

North Africa, a biodiversity hotspot in urgent need of protection

So far **3613** species assessed, **between 9-18%* threatened**, but there are many more!

WHO Threatened species in North Africa: the current situation

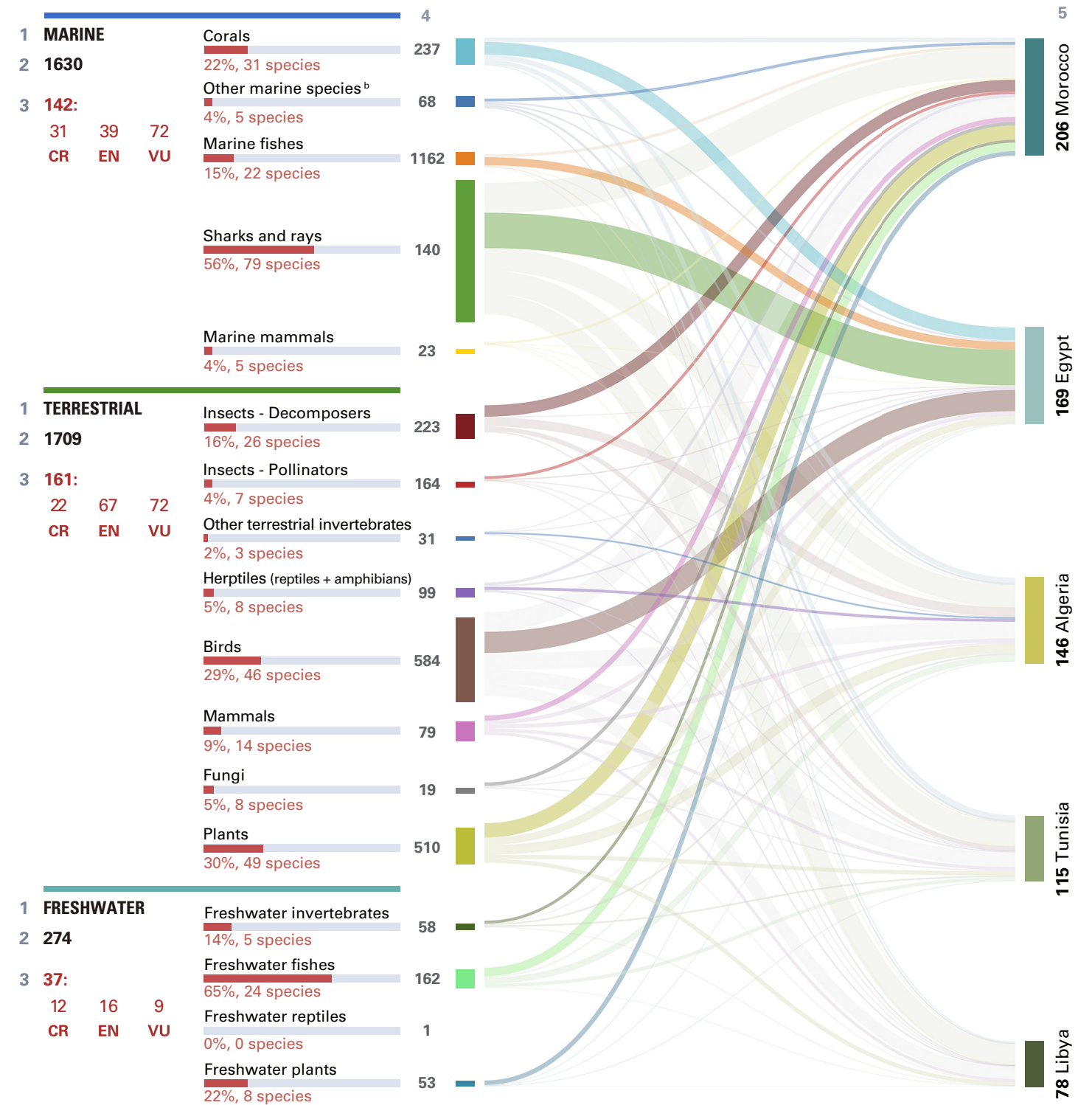
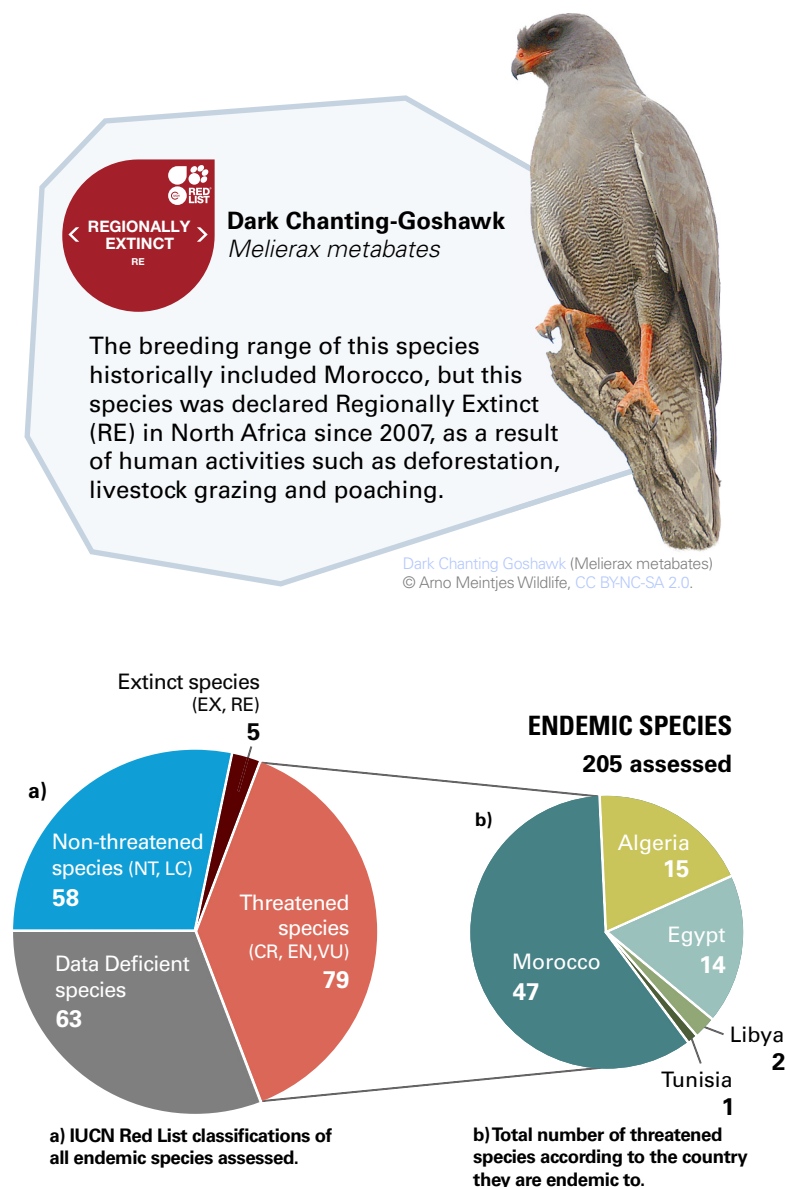
As of 2024, 3613 species have been assessed for their conservation status across North Africa, and approximately 1 in every 10** are threatened (CR, EN, VU). Out of the 340 species that have been classified as threatened, 80% are animals and 20% are plants and fungi. The highest percentage of threatened animals are marine species, including 79 sharks and rays, 31 corals and 22 fishes. On the other hand, of the 566 plant species that have been assessed, approximately 11%** have been classified as threatened, including 49 terrestrial plants and 8 freshwater plants.

Additionally, 4 North African species are known to be globally Extinct (EX), all of which are freshwater fishes.

Of the 200 species that are endemic to one of the North African countries, approximately 58%** are threatened.

WHERE How many threatened species are there in your country?

From East to West, when it comes to threatened species, each country has its share. In terms of distribution, the highest proportions of threatened species can be found in Morocco, Egypt and Algeria. This is true both for endemic species and for all species found in the region that have been assessed.



*This is the range of values between the lower bound, which assumes that none of the Data Deficient (DD) species are threatened, and the upper bound, which assumes that all DD species are threatened (IUCN 2016).

** This percentage is the mid-point value. It assumes that a similar relative proportion of the DD species are likely to be threatened, and provides the best estimation of the proportion of threatened species (IUCN 2016).

^a The designation of geographical entities and the presentation of the material do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IUCN or other participating organisations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

^b This category includes squids and octopus, bivalves and gastropods (snails, clams and mussels) and other marine invertebrates.

WHY

The main drivers of extinction

As a mostly semi-arid and arid environment, North Africa is one of the regions that is historically most vulnerable to natural stresses, and currently to climate change. Over the past two decades, major changes such as population growth, economic development and accelerated urbanisation have further exacerbated the most pressing drivers of biodiversity loss throughout the region - especially in coastal areas. In particular, the increased demand for freshwater, as a result of these major socioeconomic developments, is putting increased pressure on freshwater ecosystems.

According to the most recent data, the most significant threats to North African biodiversity are biological resource use, unsustainable agriculture and pollution - which are all being exacerbated by the effects of climate change.



Cuvier's Gazelle
Gazella cuvieri



© Cassia Dodman

What is biological resource use?

Biological resource use includes any human activities involving the harvesting of natural resources.

These include animal hunting, plant gathering, logging and wood harvesting and fishing.

HOW

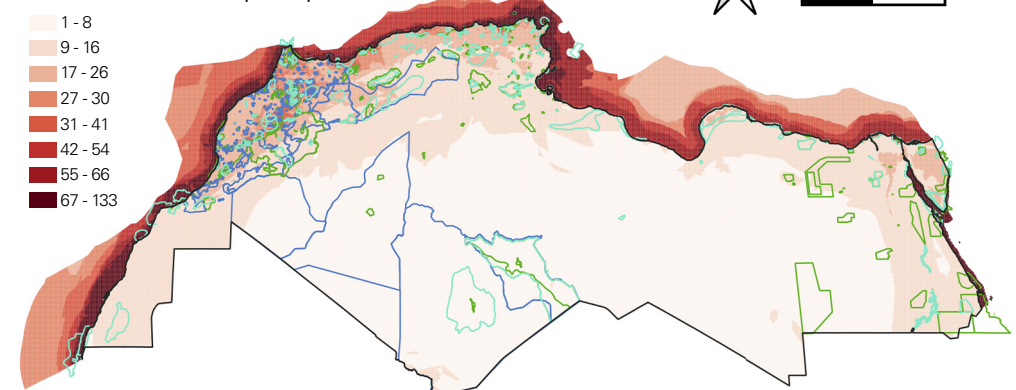
How can we address this decline?

Priority actions for biodiversity conservation

Protected and conserved areas are one of the cornerstones of biodiversity conservation. These area-based conservation measures, when effectively and equitably managed, are one of the key ways in which we can minimise biodiversity loss and reduce threats.

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are an important tool for guiding conservation and management decisions by ensuring that conservation efforts are focused in the places that matter the most. They identify where actions need to be taken to save species from extinction, helping to halt the decline in biodiversity and safeguard ecosystems. Moreover, recognising Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) is a key mechanism for maximising the coverage of conserved areas whilst also helping to mainstream biodiversity conservation on a national level.

Threatened species richness
Number of threatened species present



Source: BirdLife International (2024), UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2024)



What is a KBA?

KBAs are 'sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity' in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems.



What is a protected area?

A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space which is recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

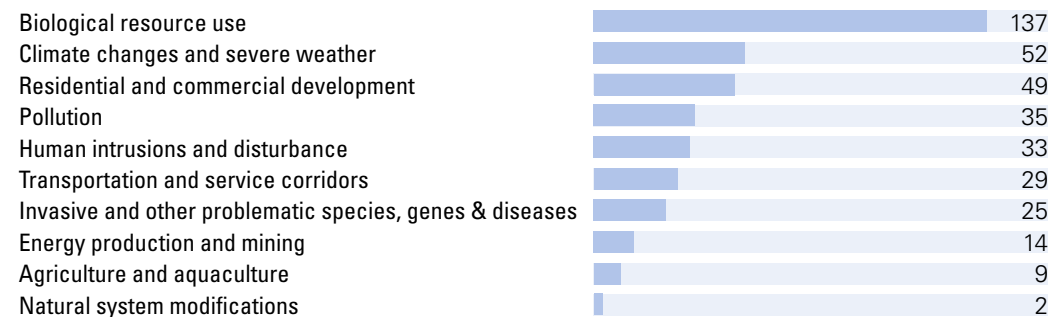


What is an OECM?

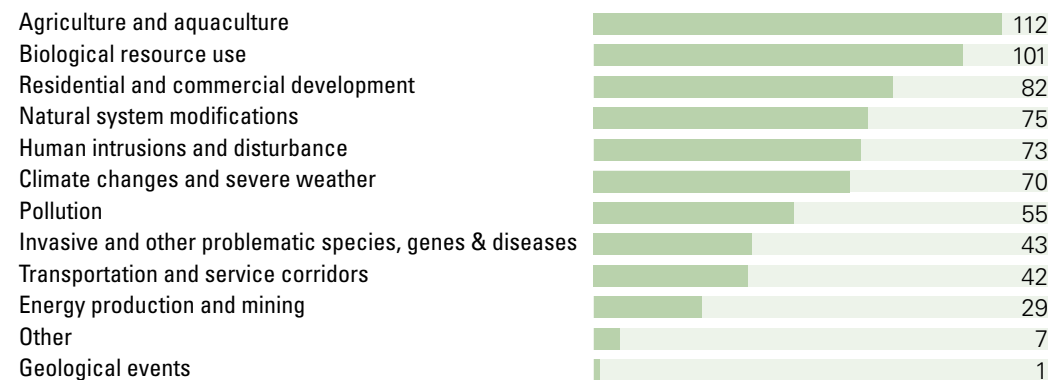
OECMs are geographically-defined areas distinct from traditional protected areas but managed in ways that yield positive, sustained, and long-term outcomes for biodiversity conservation, including associated ecosystem functions, services, and, when applicable, other locally significant values.

NUMBER OF ASSESSED SPECIES IN EACH REALM IMPACTED BY DIFFERENT THREAT TYPES, ACCORDING TO THE IUCN - CMP UNIFIED CLASSIFICATION OF DIRECT THREATS

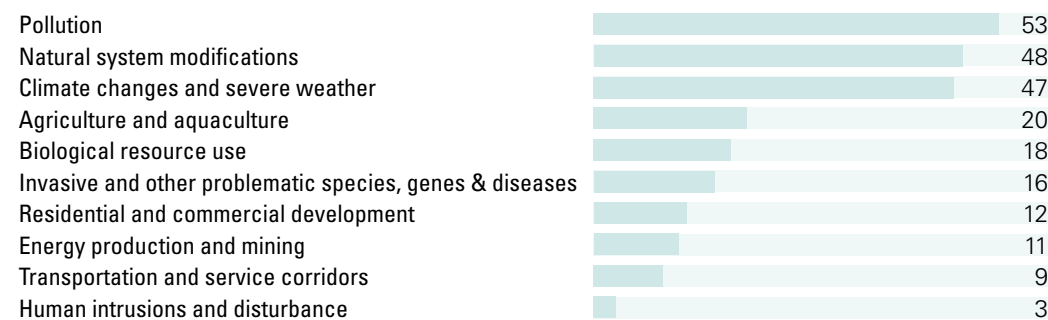
MARINE 144 threatened species



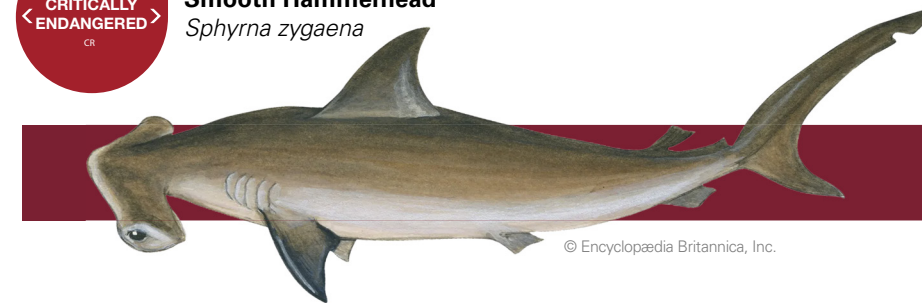
TERRESTRIAL 155 threatened species



FRESHWATER 56 threatened species



Smooth Hammerhead
Sphyrna zygaena



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TAKE ACTION

1. **Support the establishment and expansion of protected areas**, including marine protected areas, and the inclusion of KBAs within their boundaries.
2. **Improve the management plans** of protected areas to include species at risk of extinction.
3. **Enhance the identification of OECMs.**
4. **Promote transboundary collaboration** in the assessment, conservation and management of transboundary ecosystems and migratory species.
5. **Promote ecological connectivity** through the establishment and effective management of ecological networks and corridors, which interconnect protected and conserved areas.

References:

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IUCN (2023) The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2023-1. <https://www.iucnredlist.org>.

BirdLife International (2024) The World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas. Developed by the KBA Partnership: BirdLife International, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Amphibian Survival Alliance, Conservation International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Global Environment Facility, Rewild, NatureServe, Rainforest Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Wildlife Conservation Society and World Wildlife Fund. Available at www.keybiodiversityareas.org. [Accessed 01/04/2024].

UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2024). Protected Planet: The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)/The World Database on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (WD-OECM)[On-line], [April 2024]. Cambridge, UK: UNEP-WCMC and IUCN. Available at: www.protectedplanet.net



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