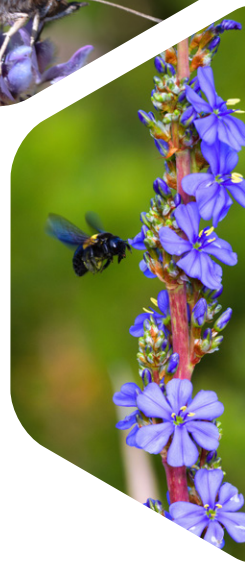
WESTERN CAPE
2026
STATE OF CONSERVATION
REPORT







CapeNature

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This is the third State of Conservation Report to inform the next iteration of the Western Cape State of Biodiversity Report to be released in 2028. Mandated by the Western Cape Biodiversity Act (Act 6 of 2022), this report represents the 2025-2026 annual (period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026) update to the conservation status of species and ecosystems within the province of the Western Cape, highlighting outcomes in response to the global biodiversity concerns in the context of its mandate.

Data & Information:

- CapeNature Field Rangers
- Conservation Managers & Officers
- Landscape Conservation Intelligence Teams
- Biodiversity Capabilities

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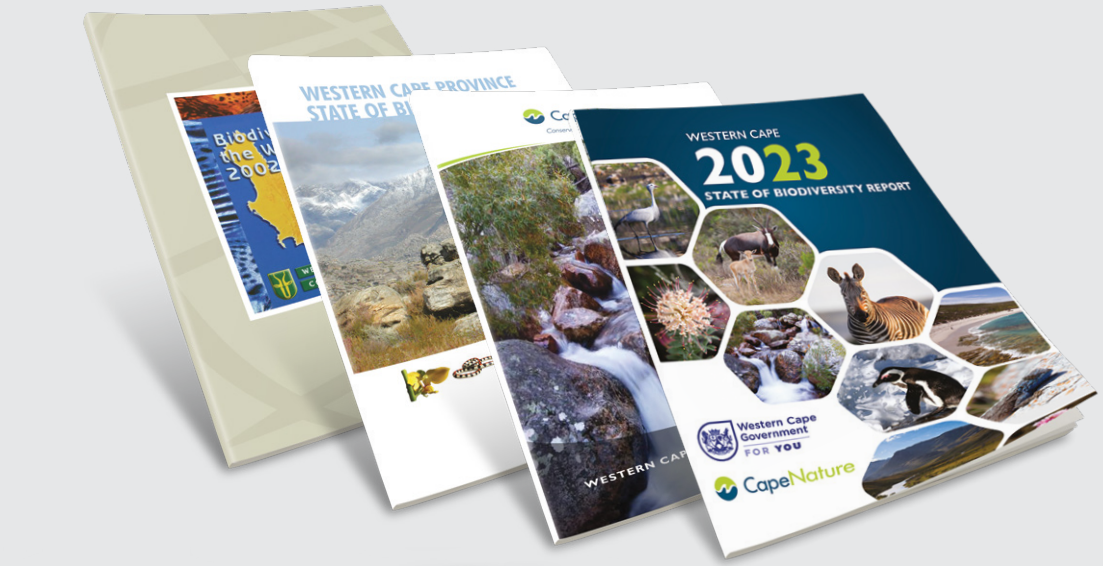
Online WC SoCR 2026 Report

To access the links indicated in the report, scan the QR code or visit the website to view the online version of the book: **https://www.capenature.co.za/state-of-biodiversity**



Western Cape State of Biodiversity Reports:

2002 · 2007 · 2012 · 2017 · 2023

Western Cape State of Conservation Reports:

2024 · 2025 · 2026

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present CapeNature's 2026 State of Conservation Report, which provides updates on the status of biodiversity in the Western Cape as at the end of March 2026. This annual report informs the five-yearly State of Biodiversity Report, as mandated by the Western Cape Biodiversity Act (Act 6 of 2021).

The Western Cape remains globally recognised for its exceptional biodiversity, with 10 774 recorded plant species accounting for nearly half of South Africa's floral diversity. This report provides an update on the conservation statuses of species and ecosystems and illustrates the change in the number of threatened species across multiple taxonomic groups, including mammals, reptiles and birds, with a particularly notable decline in the conservation status of waterbird species. The findings are consistent with the National Biodiversity Assessment (2025), confirming ongoing biodiversity loss. This is further emphasised through the revised threatened ecosystem statuses across terrestrial, freshwater and estuarine systems and reinforces a clear message: while the biodiversity richness remains globally significant, the balance between ecological resilience and cumulative pressure is becoming increasingly strained.

During the reporting period, two new taxa were described, and two unrecorded species were re-found, underscoring both the richness of the region and the importance of sustained scientific effort.

The updated assessments, based on improved data and methodologies, provide a more accurate baseline for tracking change and directing interventions. The assessments refine our understanding of habitat loss, where an estimated 20% of remaining natural habitat occurs within ecosystems already classified as Critically Endangered or Endangered.

The newly adopted 2025 Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy, informed by the 2023 Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan serves as a coherent and integrated framework to guide conservation action and inform sustainable land-use decision-making. Both these frameworks enabled the addition of more than 44 000 hectares to the protected areas estate, strengthening ecological resilience across the Western Cape. This expansion also strengthens the Province's contribution to national and global biodiversity targets established by the Convention of Biodiversity's Global Biodiversity Framework Kunming-Montreal Conference of Parties.

A defining feature of the reporting period is the intensification of key risk drivers: Habitat Loss, Fires, Invasive Alien Species and Biodiversity Crime. The year was marked by an exceptionally severe fire season, with frequent, large and intense wildfires affecting substantial areas of natural habitat: 107 fires and 215 936 ha. At the same time, biological invasions continue to erode ecosystem integrity, particularly within strategic water source areas. Despite ongoing clearing efforts, significant increases in the higher density classes of invasive alien plants were recorded. Biodiversity crime also remains a significant and evolving concern, with increased confiscations of species such as Dioscorea (Elephant's Foot) highlighting the scale and organisation of the illegal harvesting and trade.

This report also provides a brief overview of surveillance and monitoring undertaken by CapeNature during the review period. Although resource intensive, the data collected contribute to evidence-based reporting and enable sound, defensible decisions. CapeNature optimises surveillance and monitoring activities to respond to the impact of threats to species and ecosystems through prioritisation and to highlight opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.

We are grateful to our partners and collaborators for their contributions and acknowledgement that biodiversity is a foundational asset underpinning the availability of ecosystem services such as water security, climate resilience and long-term socio-economic sustainability in the Western Cape. We look forward to continued investment and strengthened collaboration across government, the private sector and civil society, supported by robust data collection and adaptive management to secure the biodiversity of the Western Cape.

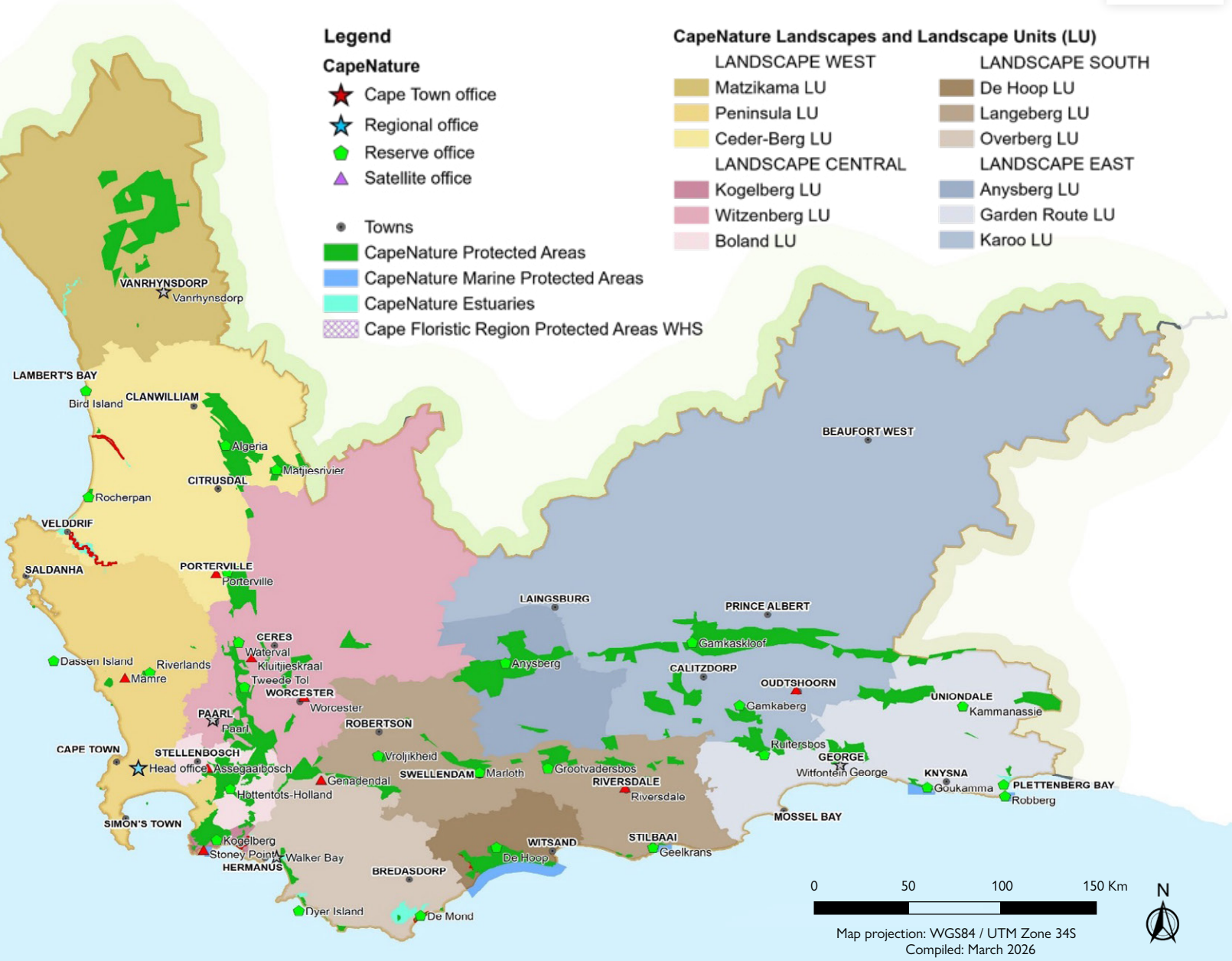
Dr Ashley Naidoo,
Chief Executive Officer

WESTERN CAPE BIODIVERSITY SPATIAL PLAN 2023

WESTERN CAPE PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY 2025

CAPENATURE
LANDSCAPES & LANDSCAPE UNITS

- CapeNature is the executive arm of the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board and is the provincial authority responsible for nature conservation in the Western Cape.
- CapeNature:
  - Manages World Heritage Sites, Provincial Nature Reserves, Estuaries, Islands and Marine Protected Areas which supply ecosystem services to citizens, climate change resilience and access for ecotourism, research and environmental education.
  - Implements biodiversity and environmental management legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines in the Western Cape.
  - Contributes to the development of biodiversity legislation and policies, provincially and nationally.
  - Monitors and reports on the State of Biodiversity in the Western Cape.



THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE FAUNA

The Cape Floristic Region is a global biodiversity hotspot and one of the world's six floral kingdoms, with high levels of endemic and range-restricted species.

Number of indigenous taxa and the proportion endemic to the province:

VERTEBRATES

- Freshwater fish: **37** | **73%** endemic
- Mammals: **154** | **4%** endemic
- Reptiles: **143** | **15%** endemic
- Amphibians: **61** | **61%** endemic
- Birds: **337** | **0%** endemic
- Sharks: **69** | **0%** endemic

PLANTS INVERTEBRATES

- Spiders: **923** | **27%** endemic
- Butterflies: **298** | **32%** endemic
- Colophon: **22** | **100%** endemic
- Dragon and damselflies: **63** | **14%** endemic

PLANTS

- Plants: **10 744** | **61%** endemic

South Africa Red List of Animals

Indicates increase from 2025.

Species richness getting richer: Ongoing discovery of new species

New taxa are discovered and described every year, so the biodiversity inventory is still growing. Taxa include species, subspecies, and varieties.

The Eastern Cape redfin *Pseudobarbus afer* was described in 1864 but genetic analysis by the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) showed it to be a species complex comprising four distinct taxa (Zarei *et al.* 2025). One of these was described in 2025 as the Outeniqua redfin *Pseudobarbus outeniqua* sp. *nov.* following a collaborative field trip between CapeNature and SAIAB scientists. It is endemic to the Western Cape and occurs in coastal river systems from the Tsitsikamma to the Klein

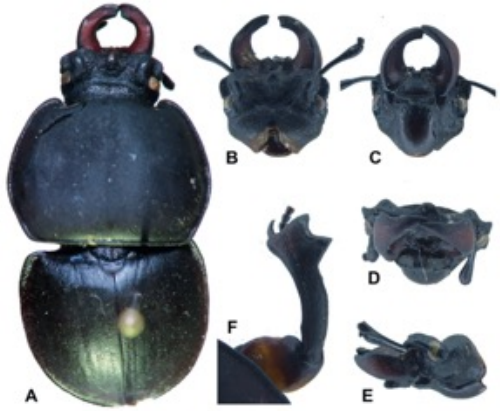
Zarei *et al.* 2025

Fish surveys in Outeniqua.

Pseudobarbus outeniqua sp. nov. Photo: Zarei *et al.* 2025.

Colophon beetles, also known as stag beetles, occupy mountain peak habitat and are endemic to the Western Cape (Durie *et al.* 2024). Most species are Threatened and rare, and little is known about their ecology. An ongoing study on the distribution and ecology of this group elucidated the presence of a new species *Colophon scholtzi sp. nov.* which is known from the Riviersonderend Mountains in the Western Cape.

Durie *et al.* 2024



Colophon scholtzi sp. nov. Photo: Durie *et al.* 2024.

THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **ECOSYSTEMS**

Terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are classified according to threat status (Red Listed Ecosystem) as reported in the 2025 National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA)

IUCN RED LIST CRITERIA FOR ECOSYSTEMS

Assess risk of collapse of ecosystems

A	DISTRIBUTION REDUCTION
B	RESTRICTED DISTRIBUTION & DECLINE
C	DEGRADATION OF ABIOTIC ENVIRONMENT
D	DISRUPTION TO BIOTIC PROCESSES
E	QUANTITAVE ESTIMATE OF RISK OF COLLAPSE

QUANTITATIVE THRESHOLDS

Threatened Ecosystems

- COLLAPSED
- CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
- ENDANGERED
- VULNERABLE
- NEAR THREATENED
- LEAST CONCERN

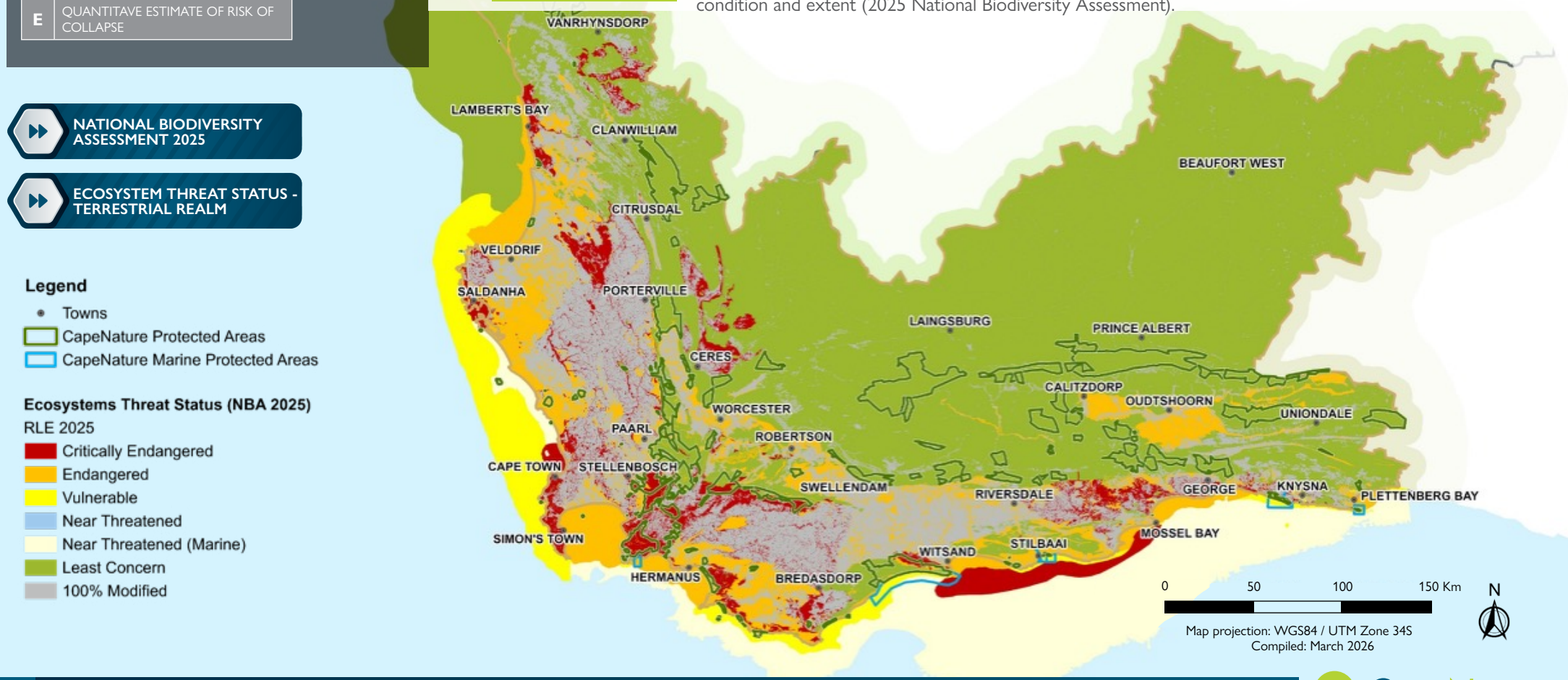
▶ **212** of **346** ecosystems in the Western Cape are Threatened.

↓ 71	↑ 88	↑ 49	↓ 4	↓ 134
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	ENDANGERED	VULNERABLE	NEAR THREATENED	LEAST CONCERN

NOTE: The changes in ecosystem status reflected here represent technical correctionsresulting from updated underlying data and assessment methodologies rather than recent changes in actual ecosystem condition and extent (2025 National Biodiversity Assessment).

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT 2025

ECOSYSTEM THREAT STATUS - TERRESTRIAL REALM



CapeNature

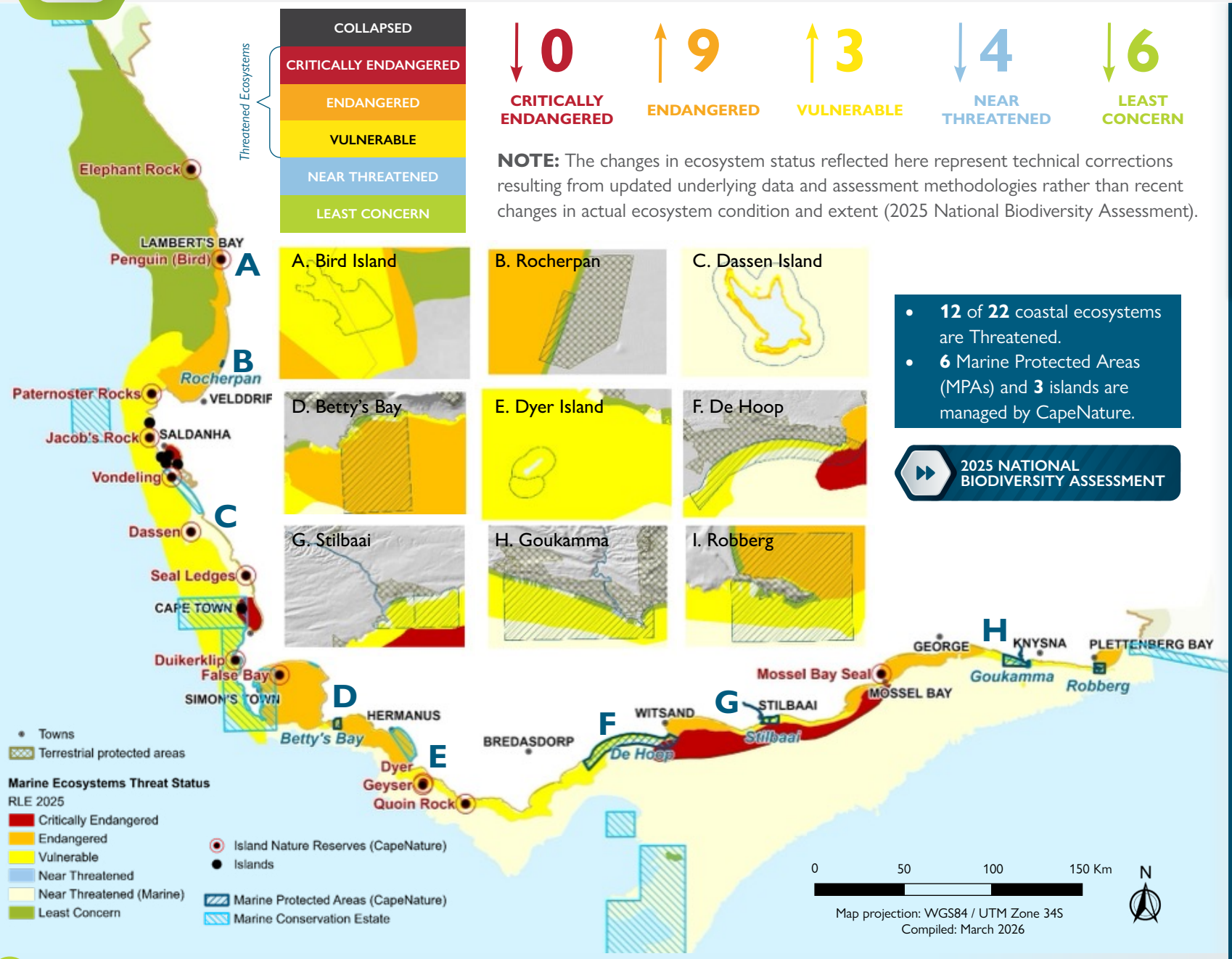
THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **MARINE ECOSYSTEMS**

Threatened Ecosystems

- COLLAPSED
- CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
- ENDANGERED
- VULNERABLE
- NEAR THREATENED
- LEAST CONCERN

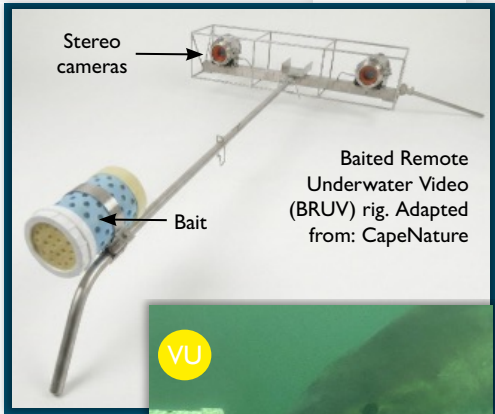
↓ 0	↑ 9	↑ 3	↓ 4	↓ 6
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	ENDANGERED	VULNERABLE	NEAR THREATENED	LEAST CONCERN

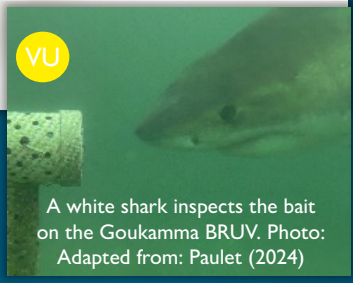
NOTE: The changes in ecosystem status reflected here represent technical corrections resulting from updated underlying data and assessment methodologies rather than recent changes in actual ecosystem condition and extent (2025 National Biodiversity Assessment).



- **12** of **22** coastal ecosystems are Threatened.
- **6** Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and **3** islands are managed by CapeNature.

2025 NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT





A white shark inspects the bait on the Goukamma BRUV. Photo: Adapted from: Paulet (2024)

Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) use baited camera rigs to record fish presence, abundance, and size, with footage archived for long-term analysis. The Goukamma MPA report (Paulet 2024) contained data from BRUV surveys between 2013 and 2018. The report listed 91 species, including **27 Threatened species** like the Vulnerable white shark, supporting the value of the MPA. Species diversity declined with depth and was higher outside the MPA, likely reflecting habitat differences and informing potential rezoning or expansion.

GOUKAMMA MARINE PROTECTED AREA REPORT

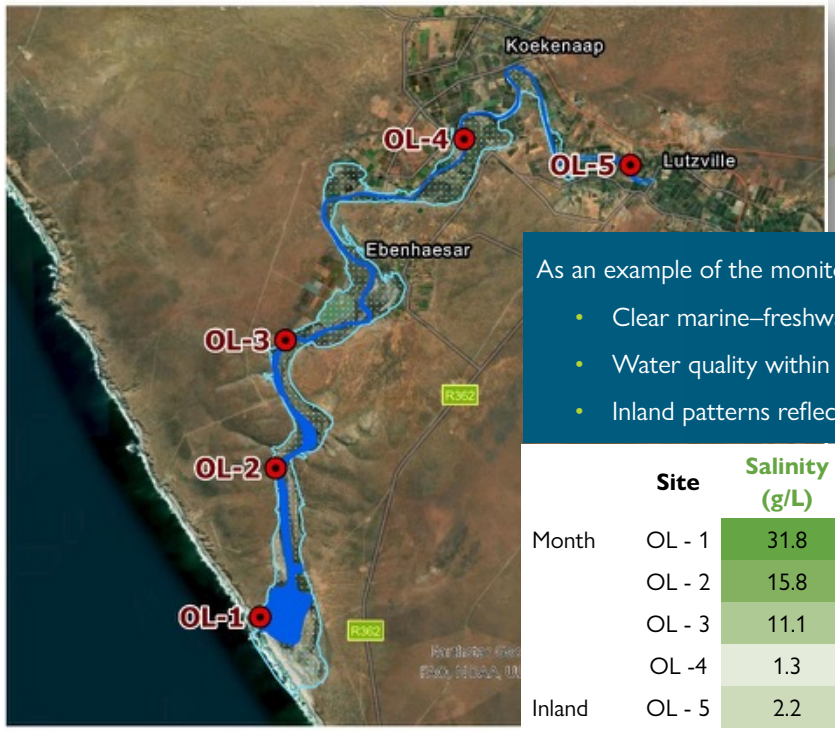
THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEMS**

↓ 0	↑ 22	↑ 23	0	↓ 9
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	ENDANGERED	VULNERABLE	NEAR THREATENED	LEAST CONCERN

NOTE: The changes in ecosystem status reflected here represent technical corrections resulting from updated underlying data and assessment methodologies rather than recent changes in actual ecosystem condition and extent (2025 National Biodiversity Assessment).

Threatened Ecosystems

- COLLAPSED
- CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
- ENDANGERED
- VULNERABLE
- NEAR THREATENED
- LEAST CONCERN



- **45** of **54** estuaries are Threatened.
- **13** of South Africa's **22** estuary types are in the Western Cape.
- CapeNature manages **13** estuaries

As an example of the monitoring of estuaries, the Oliphants estuary survey shows:

- Clear marine–freshwater gradient indicates an open, functioning estuary.
- Water quality within expected ranges; no oxygen stress observed.
- Inland patterns reflect reduced tidal flushing and freshwater influence.

	Site	Salinity (g/L)	Oxygen (mg/L)	Temperature (°C)	pH (pH units)	Visibility (m)
Month	OL - 1	31.8	8.4	14.7	6.7	1.6
	OL - 2	15.8	7.1	17.8	7.4	0.5
	OL - 3	11.1	6.9	19	7.5	0.6
	OL -4	1.3	6.9	19.5	7.6	1.5
Inland	OL - 5	2.2	7.1	20.4	7.5	0.3

Legend

- CapeNature Estuary
- Estuaries
- Towns

Western Cape Conservation Estate

- Terrestrial protected areas
- Marine Protected Areas (Coastal)

2025 NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

SOUTH AFRICAN ESTUARY INFORMATION SYSTEM

THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS**

Threatened Ecosystems

- COLLAPSED
- CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
- ENDANGERED
- VULNERABLE
- NEAR THREATENED
- LEAST CONCERN

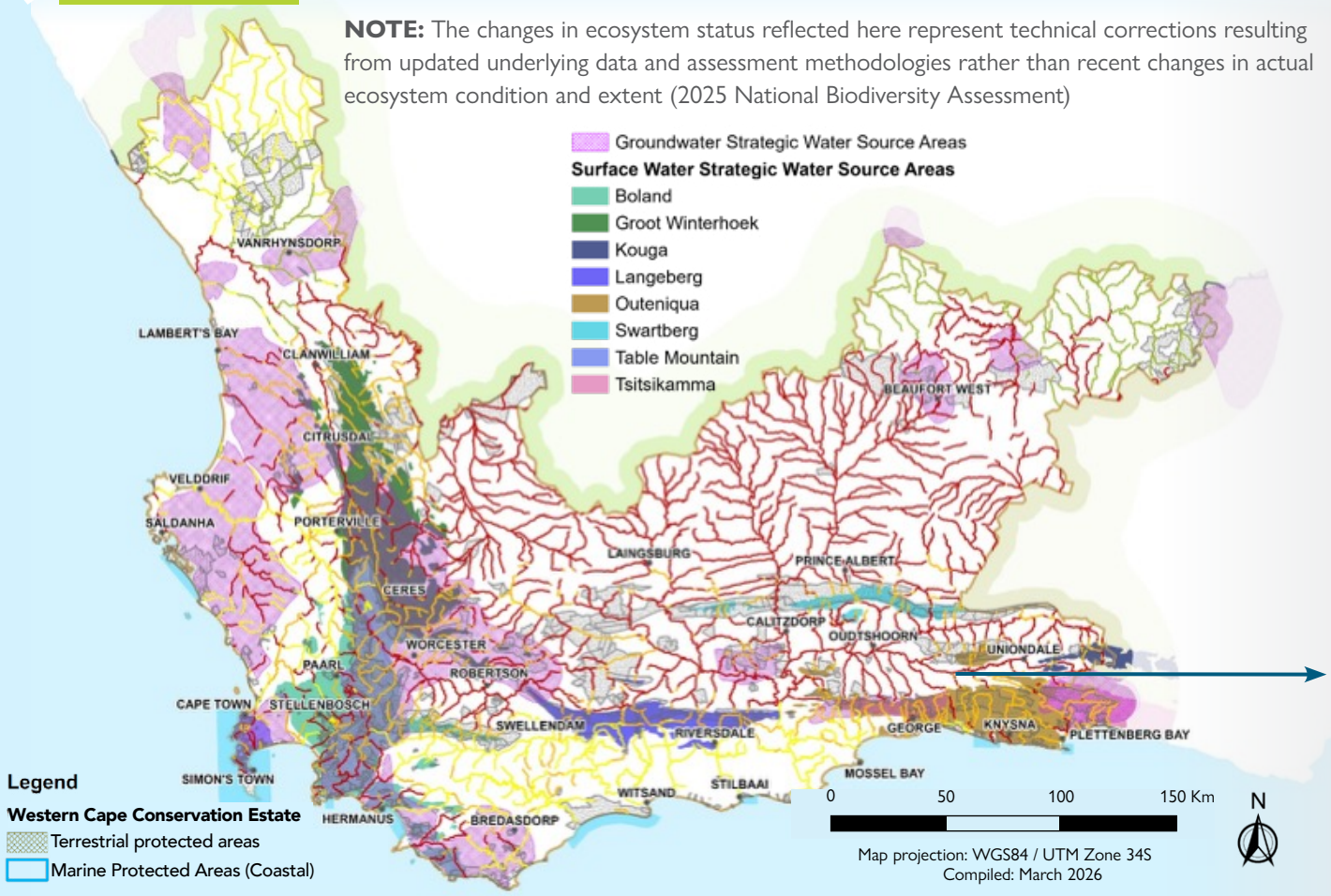
- **79** of **96** freshwater ecosystems are Threatened:
- **64** river types (>35% not protected)
- **32** wetland types (>40% not protected)
- **6** Strategic Water Source Areas are in the Western Cape.

STRATEGIC WATER SOURCE AREAS

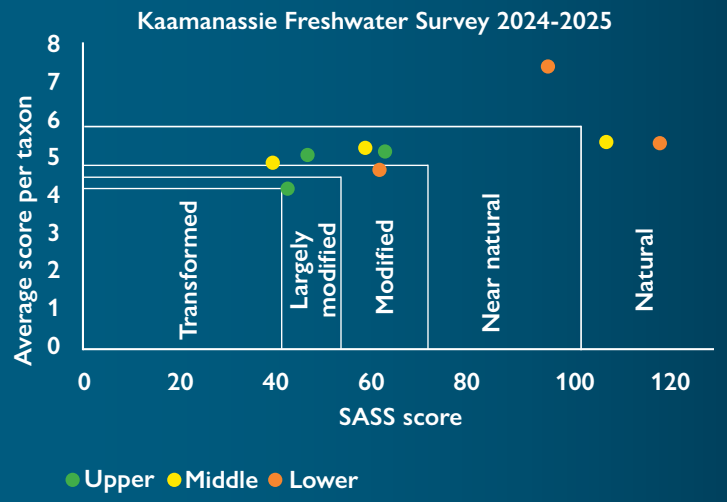
2025 NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

↓ 29	↑ 27	↑ 23	0	↓ 17
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	ENDANGERED	VULNERABLE	NEAR THREATENED	LEAST CONCERN

NOTE: The changes in ecosystem status reflected here represent technical corrections resulting from updated underlying data and assessment methodologies rather than recent changes in actual ecosystem condition and extent (2025 National Biodiversity Assessment)



An invasive alien plant clearing project began in 2021 in the Kammanassie River between Oudtshoorn and Uniondale to increase inflows to the Kammanassie Dam. CapeNature started monitored river health in 2024 and 2025. The river channel varies from top to bottom, with the lowest site showing better ecological health than upper sites. The data support adaptive management of the Kammanassie Nature Reserve (with a small part in Outeniqua SWSA) and inform cooperative management with partner agencies. Other South African Scoring System (SASS; Dickens and Graham 2002) monitoring surveys takes place in Protected Areas within the Boland and Grootwinterhoek SWSAs.



THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS**

Terrestrial ecosystems that have become Critically Endangered or Endangered between 2018-2021 and 2021-2025 are shown in the map below.

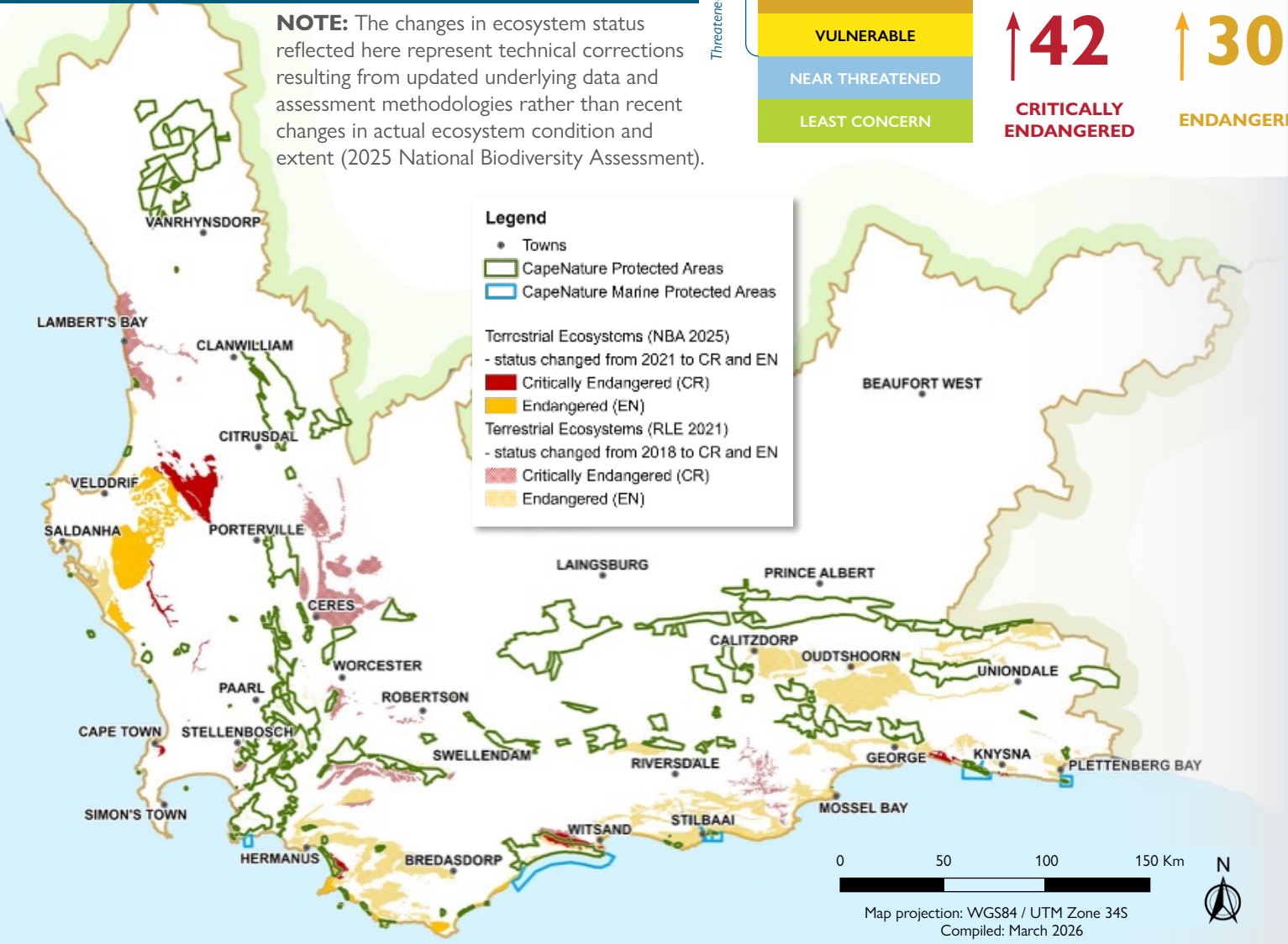
NOTE: The changes in ecosystem status reflected here represent technical corrections resulting from updated underlying data and assessment methodologies rather than recent changes in actual ecosystem condition and extent (2025 National Biodiversity Assessment).

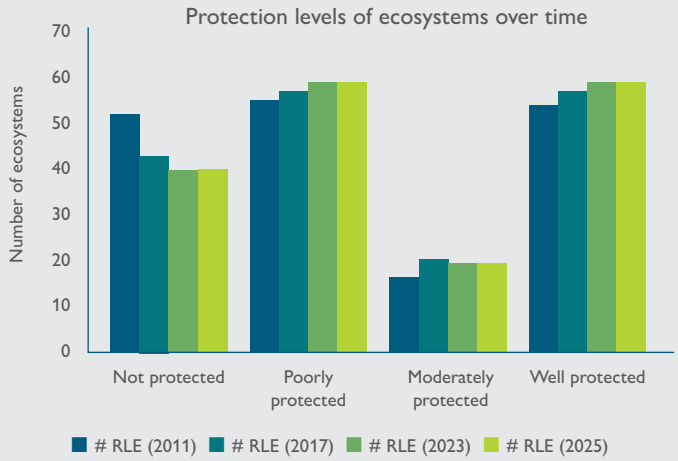
Threatened Ecosystems

- COLLAPSED
- CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
- ENDANGERED
- VULNERABLE
- NEAR THREATENED
- LEAST CONCERN

72 of 174 terrestrial ecosystems in the Western Cape are Threatened. (The status change reflects a technical adjustment following the 2025 National Biodiversity Assessment)

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	ENDANGERED	VULNERABLE	NEAR THREATENED	LEAST CONCERN
↑ 42	↑ 30	↓ 0	0	↓ 102





- IMPLEMENTATION NOTE REVISED LIST THREATENED ECOSYSTEMS
- ECOSYSTEM THREAT STATUS - TERRESTRIAL REALM
- 2025 NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

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THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **INDIGENOUS SPECIES**

National Red List assessments are conducted by taxonomic group and updated periodically. Changes in threat status reflect shifts in extinction risk and improved knowledge.

VERTEBRATES

- **24** of **37** Freshwater fish species are threatened
- **23** of **154** Mammals are Threatened
- **11** of **143** Reptiles are Threatened
- **8** of **60** Amphibian species are threatened
- **33** of **337** Birds are Threatened
- **31** of **69** Sharks are Threatened

INVERTEBRATES

- **28** of **923** Spiders are Threatened
- **32** of **298** Butterflies are Threatened
- **15** of **22** Colophons are Threatened
- **7** of **63** Dragon and damselflies are Threatened

PLANTS

- **2 006** of **10 744** Plants are Threatened

COLLAPSED
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
ENDANGERED
VULNERABLE
NEAR THREATENED
LEAST CONCERN

Threatened Ecosystems

Indicates increase from 2025.

SOUTH AFRICAN RED LIST OF ANIMALS

The value of reassessments

Caledon conebush, Leucadendron *elimense subsp. salteri,* illustrates how extinction risk can change across national assessment cycles. First listed as Vulnerable in 1980, it was later reassessed as Endangered and subsequently as Critically Endangered. In the most recent 2020 assessment, it was listed as Endangered following improved data and the protection of subpopulations through biodiversity stewardship agreements. This trajectory demonstrates how both increasing pressures and conservation action are reflected in the National Red List.

Caledon conebush

Sharks under pressure

Sharks were first listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in 2013; this number has now been expanded to nearly 200 species. In South Africa, stock status and fishing pressure are assessed by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, while CapeNature supports conservation through Marine Protected Areas.

STATUS OF MARINE FISHERY RESOURCES

	Species	Stock status	Fishing pressure
CR	Soupfin shark *Galeorhinus galeus.*	Heavily depleted	Heavy
EN	Shortfin mako shark *Isurus oxyrinchus*	Depleted	Optimal
EN	Smoothhound shark *Mustelus mustelus.*	Depleted	Heavy
EN	Dusky shark *Carcharhinus obscurus*	Depleted	Light
EN	Puffadder shyshark *Haploblepharus edwardsii*	Depleted	Unknown
VU	Bronze whaler shark *Carcharhinus brachyurus*	Unknown	Heavy
VU	Lesser guitar shark *Acroteriobatus annulatus*	Unknown	Unknown
NT	Blue shark *Prionace glauca*	Optimal	Heavy
NT	Bluntnose dogshark *Squalus acutipinnis*	Abundant	Heavy
LC	Whitespotted smoothhound shark *Mustelus palumbes*	Abundant	Light
LC	Izak catshark *Holohalaelurus regani*	Unknown	Unknown

THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE
INDIGENOUS SPECIES: ANIMALS

National Red List assessments for mammals and birds were completed in 2025 by SANBI, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and BirdLife South Africa, with expert contributions from CapeNature.

Western Cape status changes for mammals

MAMMAL RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025

Species	2016 status	2025 status	Reasons for genuine and non-genuine changes
Riverine rabbit *Bunolagus monticularis*	CR	EN	**Non-genuine changes** 1. New information becomes available, e.g., population sizes, rates of decline. 2. Taxonomic revision. 3. Error correction. 4. Updated IUCN criteria.
Lesser long-fingered bat *Miniopterus fraterculus*	LC	NT	
Natal long-fingered bat *Miniopterus natalensis*	LC	NT	
Aardvark *Orycteropus afer*	LC	NT	**Genuine changes** 1. Main threats are no longer present, or conservation measures improved the status of the species enough. 2. Main threats have continued or worsened, or new threats have developed causing the status of the species to deteriorate.
Lesueur's hairy bat *Cistugo lesueuri*	LC	VU	
Laminate vlei rat *Otomys laminatus*	NT	VU	

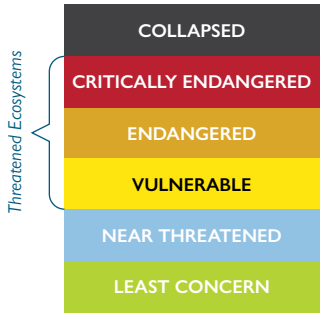
Aardvark *(Orycteropus afer)*: an example of genuine change in threat status

The aardvark is indigenous to the Western Cape, occurring across a range of habitats and relying on ants and termites for both food and water. The species is assessed as Near Threatened regionally, with the possibility of becoming Vulnerable once more population data become available. It is especially vulnerable to climate change, and the increased frequency of droughts may increase local extinction risks, especially when combined with habitat loss, hunting, and persecution

Aardvark. Photo: Andrea Fuller

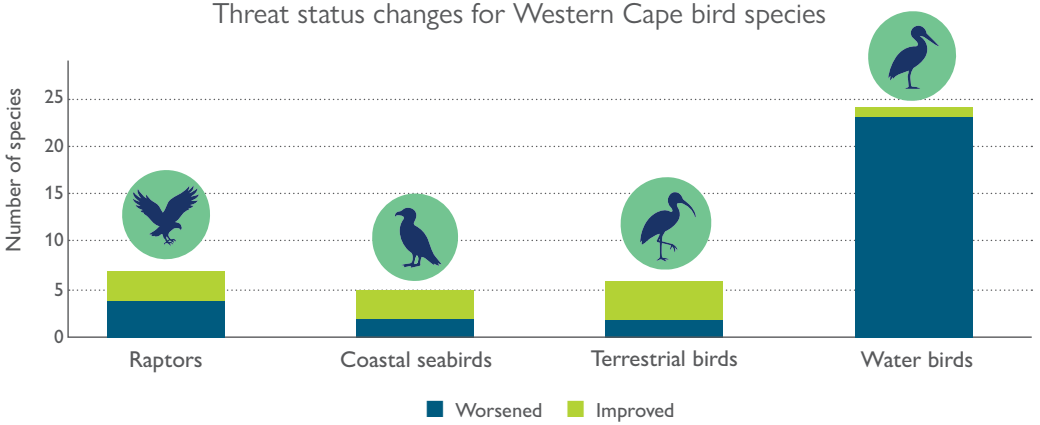
Western Cape status changes for birds

BIRD RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025



Following the 2025 Red List Assessment, 42 bird species changed threat status. Waterbirds recorded the highest number of status changes, with 23 species assigned a worse threat status, largely reflecting the increasing pressure on wetlands and other surface water habitats. Coastal seabirds had the fewest changes, with only five species affected.

Threat status changes for Western Cape bird species



Maccoa Duck *(Oxyura maccoa)*: an example of a genuine change in threat status

The Maccoa Duck occurs across eastern and southern Africa. It is one of the one of six species of duck that changed status from Near Threatened to Vulnerable. Ducks are mainly threatened by the loss or degradation of their habitat. Other threats include diseases such as avian botulism and avian flu, hybridisation with invasive ducks such as Mallards and, to a lesser extent, hunting.

Maccoa Duck. Photo: Kevin Shaw

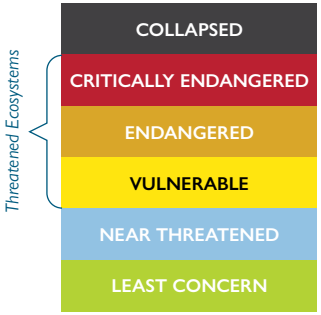
THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE
INDIGENOUS SPECIES: PLANTS

The Cape Floristic Region is a global biodiversity hotspot and one of the world's six floral kingdoms, with high levels of endemic and range-restricted species.

The Western Cape is home to 47.4% of South Africa's floral diversity, and 64% of South Africa's Threatened flora.

RED LIST STATISTICS 2024

10 744 plant taxa have been recorded in the Western Cape	**6 581** plant taxa are endemic to the Western Cape	**2 006** plant taxa are Threatened in the Western Cape.	**64%** of South Africa's threatened flora occur in the Western Cape



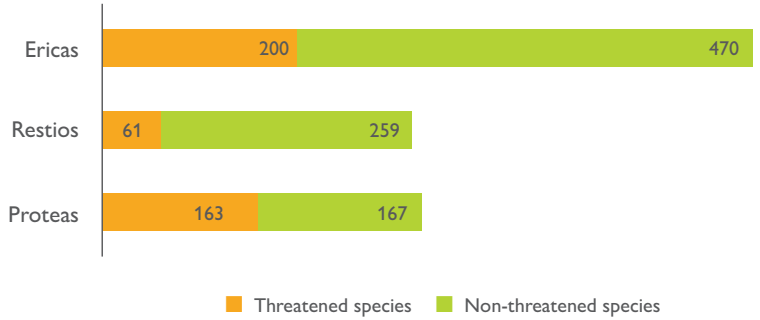
Exhaustive surveys required for classifying the species as Extinct has not yet been completed

SOUTH AFRICAN RED LIST OF PLANTS

40 CRITICALLY ENDANGERED, POSSIBLY EXTINCT	**297** CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	**688** ENDANGERED	**981** VULNERABLE

Threatened and non-threatened Ericas, Restios, and Proteas

Approximately one-third of species within the three dominant fynbos families are Threatened



Species richness getting richer: Ongoing discovery of new species

New taxa are discovered and described every year, so the biodiversity inventory is still growing. Taxa include species, subspecies, and varieties.

Moraea anastasia. Photo: Benjamin Deschodt

Moraea anastasia, a recently described member of the Iris family, was discovered on the lower slopes of Botmaskop Mountain near Stellenbosch after the felling of a pine plantation, showing that alien invasive vegetation can hide undescribed native species. The discovery was facilitated through the CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers) programme, which continues to uncover new plant diversity.

MANNING *et al.* 2025

Erica cunoniensis is restricted to a single subpopulation of fewer than 200 mature individuals within the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, with an extent of occurrence of less than 1 km^2. It grows on steep, moist, south-facing slopes in Kogelberg Sandstone Fynbos. Despite its protected location, the population faces pressure from excessively frequent fire, having burnt twice within 17 years.

ERICA CUNONIENSIS RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2012

Erica cunonioensis.

THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **PROTECTED AREAS**

CapeNature State-vested Protected Areas	659 233 ha
Provinicial Nature Reserve	
Special Nature Reserve	
State Forest Nature Reserve	
Island Nature Reserve	
Wilderness Area	
Marine Protected Area	

16 Nature Reserve complexes **872 338 ha**

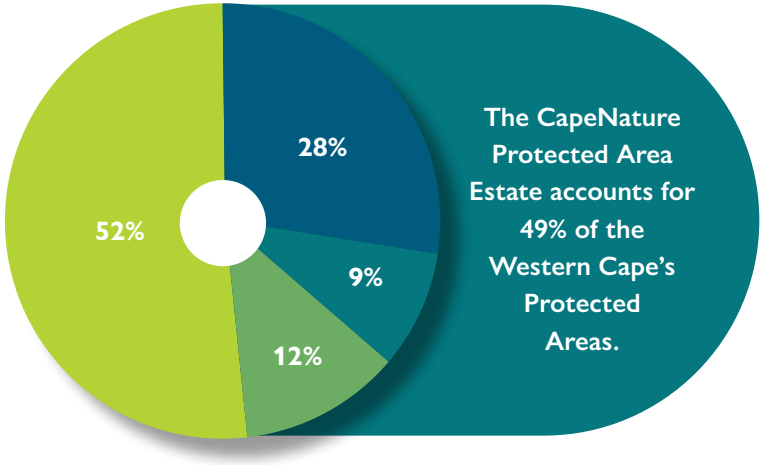
CapeNature-managed Protected Areas	213 105 ha
Nature Reserve	

CapeNature Protected Area Estate **1 158 506 ha**

CapeNature-supported Protected Areas	286 168 ha
Nature Reserve	
Protected Environment	

Other Protected Areas	1 233 857 ha
Protected Area (not managed by CapeNature)	

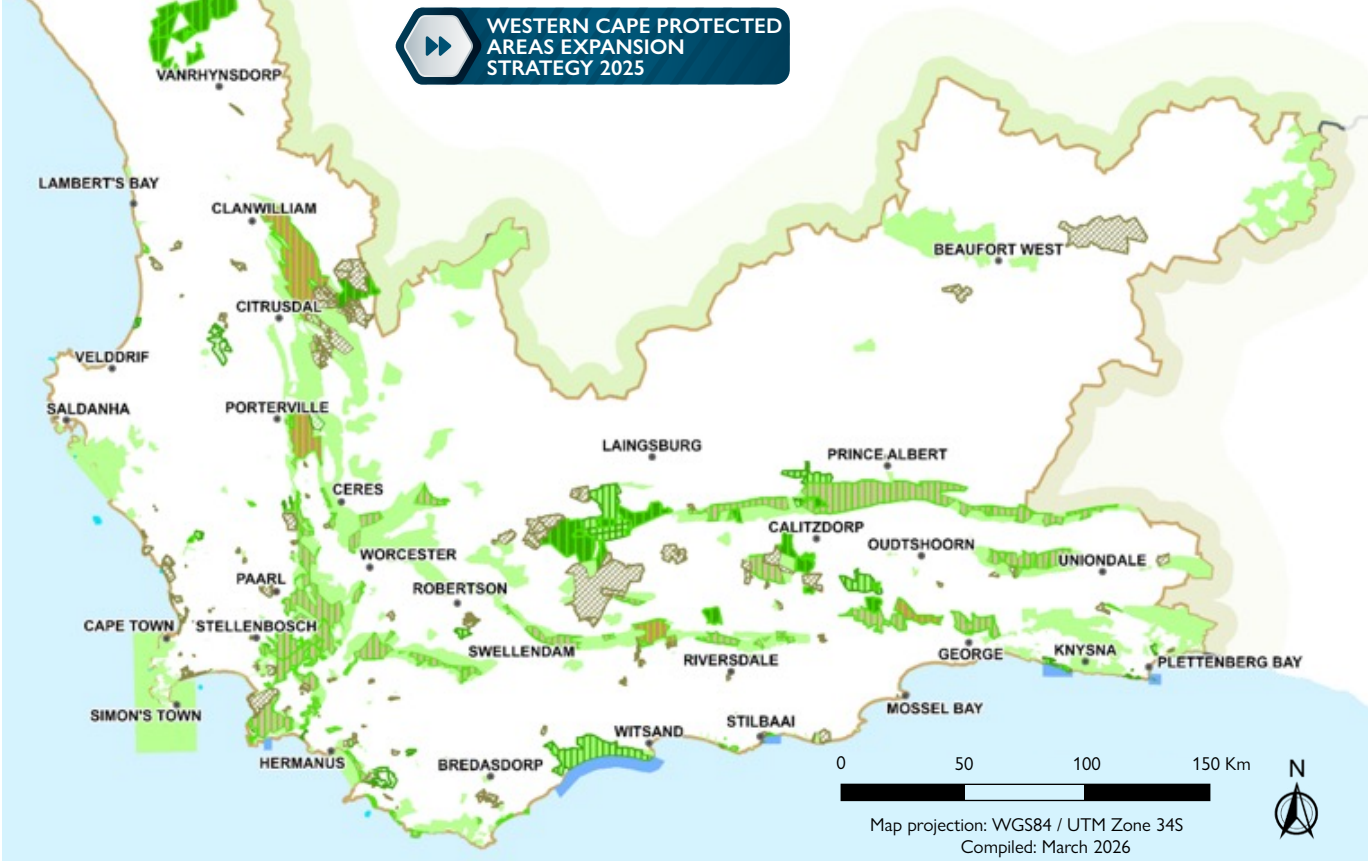
Total Protected Area Estate in the Western Cape **2 392 363 ha**



The CapeNature Protected Area Estate accounts for 49% of the Western Cape's Protected Areas.

In 2025/26, 25 new nature reserves were declared. Four of these reserves, not yet reflected in CapeNature's annual report, collectively add more than 44 000 ha to the Protected Area Estate.
In addition, seven sites are currently in progress and will contribute a further 20 246 ha to the Protected Area Estate once declared.

New Stewardship Nature Reserves	Area (ha)
Knersvlakte Nature Reserve	34 084.4
Zebraskop Nature Reserve	3 952.2
Anysberg Nature Reserve Ext.	3 945.2
Waterkloof Nature Reserve	2 063.9
Bojaansklip Private Nature Reserve	187.7
TOTAL	**44 233.4**

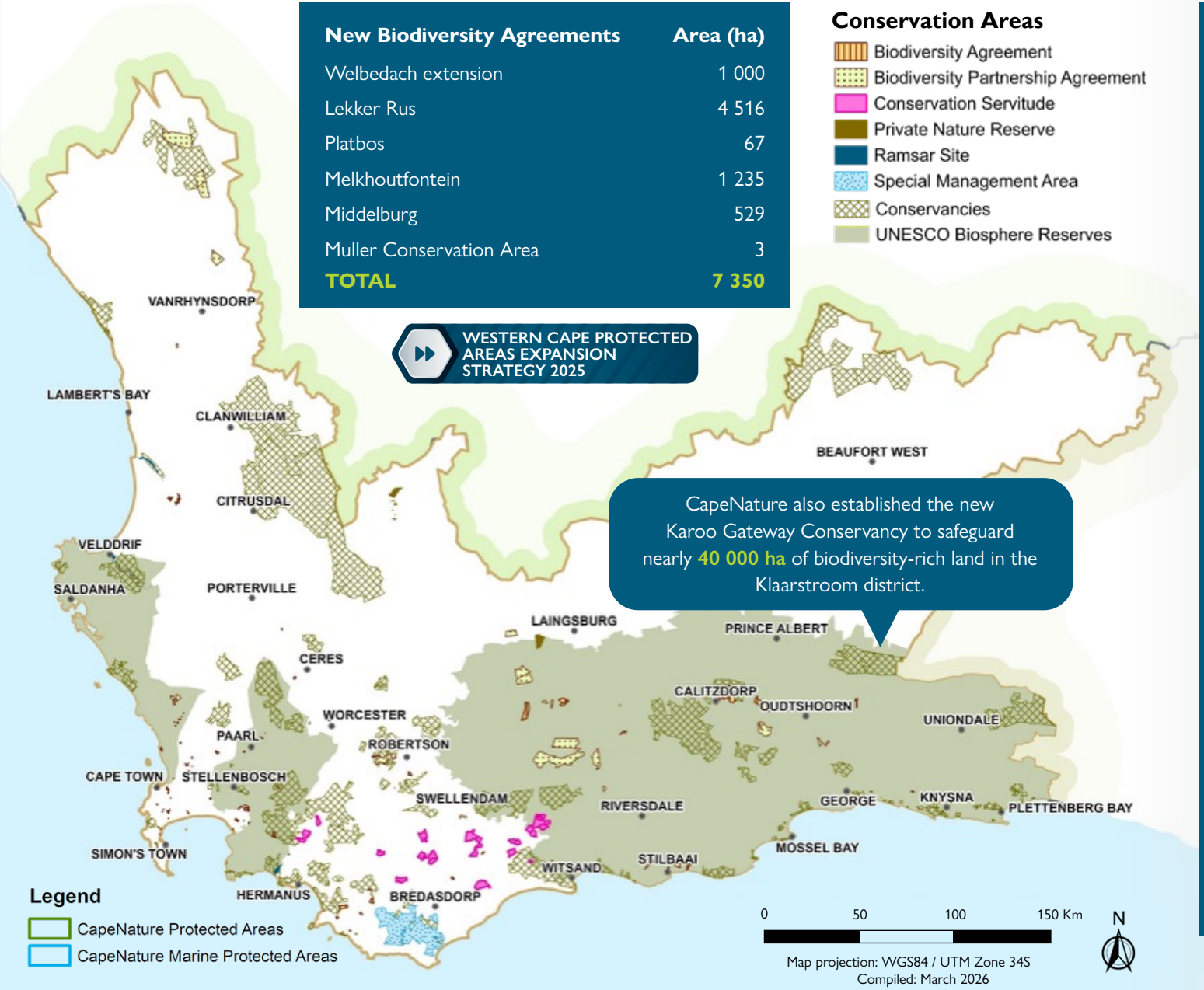


CapeNature

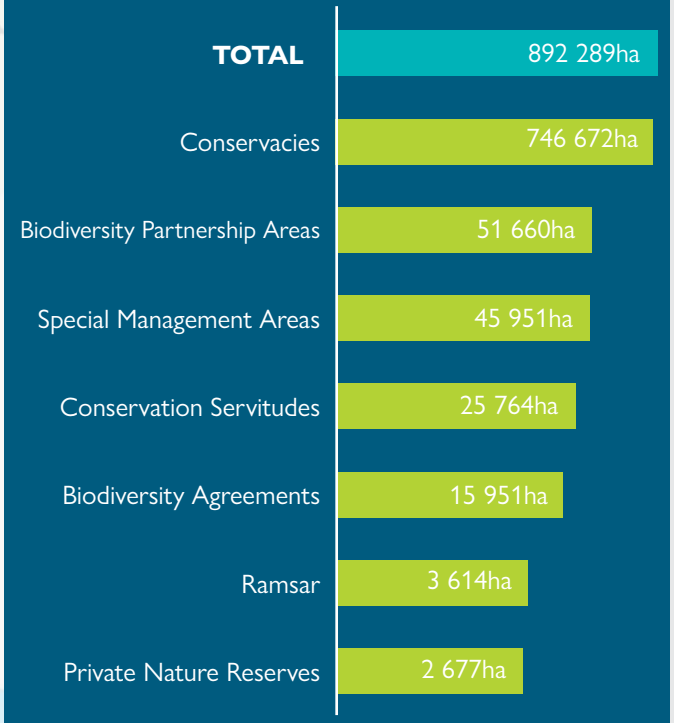
THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE
CONSERVATION AREAS

New Biodiversity Agreements	Area (ha)
Welbedach extension	1 000
Lekker Rus	4 516
Platbos	67
Melkhoutfontein	1 235
Middelburg	529
Muller Conservation Area	3
TOTAL	**7 350**

WESTERN CAPE PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY 2025

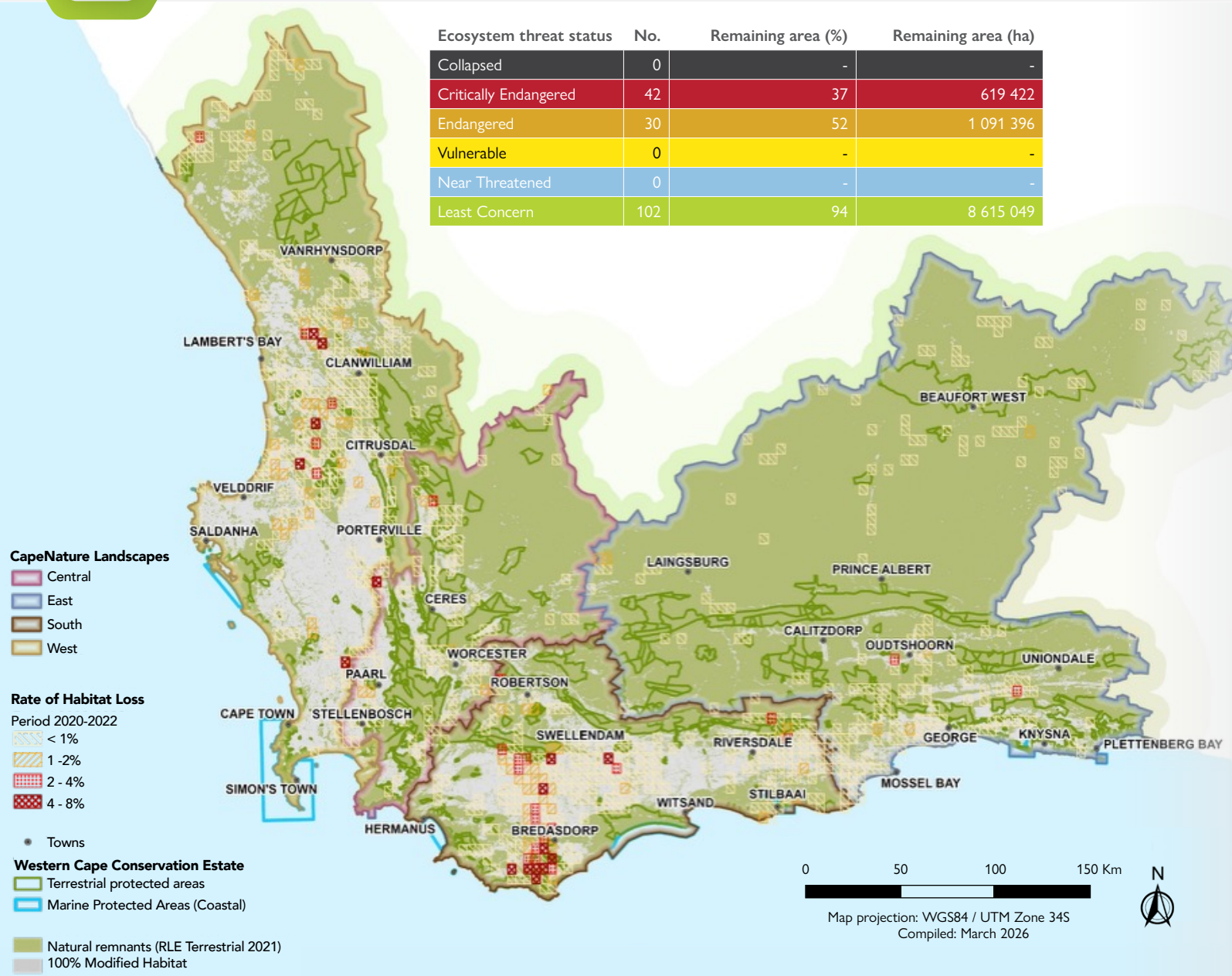


Conservation Areas contribute to biodiversity conservation outside the formally declared protected area network, ranging from voluntary initiatives to areas secured through agreements or servitudes, but without the full legal status of Protected Areas under national legislation. They support ecosystem integrity and enable partnerships with private landowners, often serving as a pathway toward formal Nature Reserve status. CapeNature is currently assessing selected sites for potential declaration as Nature Reserves.



THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE **HABITAT LOSS**

Ecosystem threat status	No.	Remaining area (%)	Remaining area (ha)
Collapsed	0	-	-
Critically Endangered	42	37	619 422
Endangered	30	52	1 091 396
Vulnerable	0	-	-
Near Threatened	0	-	-
Least Concern	102	94	8 615 049



The table shows the remaining area of natural habitat for each threat status category. The reported changes reflect technical corrections to both the number of ecosystems within each category and their historical spatial extents, based on updates in the National Vegetation Map. These revisions are informed by the National Biodiversity Assessment 2025.

These values have been calculated using the most recent version of the modification layer generated by CapeNature (2022) which was informed by latest National Land Cover (2022).

These values represent the 'new' baseline against which all future changes will be reflected.

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT 2025

SOUTH AFRICA NATIONAL LAND COVER

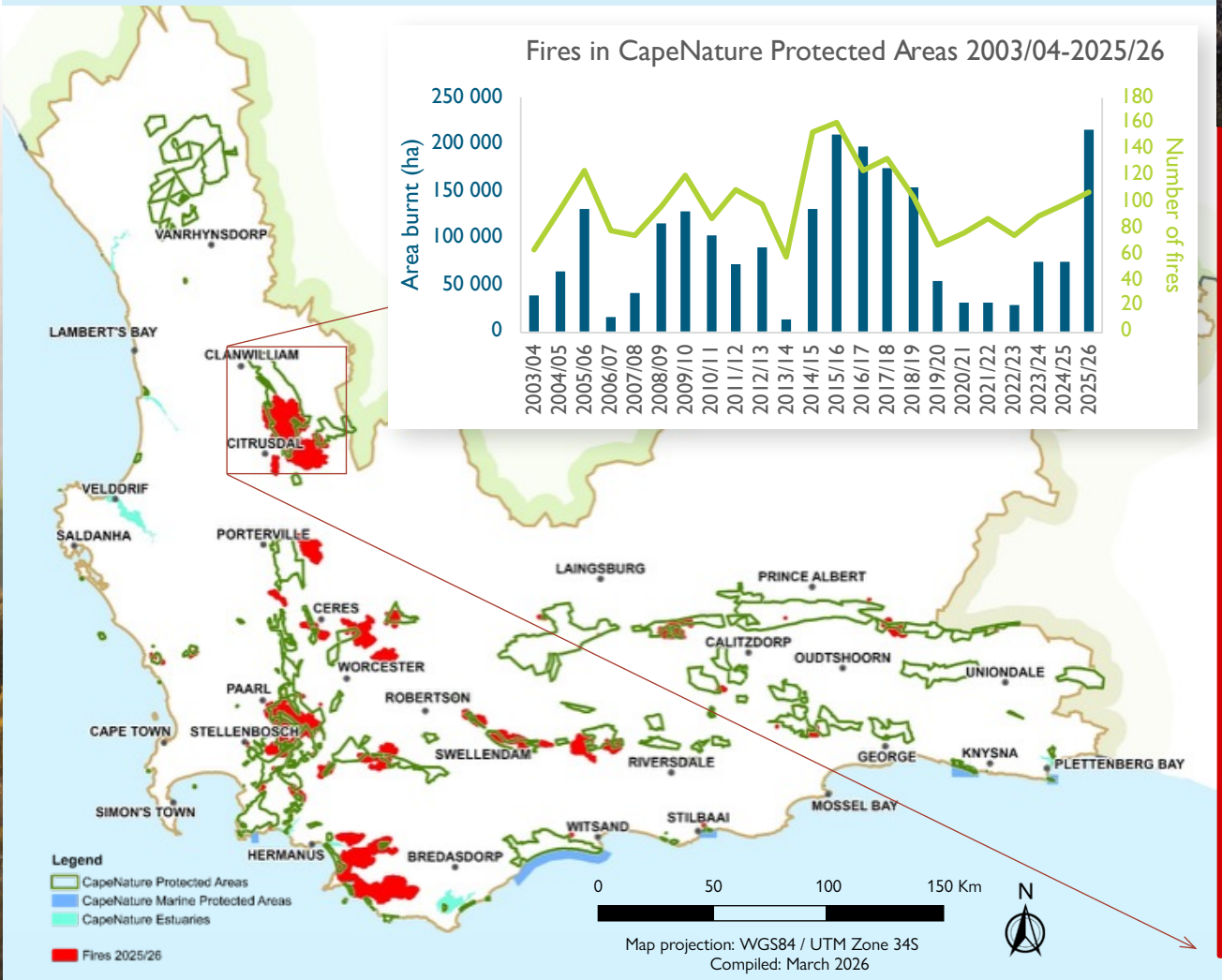
CapeNature

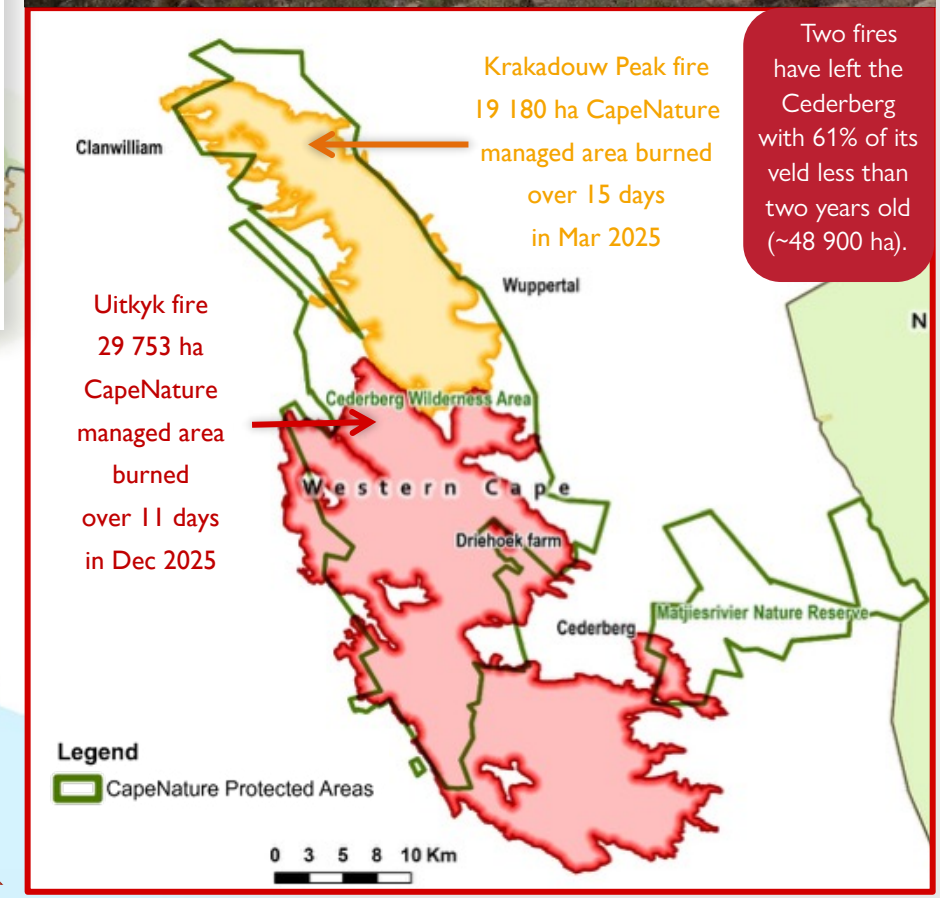
THE STATUS OF **FIRE**

The 2025/26 fire season was notably severe, with 17 fires exceeding 1 000 ha and October–November ignitions reaching 29, which was more than three times the 25-year average of 9.2. The majority of ignitions were anthropogenic. By comparison, CapeNature responded to 97 fires covering 75 174 ha in 2024/25, against 107 fires and 215 936 ha in 2025/26. The compounding effects of Increased fire activity across both seasons drove an increase in suppression costs.

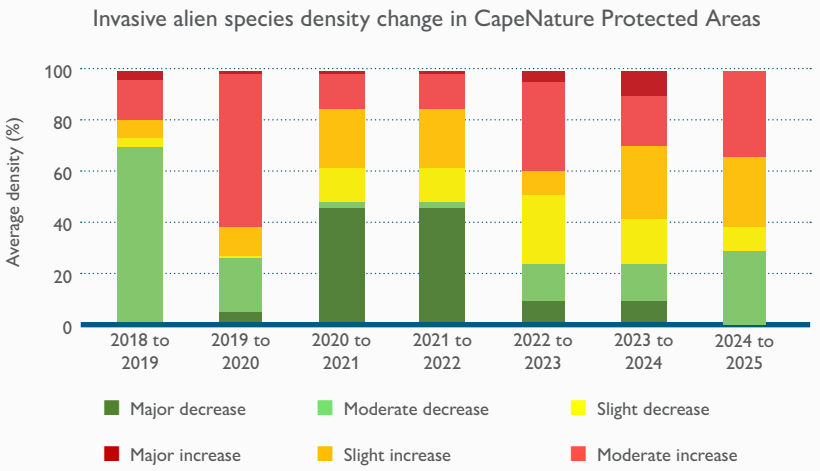
GLOBAL WILDFIRE INFORMATION SYSTEM (GWIS)

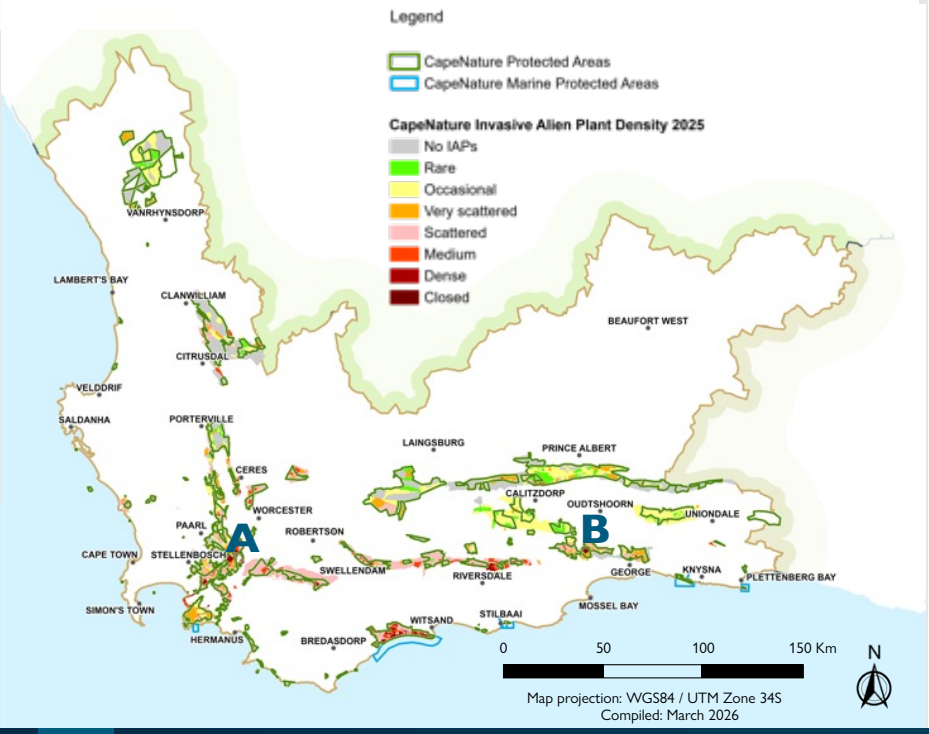
Firebreaks protected infrastructure and the Critically Endangered Clanwilliam cedars *(Widdringtonia cedarbergensis)*.





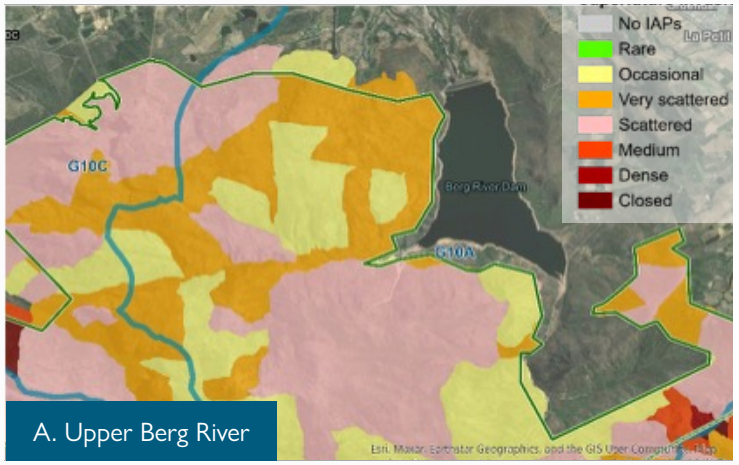
THE STATUS OF WESTERN CAPE
BIOLOGICAL INVASIONS: PLANTS



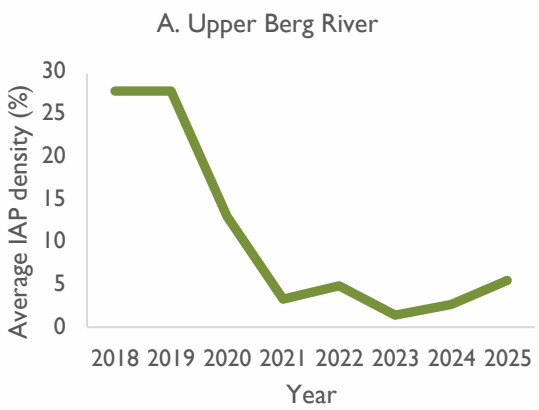


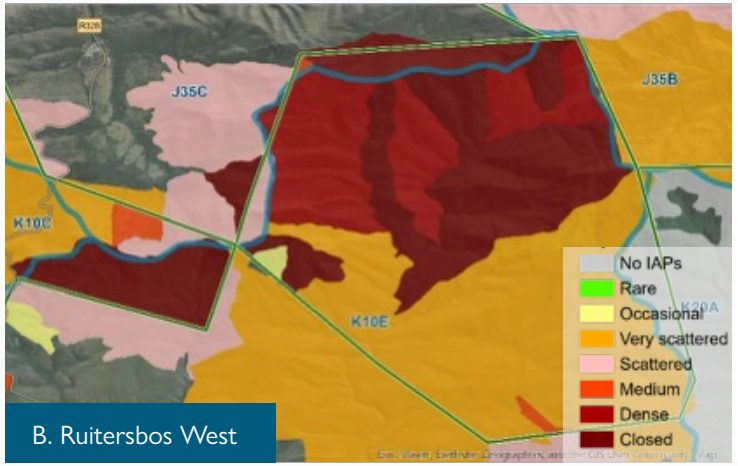
CapeNature prioritises invasive alien plant clearing in Strategic Water Source Areas, where clearing directly protects regional water security. The Berg River catchment, which supplies Cape Town, is a high-priority system managed in partnership with the Greater Cape Town Water Fund. Since inception, 32 159 ha have been cleared, including 6 959 ha in 2025/26 alone. In contrast, the Outeniqua has lower clearing investment: although more than 1 000 ha have been cleared over the past five years, approximately 15% of the catchment remains invaded.

CAPE TOWN WATER FUND

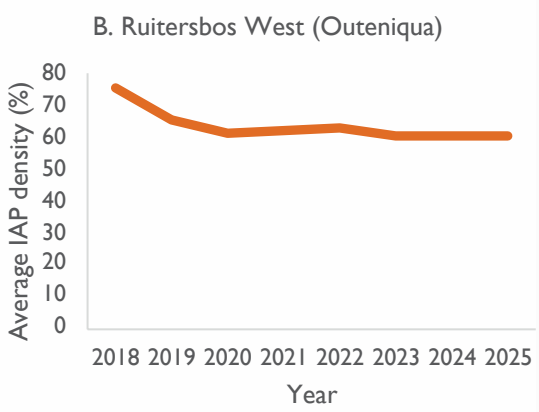


A. Upper Berg River





B. Ruitersbos West



CapeNature

BIODIVERSITY CRIME **CASE STATUS**

42 CRIMINAL DOCKETS OPENED

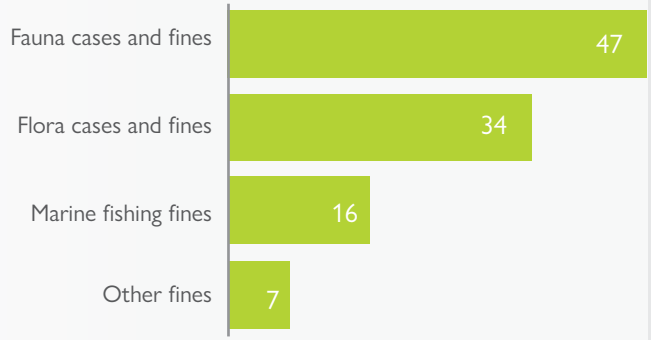
- **26** Criminal dockets still under investigation
- **16** Criminal dockets handed to NPA for decision
  - **1** Criminal dockets did not proceed to trial
    - **0** Criminal dockets declared *Nolle prosequi* (No prospect of successful prosecution)
    - **1** Criminal docket withdrawn
  - **15** Criminal dockets proceeded to trial
    - **12** Criminal dockets still in trial proceedings
    - **3** Criminal dockets finalised
      - **3** Criminal dockets finalised via convictions

52 **R80 400** Total value of Admission of Guilt fines issued

- **8** Issued under the Marine Living Resources Act, 18 of 1998
- **37** Issued under Nature Conservation Ordinance 19 of 1974
- **0** Issued under the Regulations on the Control of Vehicles in the Coastal Area, GNR 496 of 2014
- **3** Issued under the Provincial Notice 955 of 1975
- **4** Issued under the Marine Living Resource Act regulations, GNR 1111 of 1998
- **0** Issued under the Regulations for a prohibition on fishing at night in the estuary of the Breede River, GNR 886 of 2013
- **0** Issued under the Still Bay Regulations, GNR 1108 of 2008

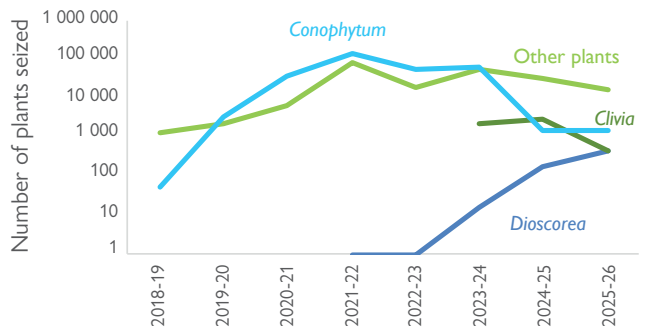
David Roman was arrested for the possession of 22 armadillo girdled lizards *(Ouroborus cataphractus)* and a speckled padloper *(Homopus signatus)* in Nov 2025. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment, and a R500 000 fine. In Oct 2025, a South African was arrested for trafficking 167 armadillo girdled lizards, the largest shipment of lizards intercepted since 2000.

NUMBER OF CASES AND FINES IN 2025/2026



Plant poaching increased sharply after 2020, driven largely by succulent species. *Conophytum* species dominated seizures during the peak years (2021–2024), with other plant groups also increasingly targeted. Smaller numbers of *Clivia* species and *Dioscorea* species were recorded. Seized plants are typically transferred to SANBI for collections and rehabilitation.

- CITES COP 20: APPS. I, II & III
- SPECIES+ PORTAL

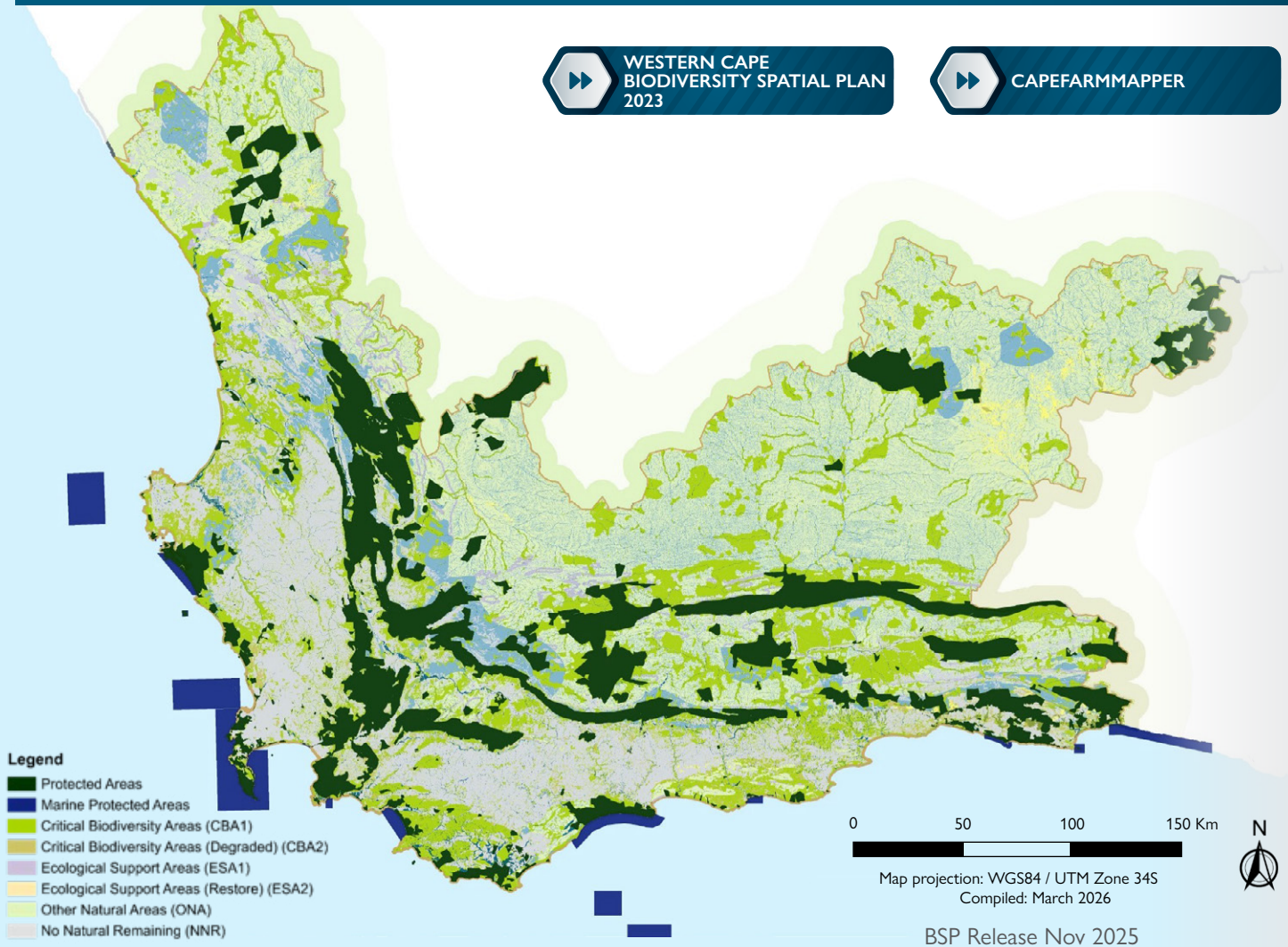


BIODIVERSITY SPATIAL PLAN

The 2023 Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan (WCBSP) is a decision-making tool that provides a guiding framework for conserving biodiversity and ecological infrastructure while promoting sustainable development. The Spatial Informants underpinning the contextual information and land-use guidelines of the Biodiversity Spatial Plan were updated, incorporating the updated protected areas declared during the 2025/26 financial year. The WCBSP Map can be accessed online via the CapeFarmMapper website, and spatial data is available on request by contacting **datasharing@capenature.co.za.** Queries concerning the Spatial Informants can be sent to **cba@capenature.co.za.**

WESTERN CAPE BIODIVERSITY SPATIAL PLAN 2023

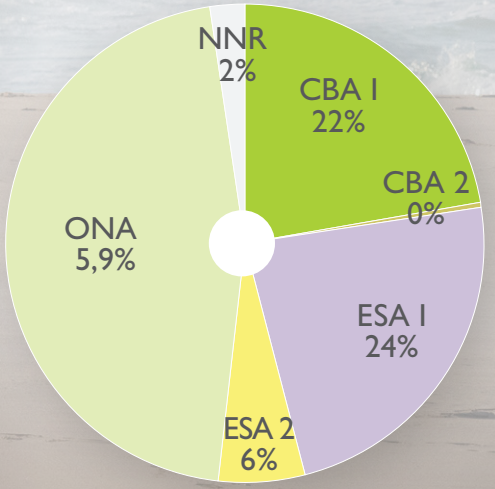
CAPEFARMMAPPER



BSP Release Nov 2025

Biodiversity Priority Area Category	Area of the Western Cape (%)
Protected Areas	16.9
Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA)	21.7
Ecological Support Area (ESA)	13.4
Other Natural Areas (ONA)	28.8
No Natural Remaining (NNR)	19.2

Between the initial development of the WCBSP in 2023 and the update to the spatial informants in 2025, 68 000 ha of Protected Areas were declared. The contribution of these newly-declared Protected Areas to former Biodiversity Priority Areas is shown below.



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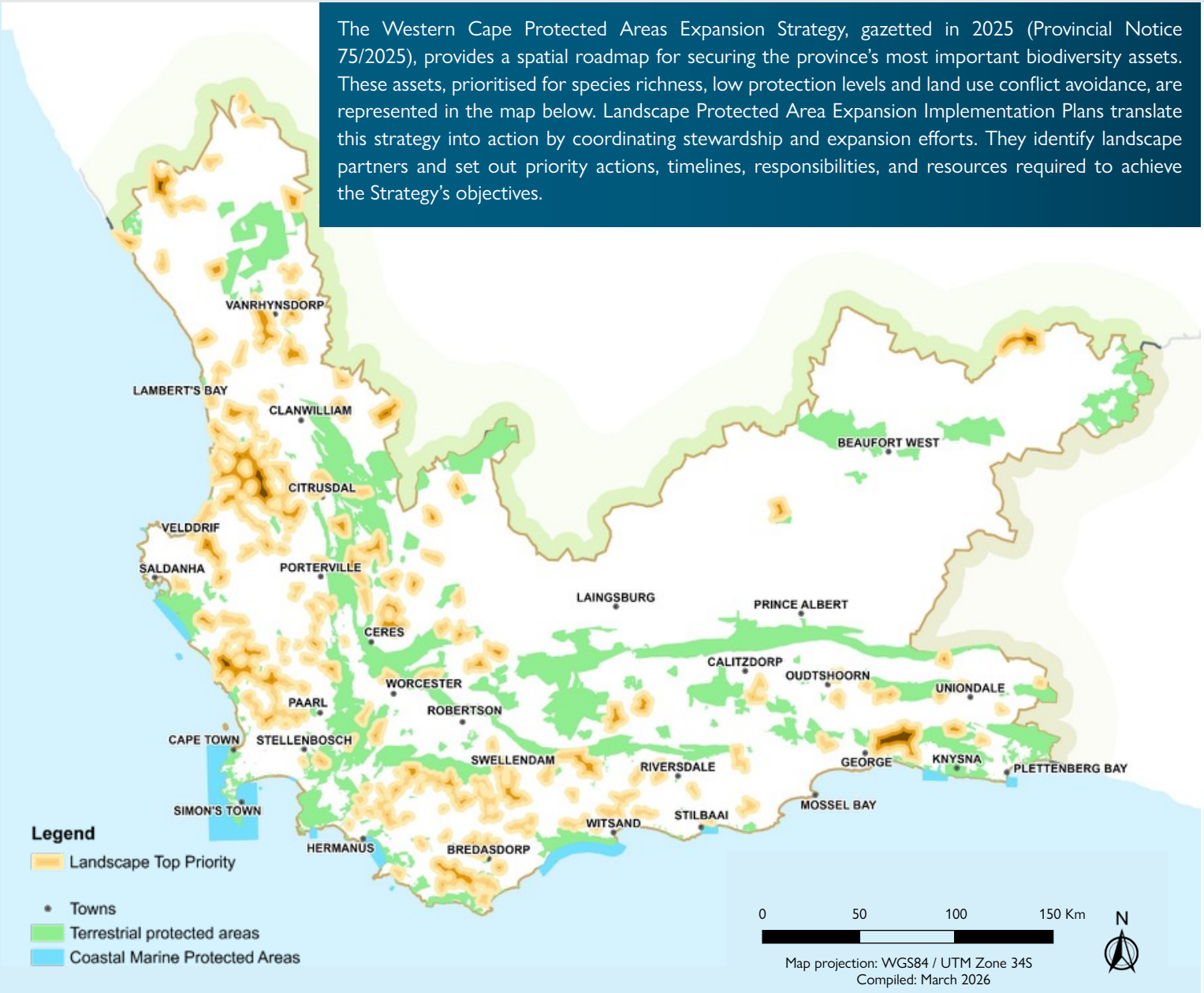
PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION
STRATEGY & PRIORITISATION

The Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy, gazetted in 2025 (Provincial Notice 75/2025), provides a spatial roadmap for securing the province's most important biodiversity assets. These assets, prioritised for species richness, low protection levels and land use conflict avoidance, are represented in the map below. Landscape Protected Area Expansion Implementation Plans translate this strategy into action by coordinating stewardship and expansion efforts. They identify landscape partners and set out priority actions, timelines, responsibilities, and resources required to achieve the Strategy's objectives.



Protected Area Expansion is a key driver of biodiversity conservation, and successfully delivering on expansion targets requires a strong focus on strategic partnerships. The Overberg Renosterveld Trust (ORT) has worked for over a decade to secure critically endangered renosterveld, and in May 2025, in partnership with ORT and WWF-SA, CapeNature declared the Haarwegskloof Nature Reserve. Haarwegskloof will be expanded, with the partnership currently adding three additional properties to the reserve, mitigating habitat loss through protected area expansion.

Haarwegskloof Nature Reserve.
Photo: Overberg Renosterveld Trust

CAPENATURE'S **BIODIVERSITY PROTOCOLS, STANDARDS AND STRATEGIES**

To ensure the reliability, accuracy and reproducibility of data and monitoring efforts, CapeNature ensures organisation-wide adoption of standardised surveillance and monitoring protocols, developed by both internal and external experts. CapeNature also ensures the alignment of protocols to international standards.

Ecological Monitoring Protocols

Protocols are regularly revised in response to strategic adaptive management, and the latest versions are available from CapeNature.

New policies and strategies developed

1. **Strategy:** 2025 Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy
   - WESTERN CAPE PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY 2025
2. **Policy:** Consumptive Use of Wild Flora on CapeNature-managed Protected Areas.
   - CONSUMPTIVE USE OF WILD FLORA POLICY
3. **Policy:** Transport and Utilisation of Indigenous Freshwater Fishes in the Western Cape Province.
   - TRANSPORT AND UTILISATION OF INDIGENOUS FISH POLICY

Internal standards

- Species Prioritisation Framework
- Field & Monitoring Protocols
- Standard Operational Procedures
- Habitat Restoration & Fire Management Guidelines
- Marine and Boating Standards
- Data Management Policies
- Occupational Health and Safety Standards
- Audit Standards

National & global alignment

- SANBI & DFFE Frameworks
- IUCN Red List & Ecosystem Guidelines
- Global Biodiversity Framework
- CITES

ANNUAL SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING

4
NEW Standardised Monitoring Protocols Developed During Reporting Period

8
Standardised monitoring reports produced

Monitoring protocol for Cape Vultures at Potberg, De Hoop Nature Reserve

Management objective:

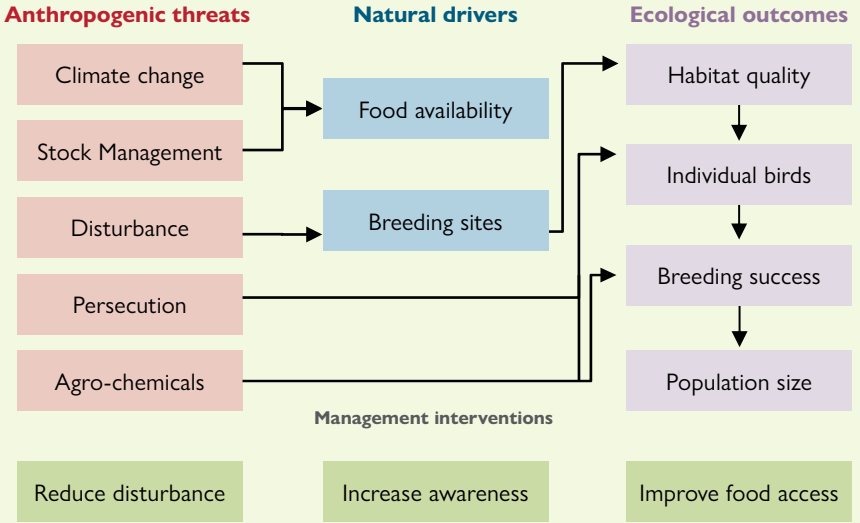
1. Increase occupied nests and fledglings.
2. Improve vulture awareness and threat mitigation among landowners.

Monitoring:

1. Breeding pairs
2. Fledglings
3. Marked individuals

Surveillance:

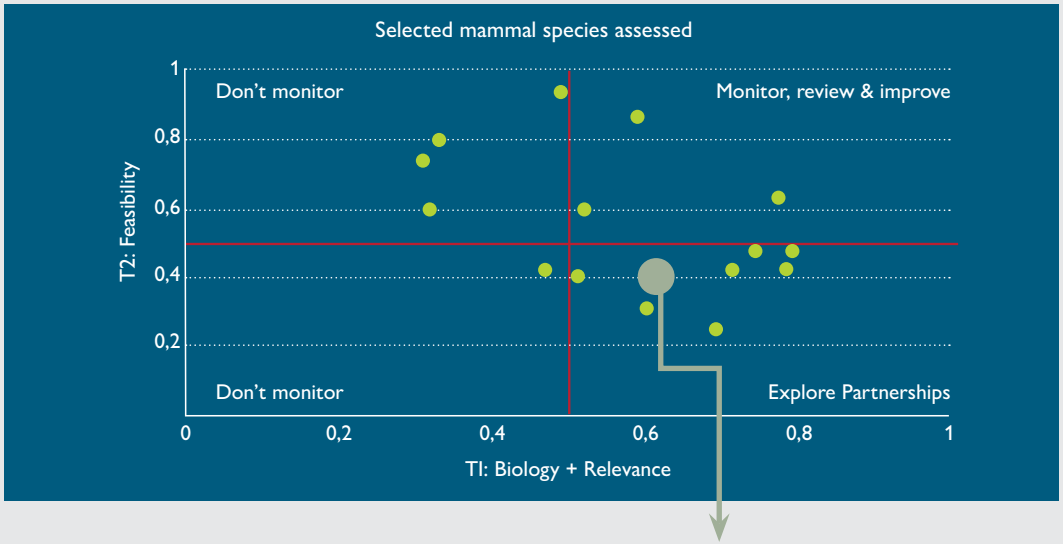
1. Sightings of vultures, incl. injured, ill, or dead
2. Sightings of other raptors

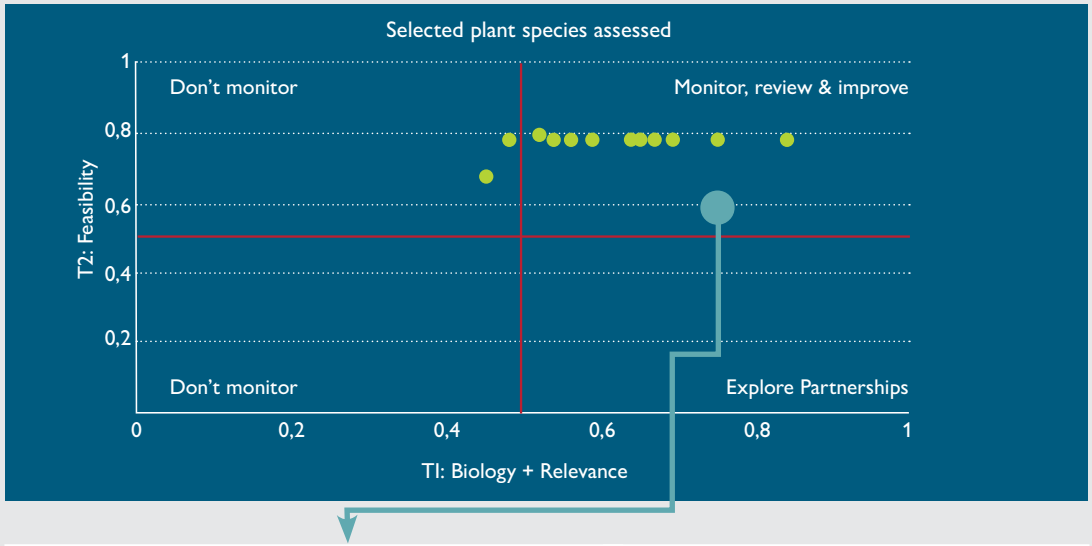


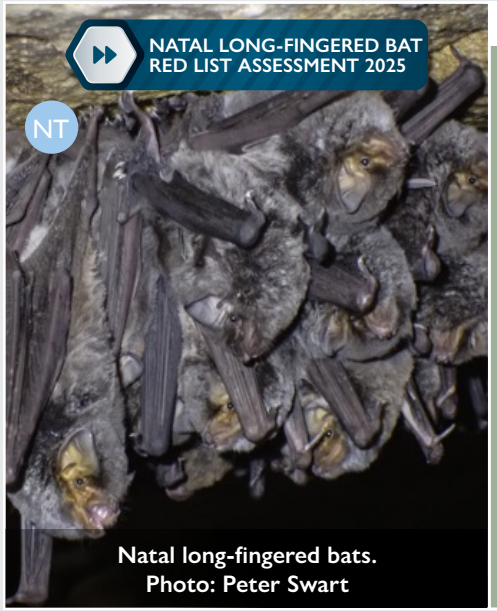
CapeNature

SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING
PRIORITY SPECIES TOOL

CapeNature's priority species tool is used to optimise surveillance and monitoring activities and highlight opportunities for partnerships. More than 260 species have been assessed to date. A mammal and a plant species assessed with the tool are shown here (represented as individual dots).







Natal long-fingered bats.
Photo: Peter Swart

Natal long-fingered bats.

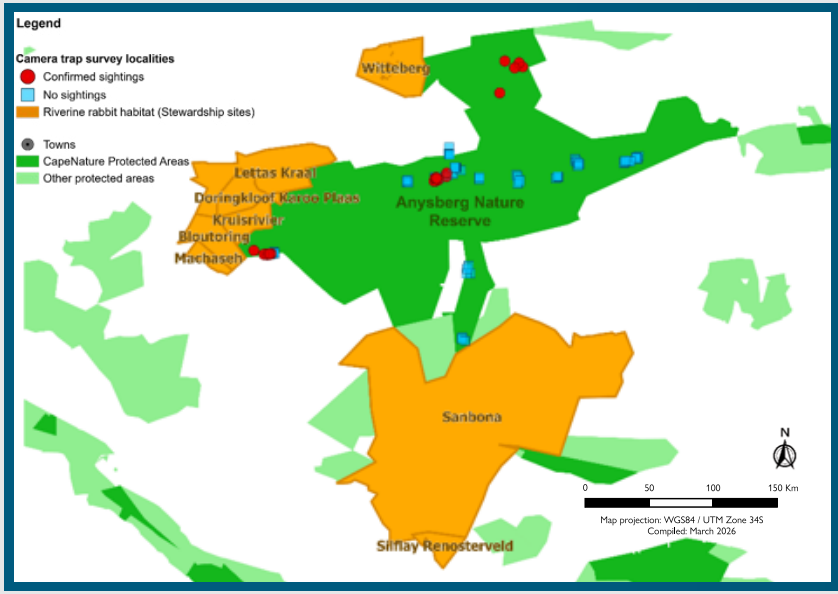
Research in the 1980s revealed that a single cave on De Hoop Nature Reserve hosted more than 300 000 bats, including what is probably the largest breeding colony of the Natal long-fingered bat (Miniopterus natalensis) in South Africa. These bats are insectivorous and thus beneficial to agriculture through the control of insect pests. Long considered safe from threat, the species was uplisted from Least Concern to Near Threatened in 2025 because of collisions with wind turbines and loss of foraging and roosting habitat. The species is identified as high priority for monitoring, but this requires specialised equipment and collaboration with external partners.

Pink sugarbush,

Protea stokoei, is a geographically restricted Western Cape endemic occurring from the Hottentots Holland Mountains to Betty's Bay. The species occurs naturally in fragmented subpopulations with many consisting of only a few individuals. The species is experiencing a slow ongoing decline due to habitat degradation from alien invasive plants and too-frequent fires. As a non-resprouting, fire-dependent species with long juvenile period (6-9 years before seed production), it is vulnerable to short fire-return intervals. Based on biological risks and its range, the species ranks high in prioritization assessments and remains a priority species for continued monitoring.

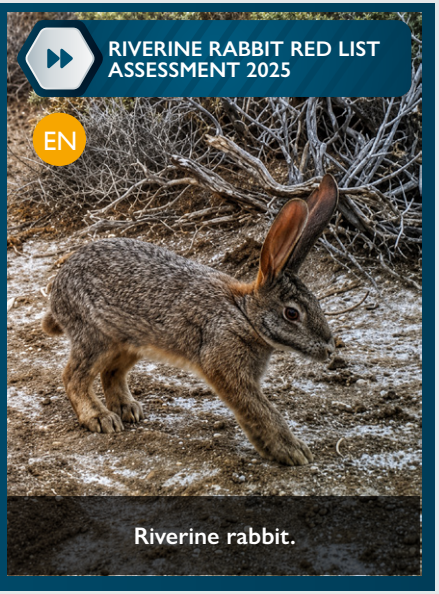
Pink sugarbush.

SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING
PRIORITY SPECIES: FAUNA

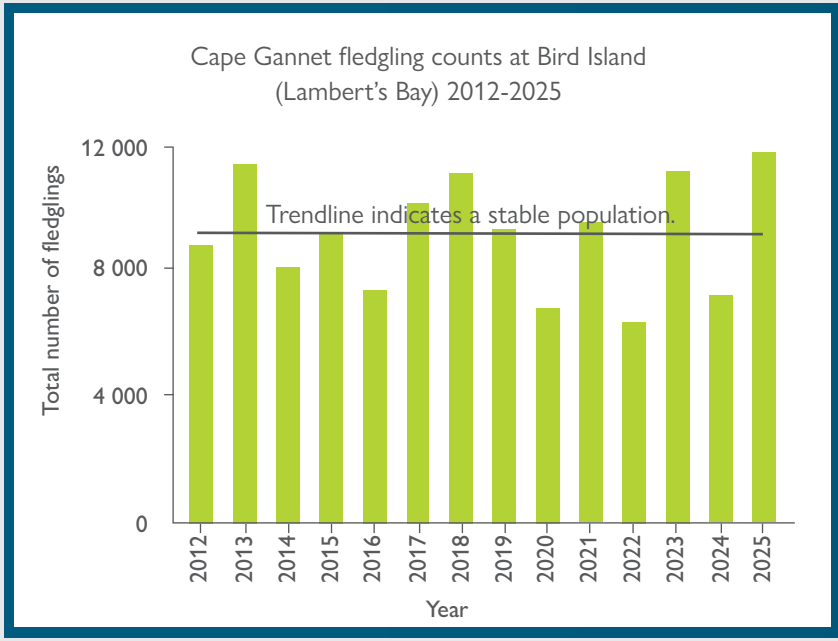


The riverine rabbit *(Bunolagus monticularis)*

New distribution and genetic data have led to the riverine rabbit being downlisted from Critically Endangered to Endangered. Originally believed to occur only in the Nama Karoo, the species is now known from two more subpopulations in the Western Cape, one of which is represented on Anysberg Nature Reserve. With the capture of a live rabbit in 2013, Anysberg was confirmed as the first formally protected area to support the species. Subsequent camera trap surveys have verified its presence and persistence at three sites on the reserve. Extensive surveys and stewardship initiatives by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and CapeNature have now resulted in the establishment of several privately owned nature reserves that safeguard the species and its habitat. Sanbona Wildlife Reserve, the largest of these, collects key data on the riverine rabbits in the Little Karoo.



Riverine rabbit.



The Cape Gannet *(Morus capensis)*

The Cape Gannet is an endemic seabird, breeding at three breeding localities in Namibia (Mercury Island, Ichaboe Island and Possession Island), and three in South Africa (Bird Island Lambert's Bay, Bird Island Algoa Bay and Malgas Island). Cape Gannets are dependent on the Benguela current marine ecosystem for sardine, anchovies, horse mackerel and other small pelagic fish. CapeNature has been monitoring the number of Cape Gannet fledglings leaving Bird Island Lambert's Bay since the early 2000s. During the 2025 breeding season, 11 663 fledglings left the island. However, Cape Gannet numbers have shown significant global decline, particularly in the northern part of their range and are thus listed as globally Endangered. It is believed that many of the gannets that occurred and bred on the Namibian islands have shifted further south and now reside and breed on Bird Island in Lambert's Bay. The regional red list status is therefore Vulnerable.

Cape gannets.

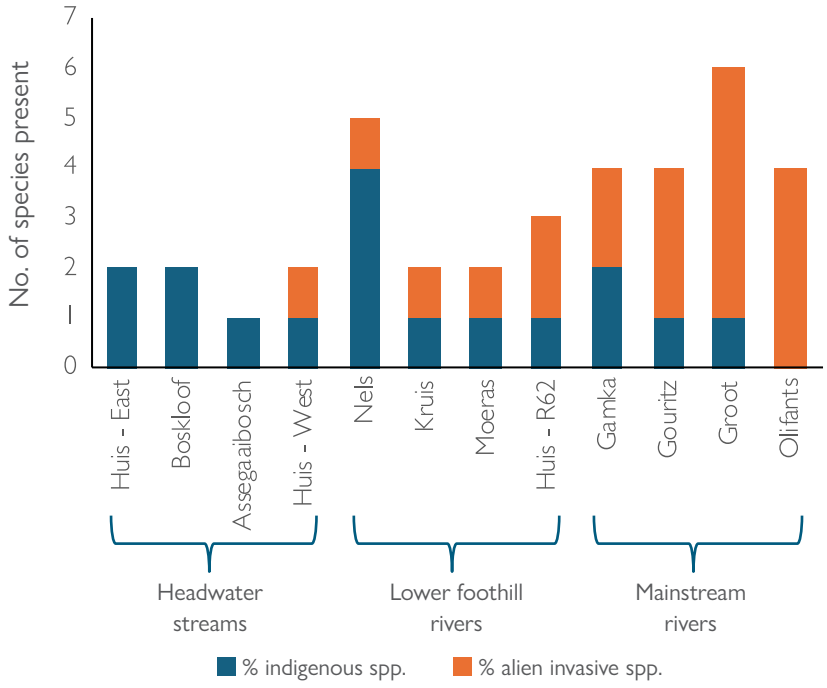
SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING
PRIORITY SPECIES: FAUNA

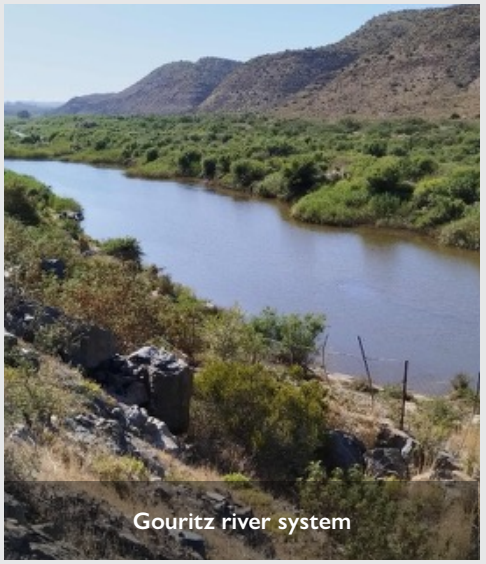
Surveillance: *Data collected through ad hoc observations or focal biodiversity surveys providing occurrence information used for determining species persistence or changes in distribution.*

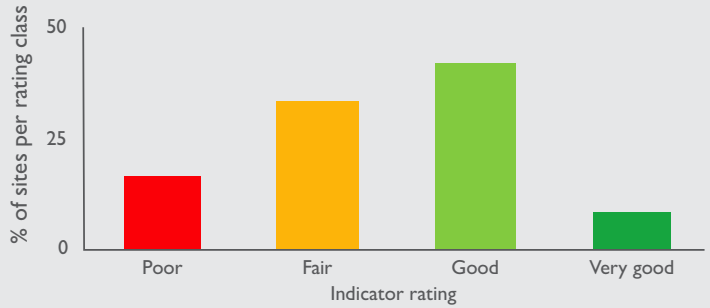
Gamkaberg Nature Reserve Complex Fish Survey

- The reserve complex is in the Gouritz River system, the largest river system in the Western Cape Province and home to seven indigenous freshwater fishes including an eel species. Several invasive fish species are present throughout the system.
- Twelve rivers both on- and off-reserve were surveyed between 2025-2026. Off-reserve sites were included if they were in priority catchments and/or home to endemic or Threatened species.
- Half of all sites sampled could be categorised into the "Good" and "Very good" categories in terms of the indicator rating for the Complex.
- Two new invasive species were detected in the Olifants River that were not detected in 2015. These were the mosquitofish and the sharptooth catfish.
- Lowland and mainstream indigenous species are highly vulnerable to the impacts of invasive fish.

Headwater streams remained largely free of invasive fish and were dominated by indigenous taxa, most notably the slender redfin. Lowland and mainstream rivers are more vulnerable to alien invasion and other anthropogenic pressures, which can result in the complete loss of indigenous species.




Gouritz river system



Slender redfin. Photo: Riaan van der Walt

Indicator ratings to define the condition of the freshwater fish community			
Poor	**Fair**	**Good**	**Very Good**
Indigenous fish species absent	50% or less of expected indigenous fish species present and/or only one age class present. Some invasive alien fish species present	>50% of expected indigenous fish species present and/or one or two age classes present. Some invasive alien fish species present	100% of expected indigenous fish species present and all three age classes present. No invasive alien fish species present

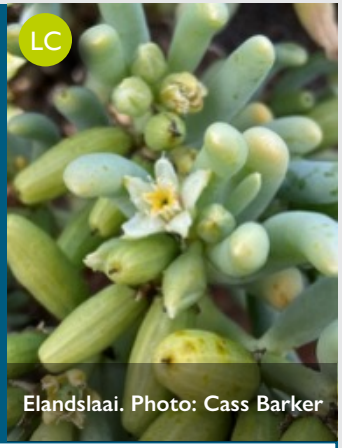
SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING
PRIORITY SPECIES: FLORA

Surveillance: *Data collected through ad hoc observations or focal biodiversity surveys providing occurrence information used for determining species persistence or changes in distribution.*

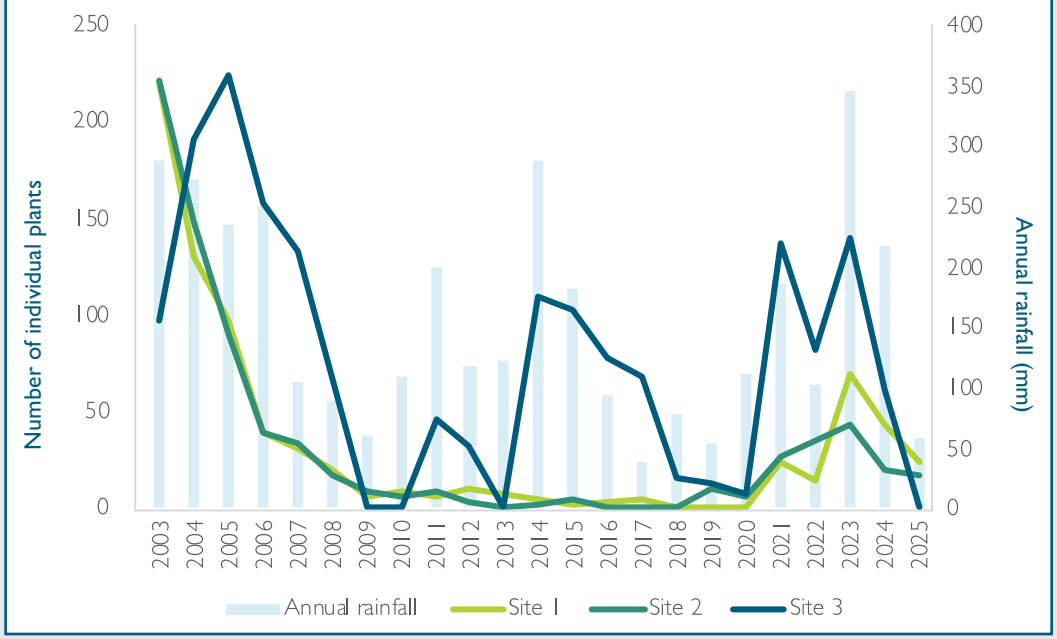
CapeNature maintains plant monitoring sites across the province to collect long-term species data. Site distribution follows CapeNature's prioritisation framework, with high-priority species monitored mostly annually to support adaptive management. Monitoring includes not only Threatened species but also indicator species that reflect ecosystem health.

Elandslaai *(Augea capensis)*, indigenous to South Africa but not to the Klein Karoo, has been found to invade overgrazed areas. Monitoring has been conducted at three sites for 21 years to determine if the species needs to be actively eradicated.

- Long-term monitoring dataset provides rare temporal depth.
- Elandslaai functions as indicators of veld condition.
- Dataset enables assessment of population persistence rather than short-term change.
- The population fluctuates rather than expands continuously; eradication is therefore not warranted.



Elandslaai. Photo: Cass Barker



CapeNature

CAPENATURE'S CONSERVATION DATA RESOURCES

CAPENATURE DATASETS

CapeNature collects data that fall into conservation management and legally-mandated categories:

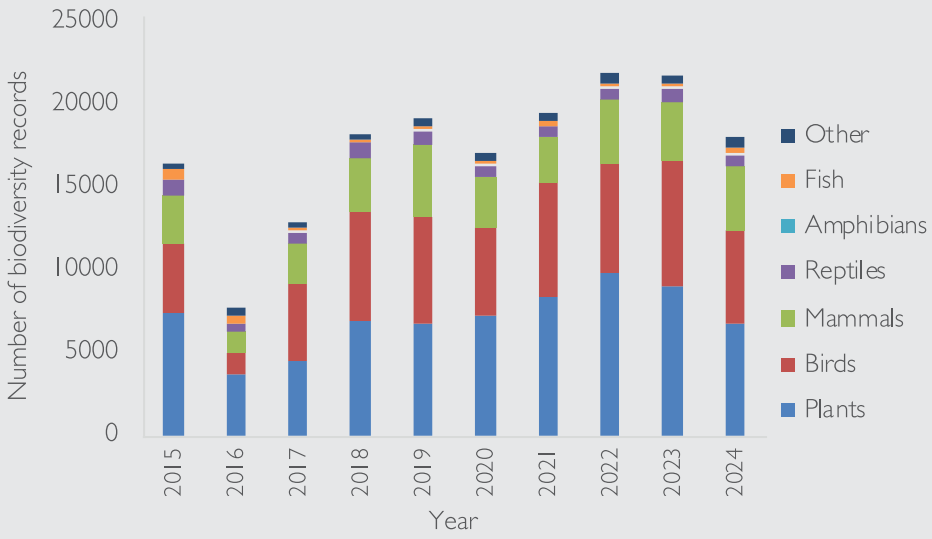
- Biodiversity distribution and population monitoring
- Conservation estate
- Invasive alien species monitoring and management
- Fire management, history and veld age
- Environmental law enforcement
- Ecological, operational and tourism infrastructure
- Land-use advice
- Ecosystem monitoring
- Biodiversity spatial planning

EXTERNAL DATASETS

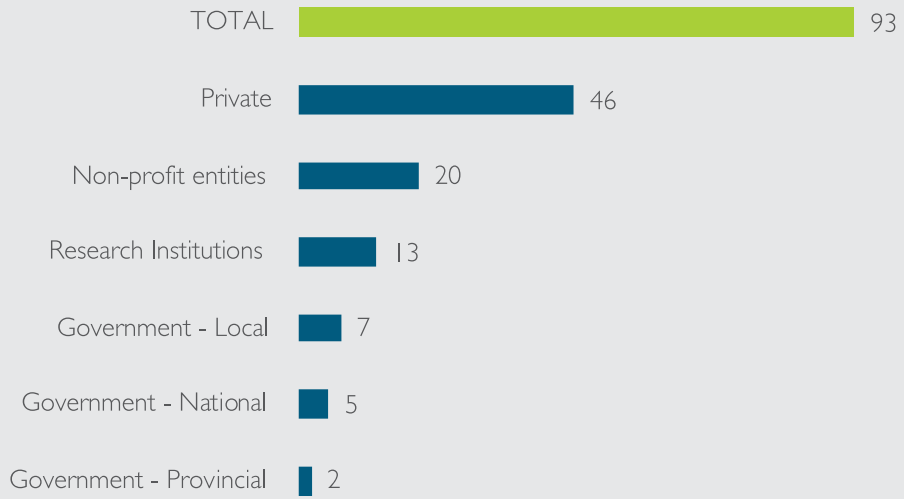
CapeNature relies on many partners and collaborators in various sectors who share and make data available to inform our planning and operations:

- Citizen science
- International data repositories
- All spheres of government
- Research institutions
- Academic institutions
- Non-profit entities

Biodiversity data records collected from 2015 to 2024

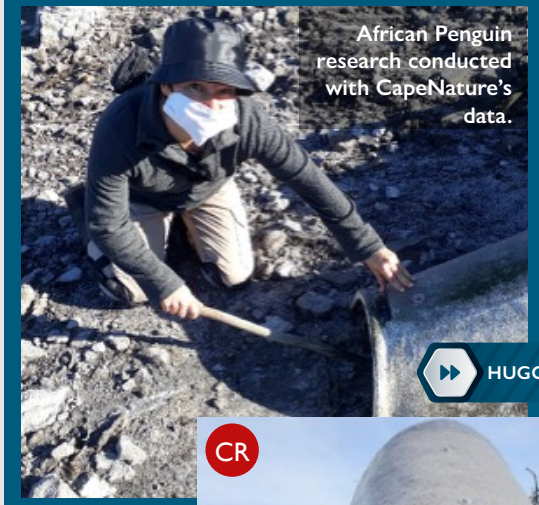


Data sharing agreements processed: 2025-26



DATA SHARING AGREEMENTS

Collaborating entities benefit from CapeNature's data resources and, in return, generate valuable insights that support conservation management. For example, an MSc thesis on the ecology and management of the critically endangered African Penguin, conducted under the guidance of the University of the Western Cape, used long-term CapeNature datasets to investigate colony dynamics. CapeNature provided penguin mortality, breeding success and chick condition data for the Dyer Island and Stony Point colonies. The research generated important insights that support improved management of these key African penguin colonies.



African penguin. Photo: Corlie Hugo

BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION
CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

IUCN red list for ecosystems and species

Ecosystem and species threat statuses in this report reflect national assessments coordinated by SANBI in partnership with taxon-specialist organisations, using IUCN criteria applied at a national scale. For species, the national framework includes additional categories for rare or declining species not at extinction risk.

IUCN RED LIST CRITERIA FOR ECOSYSTEMS
Assess risk of collapse of ecosystems

A	Distribution reduction
B	Restricted distribution & decline
C	Degradation of abiotic environment
D	Disruption to biotic processes
E	Quantitative estimate of risk of collapse

QUANTITATIVE THRESHOLDS

COLLAPSED	COLLAPSED
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
ENDANGERED	ENDANGERED
VULNERABLE	VULNERABLE
NEAR THREATENED	NEAR THREATENED
LEAST CONCERN	LEAST CONCERN

QUANTITATIVE THRESHOLDS

IUCN RED LIST CRITERIA FOR SPECIES
Assess risk of extinction of species

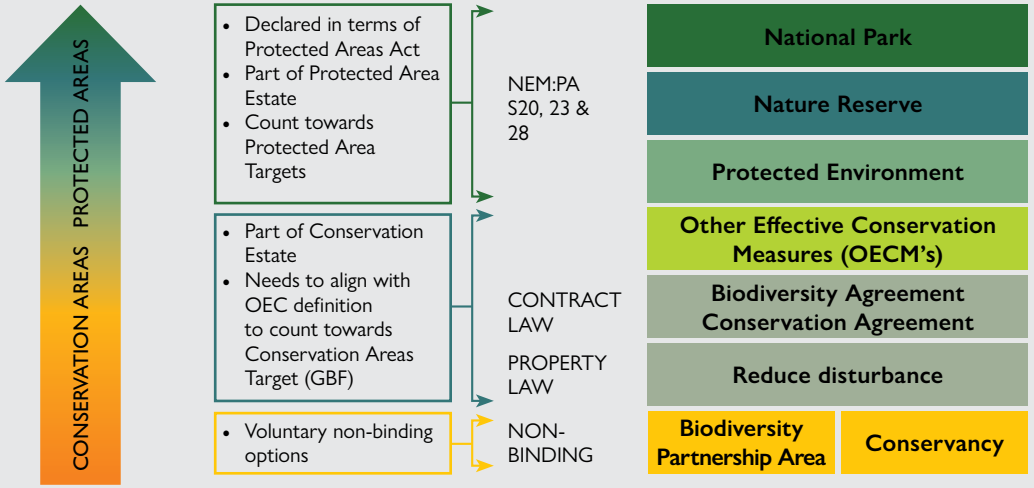
A	Population size reduction
B	Geographic range
C	Small population size and decline
D	Very small or restricted population
E	Quantitative analysis

IUCN RED LIST CRITERIA FOR ECOSYSTEMS

IUCN RED LIST CRITERIA FOR SPECIES

Protected Areas and Conservation Areas

WESTERN CAPE PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY 2025



Biodiversity Priority Areas

WESTERN CAPE BIODIVERSITY SPATIAL PLAN 2023

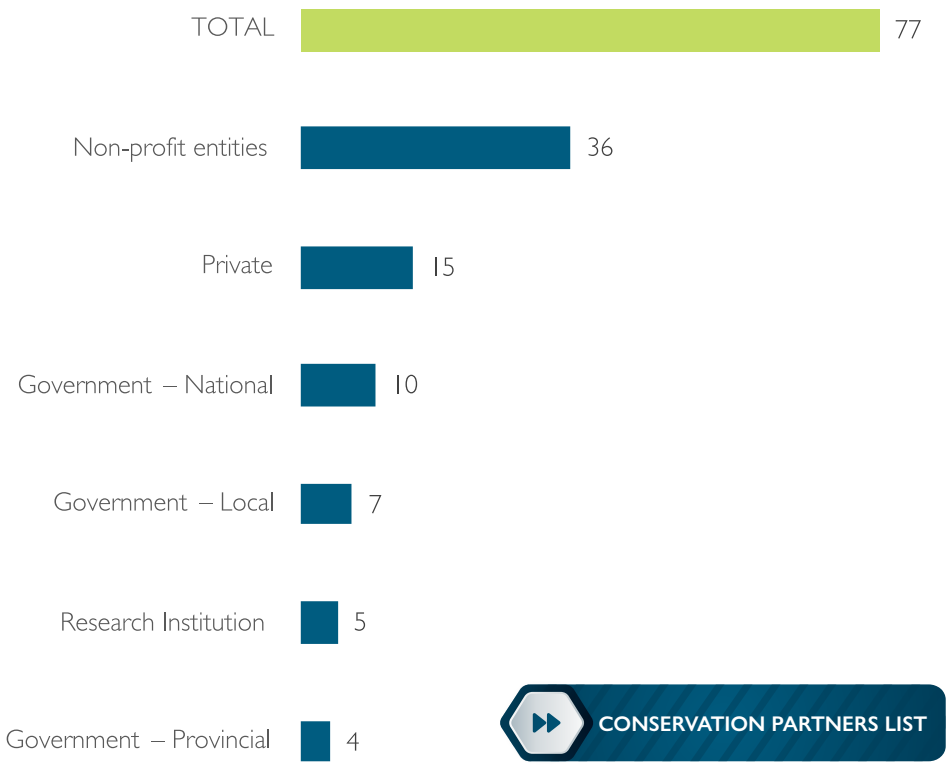
Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA)	Areas that are required to meet biodiversity targets for species, ecosystems or ecological processes and infrastructure.
Ecological Support Area (ESA)	Areas that are not essential for meeting biodiversity targets but play an important role in supporting the functioning of PAs or CBAs and are often vital for delivering ecosystem services.
Other Natural Areas (ONA)	Areas not identified as a priority in the current biodiversity spatial plan but retain most of their natural character and perform a range of biodiversity and ecological infrastructure functions.
No Natural Remaining (NNR)	Areas severely to completely modified by human activity to the extent that they are no longer natural, and do not contribute to biodiversity targets. These areas may still provide limited biodiversity and ecological infrastructure functions, even if they are never prioritised for conservation action.

CapeNature

PARTNERSHIPS
FOR CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

CapeNature acknowledges the need for stakeholder collaboration in sustaining biodiversity conservation and the Biodiversity Economy. CapeNature values and pursues working with communities, private landowners, civil society, conservation organisations, researchers, tertiary institutions and other spheres of government to deliver on conservation targets. CapeNature engages in valued, formal and informal working collaborations. CapeNature has 77 formal partnerships related specifically to biodiversity and conservation.

CapeNature partnerships 2025-2026



CONSERVATION PARTNERS LIST

Case studies: partners in protected area expansion and fire management

Table Mountain Fund:

The Table Mountain Fund has been supporting CapeNature's Protected Area Expansion and Stewardship programme since 2009. The Stewardship Technical Assistance project (through the Millenium Trust) has delivered incentives, technical assistance, capacity building, and knowledge sharing events to stewardship landowners over the past 16 years. This investment in the management effectiveness of Nature Reserves in private hands has been instrumental in the success and growth of the Western Cape's Protected Area estate.

WWF-SA:

WWF-SA contributed to 446 527 ha through land acquisition between 2014 and 2022 and have invested nearly R18 million in projects for protected area expansion and stewardship.

Fire partners:

Approximately R92mil total partnership funding was realised from Working on Fire, Volunteer Wildfire Services, Fire Protection Agencies, Municipalities, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and the Provincial Disaster Management Centre. These partnerships are indispensable and have contributed significantly to the management of 98 fires in the challenging 2025/26 period. Contributions include incident command management, aerial support, aircraft transport, firefighter training, personnel transport and rations, and equipment resources.

FURTHER READING
LINKS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

- AARDVARK RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025
- BIRD RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025
- CALEDON CONEBUSH RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2020
- CAPE GANNET RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025
- CAPE TOWN WATER FUND
- CAPEFARMMAPPER WEBSITE
- CITES COP 20: APPS. I, II & III WEBSITE
- CONSERVATION PARTNERS LIST
- CONSUMPTIVE USE OF WILD FLORA POLICY
- DURIE *et al.* 2024
- ECOSYSTEM THREAT STATUS - TERRESTRIAL REALM
- *ERICA CUNONIENSIS* RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2012
- GLOBAL WILDFIRE INFORMATION SYSTEM (GWIS)
- GOUKAMMA MARINE PROTECTED AREA REPORT
- HUGO 2022
- IUCN RED LIST CRITERIA FOR ECOSYSTEMS
- IUCN RED LIST CRITERIA FOR SPECIES
- IMPLEMENTATION NOTE REVISED LIST THREATENED ECOSYSTEMS
- MACCOA DUCK RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025
- MAMMAL RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025
- MANNING *et al.* 2025
- NATAL LONG-FINGERED BAT RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025
- NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT 2025
- PINK SUGARBUSH RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2019
- RED LIST STATISTICS 2024
- RIVERINE RABBIT RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2025
- SLENDER REDFIN RED LIST ASSESSMENT 2017
- SOUTH AFRICAN RED LIST OF ANIMALS
- SOUTH AFRICAN RED LIST OF PLANTS
- SOUTH AFRICAN ESTUARY INFORMATION SYSTEM
- SOUTH AFRICA NATIONAL LAND COVER
- SPECIES+ PORTAL
- STATUS OF MARINE FISHERY RESOURCES
- STRATEGIC WATER SOURCE AREAS
- TRANSPORT AND UTILISATION OF INDIGENOUS FISH POLICY
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT 2002
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT 2007
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT 2012
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT 2017
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT 2023
- WESTERN CAPE PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY 2025
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT 2024
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT 2025
- WESTERN CAPE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT 2026
- ZAREI *et al.* 2025
- 2025 NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

Online SoCR 2026 references:
To access the references the report, please scan the QR code provided on the left, or visit the website https://www.capenature.co.za/reference-resource.

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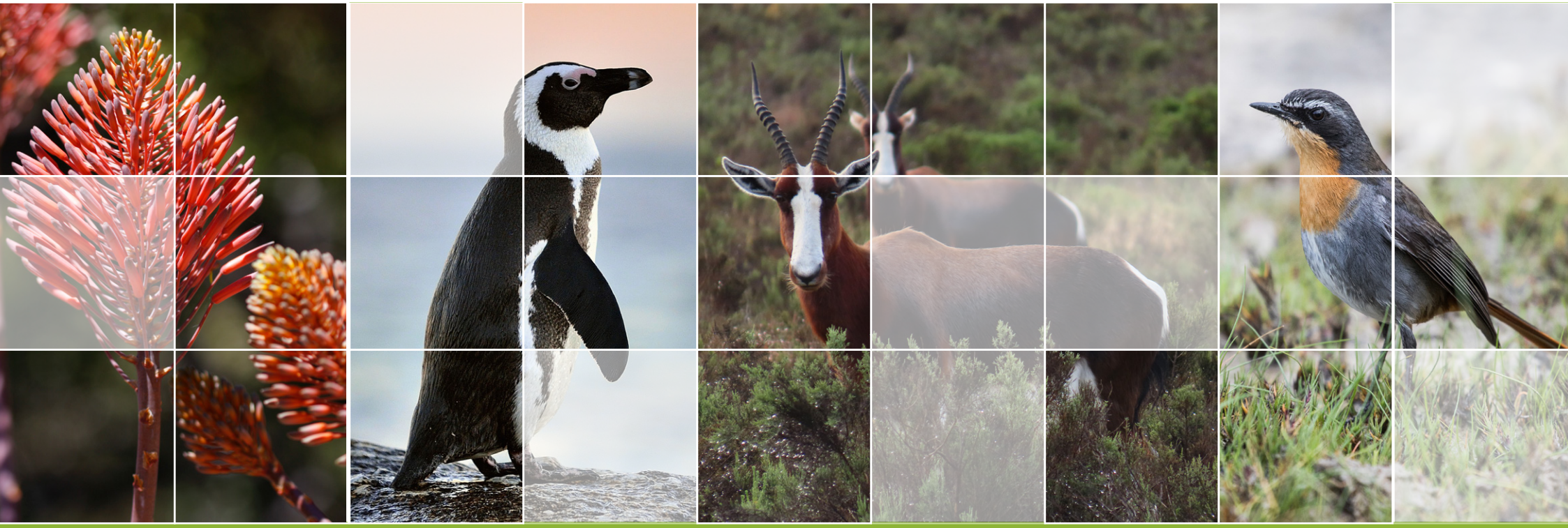

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