveys, 4245 surveys were conducted at 1373 Shared Sites. Birddata citizen scientists were in the field surveying KBAs for a whopping 29,596 combined 'person hours'.

This massive effort is extremely worthwhile: 229,294 sightings of 651 bird species were recorded in KBAs this year. Invaluable data on threatened species such as Plains-wanderer, Australasian Bittern, Baudin's Black-Cockatoo, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, Powerful Owl and Swift Parrot were collected, which will assist conservation efforts to save these birds.



**birddata**



## Ways to get involved

There are many ways to volunteer in the KBA program. With KBAs being so diverse there is bound to be something you enjoy and are good at! Help protect Australia's most important nature hotspots and take action for KBAs.

### MESSY

Get your hands dirty planting trees in KBAs

Help clean up weeds and rubbish from nature's hotspots

### EASY

Put this report on a coffee table and fly the flag for KBAs

Go on holiday to or near a KBA and tell everyone that is why you are visiting

Join BirdLife Australia and volunteer for the KBA program

### COMFY

Volunteer for data entry for the KBA program

Sign up for BirdLife e-news to stay up-to-date

Alert the KBA team when you hear of a threat to your local KBA

### BIRDY

Get the free Birddata app and start recording birds in KBAs

Raise funds for threatened species in KBAs during the Twitchathon

Join your local BirdLife branch or Special Interest Group

### FRIENDLY

Become a KBA Guardian

Volunteer with local councils or friends groups

Go on a picnic to a KBA with friends

## KBA contacts and local coordinators

### KBA National Coordination Group (NCG)

Dr James Watson, WCS, Chairperson  
[james.watsonr@uq.edu.au](mailto:james.watsonr@uq.edu.au)

Dr Golo Maurer, BirdLife Australia, Secretary  
[kba@birdlife.org.au](mailto:kba@birdlife.org.au)

### KBA Guardian Program Coordinators

National and NT: Dr Amanda Lilleyman, KBA Program Coordinator  
[amanda.lilleyman@birdlife.org.au](mailto:amanda.lilleyman@birdlife.org.au)

ACT: Dr Elisabeth Hodson [emhodson@exemail.com.au](mailto:emhodson@exemail.com.au)

NSW: Dr Elisabeth Hodson [emhodson@exemail.com.au](mailto:emhodson@exemail.com.au)

QLD (N): Kath Shurcliff [crabplover@westnet.com.au](mailto:crabplover@westnet.com.au)

QLD (S): Tida Nou [tida.nou@gmail.com](mailto:tida.nou@gmail.com)

SA: Vacant

TAS: BirdLife Tasmania Science Subcommittee  
[tasmania@birdlife.org.au](mailto:tasmania@birdlife.org.au)

VIC: Greg Turner [gregturner56@bigpond.com](mailto:gregturner56@bigpond.com)

WA: Linda Borrison [lindaborrison@inet.net.au](mailto:lindaborrison@inet.net.au)

### KBA Resources

KBA website: [keybiodiversityareas.org.au](http://keybiodiversityareas.org.au)

Australia's KBA Health-check data portal:  
[portal.birdlife.org.au/kba-health-check/](http://portal.birdlife.org.au/kba-health-check/)

KBA-criteria: [portals.iucn.org/library/node/46259](http://portals.iucn.org/library/node/46259)

Guidelines for using the KBA standards: [portals.iucn.org/library/node/47982](http://portals.iucn.org/library/node/47982)

BirdLife Australia KBA Program: [birdlife.org.au/programs/key-biodiversity-areas/](http://birdlife.org.au/programs/key-biodiversity-areas/)

Detailed information on KBAs: [datazone.birdlife.org/site/search](http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/search)



### REFERENCES

Garnett, S., Woinarski, J., Lindenmayer, D., & Latch, P. (Eds.). (2018). Recovering Australian threatened species: a book of hope. CSIRO PUBLISHING.

**Everyone can play a role in safeguarding the future of Australia's nature hotspots – will you join us?**

# 2021

## KBA Achievements

86

Easter Health-checks

66

KBA Guardians &  
Guardian teams

37

BirdLife Branches, affiliates &  
bird clubs as KBA Guardians

25

Indigenous Groups

72

other community  
Groups, Landcare,  
Friends, eNGOs,  
community groups

>3,915

Monitoring & Conservation  
Volunteers

# SUCCESS >46,213

1 BirdLife Indigenous Grant for Bird  
Research and Conservation awarded  
to  
Yuku Baja Muliku  
Rangers

Monitoring & Conservation  
hours

Save Birds. Save Life.



birdlife  
AUSTRALIA