

Conserving Connectivity —
Protecting Wildlife Corridors and Dispersal Areas in Kenya

Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
P. O. Box 30126-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 20 2730808/9; +254 20 2725707; +254 20 2725707
Email: info@environment.go.ke;
Website: http://www.environment.go.ke

KENYA VISION 2030

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Vision 2030 Flagship Project

Kenya's wildlife is the envy of the world and a key economic asset for the country and the region. Wildlife is an important driver of economic development and provides irreplaceable cultural and social value to the people of Kenya. For example, the highest returns from wildlife based tourism and photography was in 2011 and it contributed $1.16 billion to national revenue, translating to about 13.7 % of the gross domestic product and generating more than 10% of national formal sector employment. In addition, wildlife habitats provide key ecosystem services that support the national economy in areas such as renewable energy, water, agriculture, livestock, health, and fisheries among others.

In recognition of the important role of wildlife to the people and development of Kenya, Vision 2030 is ensuring the conservation of wildlife for future generations through the identification and protection of key wildlife habitats, and the corridors and dispersal areas on which they depend. Securing these wildlife corridors and dispersal areas is one of the Vision 2030 flagship projects and is summarized in this report, which brings together the most up to date information on the status, threats, opportunities and challenges for conserving landscape connectivity in Kenya. The report outlines the importance of connectivity, identifies key wildlife corridors and dispersal areas, and suggests priority conservation actions to protect this cornerstone of our national heritage.

Why corridors and dispersal areas?

All over the country, wildlife populations have declined dramatically over the last few decades. Ecosystems are failing to provide ecological services such as water storage, soil protection and climate moderation. At the same time, human-wildlife conflict has increased. Land-use and climate change, combined with increasing population pressures and poverty, have led to widespread habitat loss and fragmentation. The rapid expansion of crop cultivation and high-density settlements, the proliferation of fences, mining and quarrying, unplanned development, woodland clearing, rangeland degradation, and poaching have all contributed to the loss of space for Kenya's wildlife. To reduce and reverse this trend, it is urgent to assess and secure Kenya's wildlife migratory corridors and dispersal areas to restore connectivity and resilience to our natural environment. Protected Areas (PA) are the jewels in Kenya's conservation crown. These key habitats, ecosystems, and landscapes represent the core elements of Kenya's conservation strategy. Each of these elements, while unique and irreplaceable in their own right, is part of a network of essential habitats and resources that support Kenya's world class wildlife diversity. Indeed, one of the reasons Kenya's wildlife is so diverse, and so popular, is that it is found all over the country – not just within national parks and reserves. While much of Kenya's wildlife depends on the protection of parks and reserves, healthy wildlife populations also need access to resources in the broader landscape





outside protected areas. Similarly, connections between populations increase the resilience of wildlife populations and communities in the face of rapid climate and land-use change.

Wildlife migratory corridors connect core habitats and are critical for species' survival and long-term viability of ecosystems. Animals disperse or migrate across landscapes to access vital resources such as pasture, water, and breeding grounds; to reduce the risks of predation; and to enhance genetic health. Migration is essential to the resilience of wildlife populations in the face of spatial and temporally variable rainfall and forage. Connectivity conservation recognizes the importance of physical connections and linkages between isolated habitats that increase the effective area available to wildlife and other biodiversity. Ensuring connectivity through the restoration of wildlife habitats helps to improve the integrity of ecosystems, and is an essential strategy in reversing the negative effects of habitat fragmentation and maintaining landscape patterns and ecological processes that promote the survival of species in environments modified by both natural events and anthropogenic activities.

Mapping Conservation Connectivity - Corridors and Dispersal Areas

Under the auspices of Vision 2030, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, in collaboration with other key stakeholders, has lead this innovative effort to secure key corridors and dispersal areas in Kenya. Initiated in 2011 this collaborative effort brought together communities, scientists, conservationists, and policy makers to identify and map essential corridors and dispersal areas, assess their status and threats, and propose solutions for the protection of these key national assets. Dividing the country into two sections, the team mapped and assessed over 100 corridors in the Southern and Northern/Coastal regions. The process of mapping wildlife dispersal areas and migratory corridors aims at developing a Conservation Connectivity Framework (CCF) that will facilitate formulation of an inclusive and collaborative strategy for securing and managing all wildlife habitat within an increasingly human-dominated landscape.

How to Conserve Corridors and Dispersal Areas? Collaboration and coordination are essential to the success of Vision 2030's goal of ensuring conservation connectivity through corridors and dispersal areas, and protecting wildlife in the 21st Century. Kenyans from all walks of life and all sectors of the economy have an essential role to play in fulfilling the vision of a sustainable network of protected areas that conserve wildlife and ecosystem services for the sustainable and long term development of Kenya and its people.

Integration cross-sectoral planning will be key to balancing development objectives and conservation goals. Effective coordination within the conservation sector, and meaningful collaboration between the Ministry, National and County governments, the National Land Commission and other stakeholders is essential to securing tangible outcomes. Ultimately, we must recognize the true value of wildlife to the people of Kenya as we embrace new and innovative forms of conservation that protect both wildlife and local livelihoods. For example, community conservancies are playing an increasingly important role in wildlife conservation – providing protection to essential dispersal areas and migratory corridors outside the formal protected area network.

Key recommendations from the securing wildlife migratory corridors and dispersal areas report, include:

- Develop, expand and implement the proposed Conservation Connectivity Framework
- Identify, prioritize, and secure wildlife dispersal areas and migratory corridors
- Promote integrated land-use planning and cross-sectoral implementation
- Review policies and legislation for a harmonized policy framework
- Promote community participation in biodiversity conservation
- Implement management of conservation connectivity
- Enhance knowledge through effective research and monitoring
- Secure resources for conservation connectivity management
- Ensure effective monitoring and learning

Together we can work to ensure Kenya's conservation future and sustainable development for generations to come.