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8.9 Lesotho

Protected and conserved areas in Lesotho⁵⁸

Lesotho has four protected areas covering 80 km² of land (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2019j).

One of Lesotho's parks, the Sehlabathebe National Park is a mixed natural/cultural World Heritage Site and together with the Khahlamba Drakensberg National Park in South Africa forms a transboundary protected area, known as the Maloti Drakensberg Park, a haven for many threatened and endemic species.

In addition to the formally designated protected areas, there are several areas that are either informally designated or proposed for protection in various parts of the country. There are plans to proclaim Letsa-La-Letsie Nature Reserve and Tsatsane as protected areas. In order to meet all the biodiversity targets, 49% of Lesotho Highlands should be under some form of conservation management – possibly a mix of managed resource areas and smaller protected areas. Eight key areas for priority action have been identified by Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project.

Transboundary protected and conserved areas

Lesotho includes part of the Maloti Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site which is inside the Maloti Drakensberg TFCA.

Policy context

A comprehensive report on legislation and policy related to protected area management, governance, and equity was undertaken by the BIOPAMA programme. It identified 17 relevant laws and policies in Lesotho (Tessema, 2019).

Key species⁵⁹

Despite its small size, Lesotho has very high levels of plant endemism with at least 54 endemic species. Lesotho is also home to 340 bird species and a number of mammal species, including the endemic ice rat (*Otomys sloggetti*) and white-tailed mouse (*Mystromys albicaudatus*). The chacma baboon (*Papio ursinus*), once abundant, has suffered a precipitous decline.

Lesotho also has high levels of endemism in the reptile and amphibian groups. The 14 recorded fish species include one endemic species.

Pressures and threats⁶⁰

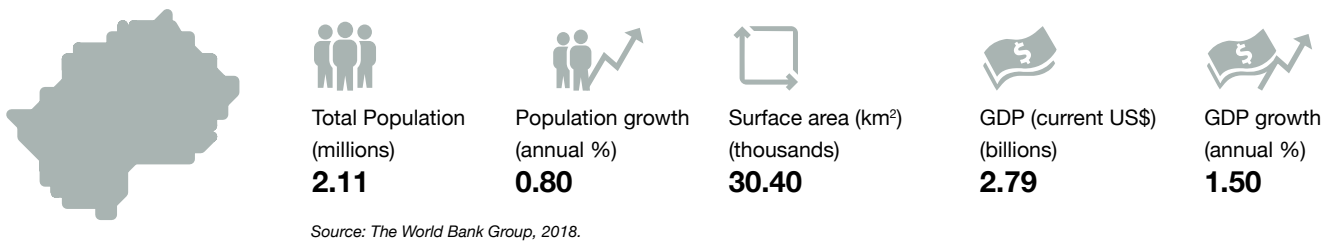
One of the main threats to biodiversity in Lesotho is habitat loss and degradation, particularly of wetlands and rangelands. Poor range management practices have resulted in the loss of plant cover and topsoil. Uncontrolled fires are also a threat in the

58 The section draws on information contained in Lesotho's Sixth National Report to the CBD (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2019).

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

Figure 8.17 Lesotho Summary



Area Protected:

4 protected areas



Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, (2019)

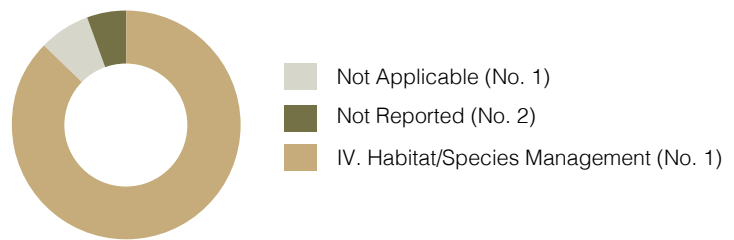


340 bird species



14 fish species

Protected and conserved areas in Lesotho in IUCN Management Categories



Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019).

Coverage of protected areas in Lesotho

Type of protected area	Area protected or conserved*	Area protected or conserved**
Terrestrial and inland water	0.26%	0.50%

* WDPA dataset ** From National Report on Biodiversity
Source: Kingdom of Lesotho (2019); UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019).

Protected and conserved areas designated as global sites of importance in Lesotho

Global designation	No. of sites
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Natural or Mixed)	1
Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)	1

Source: Ramsar (2019); UNESCO (2019a, 2019b)

National designations of protected and conserved areas in Lesotho

National designation	No.	Area (km ²)
National Park	2	6 394

Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019).

Priority areas for conservation

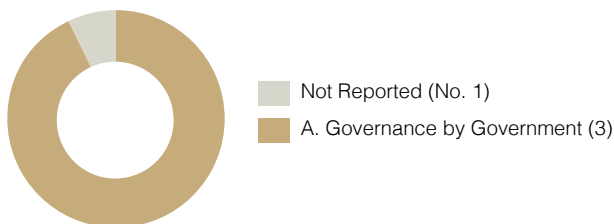


6 sites

Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas

Source: BirdLife International (2019c).

Protected and conserved areas in Lesotho in IUCN Governance Types



Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019)

rangelands. Initiatives for economic development, such as mining, can also represent threats to habitats in Lesotho. With increasing climate uncertainty, subsistence agriculture is increasingly encroaching into remaining habitats.

Invasive species represent a major threat in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. In addition, climate change is increasing climate uncertainty.

Figure 8.18 Lesotho protected areas

