Side Bar to Press release: NBA launch day 3 October 2019 – for immediate release

Pressures on biodiversity prompt urgent action

Government and civil society must ensure it does all it can to protect and manage South Africa's biodiversity to support socio-economic development and human wellbeing. Dr Andrew Skowno, Lead Scientist for the National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA) at SANBI, said: "The NBA presents important information that can be used by government and civil society in numerous decision-making processes.

Actions for managing and conserving biodiversity highlighted in the NBA include:

- **Improving spatial planning.** The NBA provides information that helps to identify biodiversity priority areas in the landscape and seascape. Spatial biodiversity plans help to support decisions about the desired future uses of the land or ocean, often in the form of Spatial Development Frameworks produced by municipalities. They also inform the decisions made in response to development applications such as environmental impact assessments.
- **Strengthening compliance and enforcement.** While there may be good policies and legislation in place, there is limited technical capacity to use existing policy tools, and limited capacity to enforce laws or regulations.
- **Strengthening cross-sectoral and cross-realm planning.** Biodiversity features and ecological processes are connected in complex ways that cross natural realms and human-constructed boundaries. To deal with this interconnectedness, cooperative governance is essential.
- **Strengthening evaluation for adaptive management.** Interventions to manage and conserve biodiversity are often not monitored for effectiveness. This needs to be improved to make adaptive management possible.
- **Maintaining and further strengthening capacity.** A common theme across the NBA is that of human capacity. Building an equitable and suitably skilled workforce to improve the management and conservation of biodiversity is an important part of building a capable state.
- **Improving conservation project implementation.** Improving project financing and management are key elements in implementation success for specific projects.
- **Research priorities.** Improved foundational information (e.g. distributions, descriptions) for species and ecosystems, further work on pressures on biodiversity and ecological condition, and research for further improving the indicators used in the NBA are needed.
- **Monitoring needs.** Investment in existing and future strategic and cooperative biodiversity monitoring programmes is essential to strengthen our ability to detect trends and plan accordingly. While South Africa has some robust biodiversity monitoring programmes, many involving citizen scientists, there has been a decline in resources allocated to monitoring programmes and some key datasets are very old and no longer being updated.
- **Data management and sharing imperatives.** Effective collaboration and data sharing between biodiversity data facilities, and between these facilities and the data users, provides a crucial foundation for ongoing research and monitoring. This ultimately improves the quality and accuracy of biodiversity assessments and planning, and underpins transparent science-based policy advice and decision making.

All South Africans can help reduce the pressures on our biodiversity

We all need to play our part to protect and conserve our natural heritage of South Africa's species and ecosystems, no matter whether we live in an urban or rural setting. Here are some of the things South African can do:

- **Consider what you eat**: eat foods from local sources that are sustainably produced.
- **Think before you buy:** minimise purchasing of items that have only a single use (e.g. plastic straws, food in single-use packaging), and buy locally-made items to reduce your carbon footprint.
- **Reduce your waste:** recycle all packaging, reduce your energy and water consumption and make sure you don't waste them, dispose of any other waste appropriately.
- **Become involved:** support local initiatives that protect, restore and study nature – like coastal clean-ups, biodiversity citizen science projects, alien plant hacking, and more.

End

Images for use:

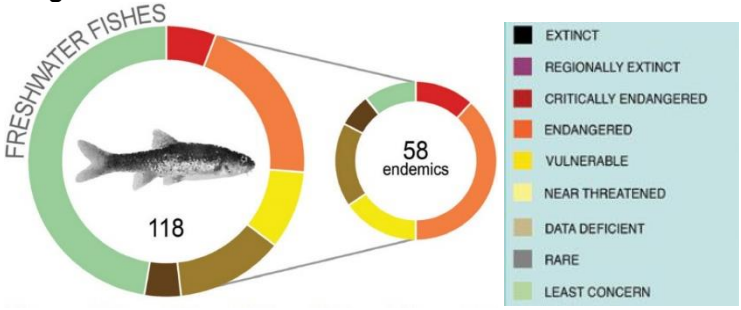
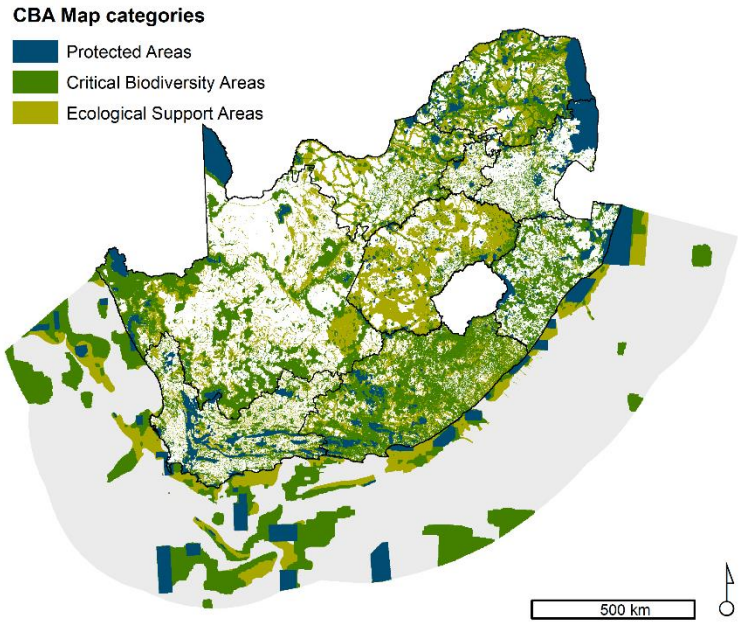
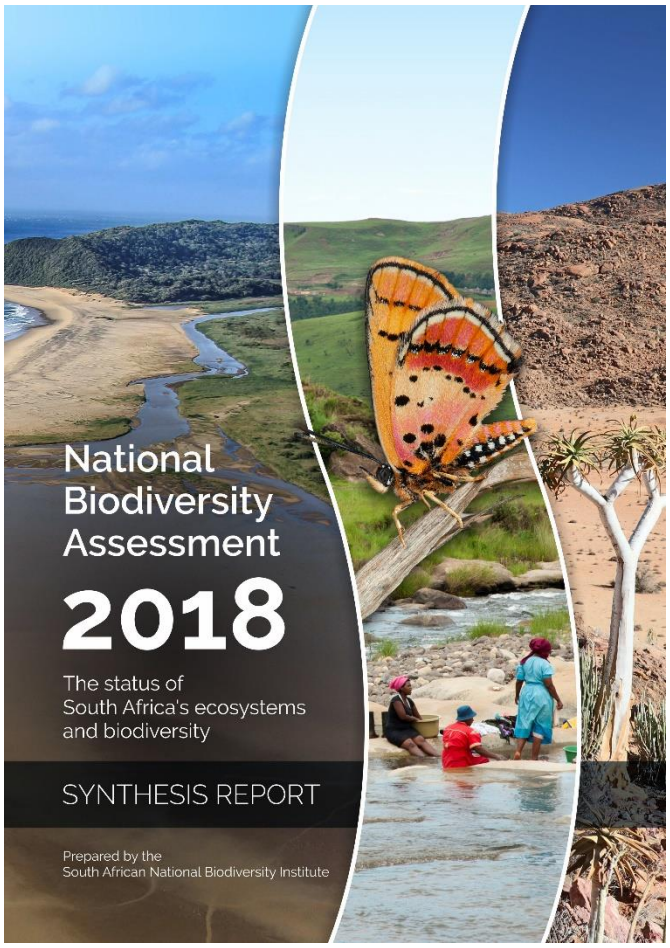


Figure 1. There are 118 freshwater fish species in South Africa and 58 of these species are endemic. The colour on the graphs show the proportion of species in the IUCN Red List of Species categories of threat status. The fact that 66% of our endemic freshwater fishes are threatened (Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable) reflects the poor ecological condition of South Africa's rivers and wetlands.



Maps of Critical Biodiversity Areas, prepared at provincial or metropolitan scale, now cover the whole of the landmass and the ocean around South Africa. The first national coastal and marine CBA Map (developed in early 2019) now complements the land-based CBA Maps. Together, these maps provide key inputs into strategic planning and decision making processes.

Biodiversity scientists use the data submitted by citizen scientists on platforms like iNaturalist to update information on species distribution and abundance patterns used in Red List assessments. Here, birders record bird sightings on a cell phone app © SANBI



Front cover of the synthesis report of the National Biodiversity Assessment