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Bird Migratory Status and Habitat

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Clarifying the Key Biodiversity Areas Approach

We warmly welcome the constructive suggestions of Knight and colleagues (2007) on the key biodiversity areas (KBA) approach. However, their concerns are based in part on misapprehensions.

The involvement of stakeholders, including implementation agencies, is key to the (explicitly "bottom-up") KBA process and to the demonstrable success of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Programme, on which the KBA approach is based (Langhammer et al. 2007). There are more than 90 national-language IBA directories compiled through participatory national approaches, often in partnership with government agencies. KBA directories take the same approach. The Alliance for Zero Extinction approach is an exception, its "top-down" process being essential where species extinctions are imminent.

KBAs, including IBAs and Important Plant Areas, have now been identified in some 173 nations or territories, 67 percent of them developing countries. Three prerequisites of success that Knight and colleagues identify (extensive data sets, significant private funding, and highly knowledgeable local experts) are not borne out by our experience. "Strong support from local partners and institutions" is vital, but is by no means confined to developed countries, and is reinforced by the KBA process.

Indeed, this consolidation of support around a clear conservation agenda (often including important but hitherto overlooked sites) is a great practical benefit of KBAs. The approach promotes "an overly simple answer" only if naively applied. It does not imply an inflexible approach to landscape connectivity, nor does it rely on post hoc consideration of implementation opportunities and constraints. KBAs complement, inform, and guide conservation planning at other spatial scales. As Knight and colleagues acknowledge, we have not argued that KBAs provide "a complete, packaged conservation solution." KBAs are a focused response to a central problem in conservation.

The issue of species versus environmental surrogates in planning is important, but KBAs already incorporate a criterion specifically for biome or habitat representation. We consider the global context of KBA selection essential in effectively preventing global extinctions. Indeed, areas containing species of concern that are locally or regionally secure are precisely the best places to invest for those species' long-term persistence. The fact that KBAs represent an international conservation currency increases their effectiveness in leveraging conservation at all scales.

We enthusiastically endorse the call for training to help practitioners use KBA information more effectively. The proposal to increase stakeholder input, however, seems not to recognize that in the existing process, local stakeholders apply global criteria to identify and document globally significant sites. Still lacking is an internationally recognized system for endorsing KBA nominations and maintaining consistent standards. We look forward to working with Knight and his coauthors in developing such a scheme.

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Dr. James V. Remsen Jr. of the Louisiana Museum of Natural Science suggested that we check the habitat and migratory status assignations for bird species we included in our article on changes in bird abundance in eastern North America (*BioScience* 57: 360–370). After further detailed examination of regional and other literature, out of the 330 species that were included in our study, we would change the assignation of migration latitude (for example, from "Mexico" to "Mesoamerica and northern South America") for 15 species, and habitat choice (for example, from "edge" to "forest") for 12 species.

We have reanalyzed the data, and we conclude that the changes make no substantial difference to the overall patterns we reported in our article. We retain full confidence in the conclusions. Corrected data and replotted graphs are available at *www.ecologia.mdp.edu.ar/pdf/valiela-martinetto2007.htm*.

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