

WDPCA Data Status Report

The World Database on Protected and Conserved Areas (WDPCA)

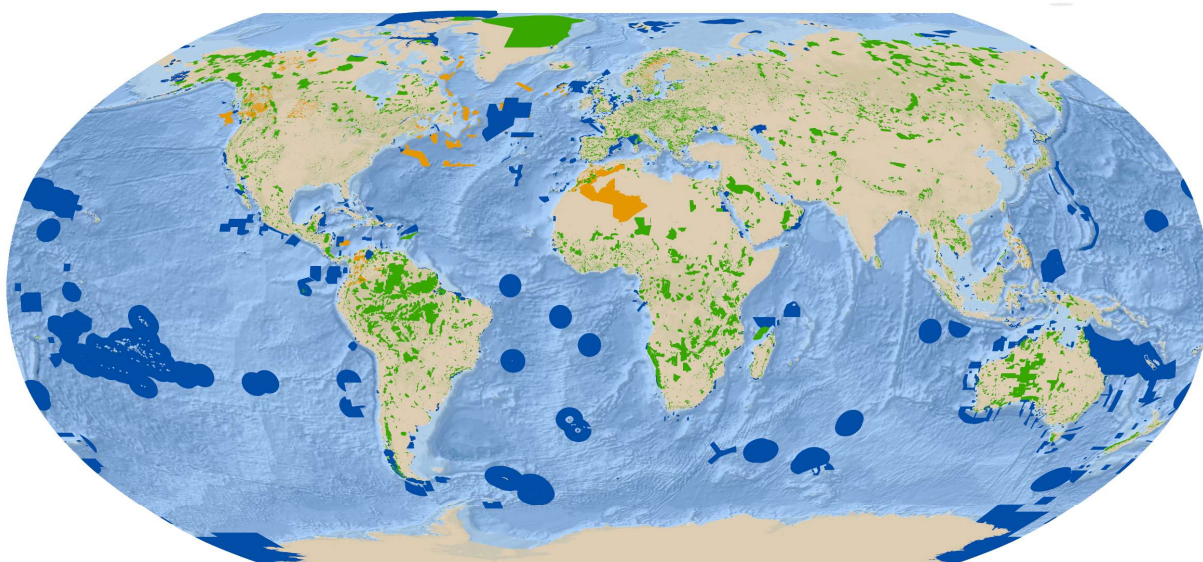
December 2025

About this Report, protected and conserved areas

The WDPCA is the most comprehensive global dataset on terrestrial and marine protected and conserved areas, incorporating data compiled and managed by UNEP-WCMC, in collaboration with governments, non-governmental organisations, and other data-providers. The WDPCA dataset is not necessarily a complete representation of all the protected and conserved areas which have been designated in country. The quality of the WDPCA depends on the accessibility of accurate, comprehensive, up-to-date protected and conserved areas information from data holders.

This report describes the current status of data in the WDPCA for all sites included in the December 2025 monthly release.

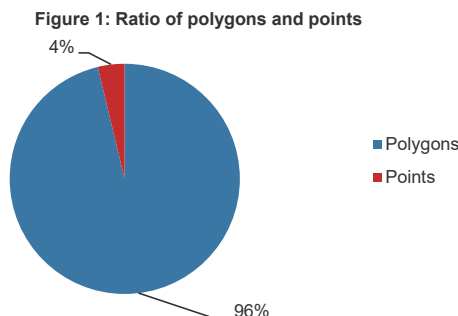
Map showing protected and conserved areas in the WDPCA



Source: UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2025). Protected Planet: The World Database on Protected and Conserved Areas (WDPCA) [On-line], December 2025, Cambridge, UK: UNEP-WCMC. Available at www.protectedplanet.net

Protected and conserved areas data in the WDPCA

There are 314,385 protected and conserved area records stored in the WDPCA. 278,018 are national-level protected and conserved areas with 35,939 designated under international and regional agreements or conventions. 96% of the data have boundaries in polygon format, with the remaining 4% depicted in point format (i.e. a single latitude and longitude point for the protected area). See Figure 1.



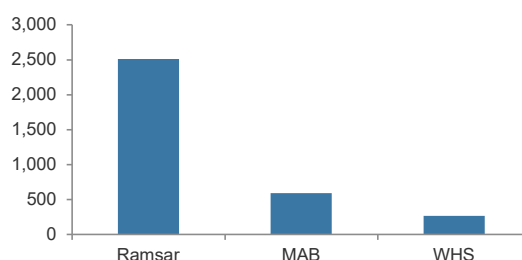
Of the 314,385 protected and conserved areas, 17,256 (5%) include a marine or coastal component. These protected and conserved areas may be either partially or completely within the marine environment.

Data for protected and conserved areas designated under international conventions and agreements

There are 3,366 protected and conserved areas in the WDPCA designated under international conventions or agreements.

266 are World Heritage sites (WHs), 2,511 are Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance, 589 are UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves (MAB). See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Sites designated under international conventions and agreements



Data for protected and conserved areas designated under regional conventions and agreements

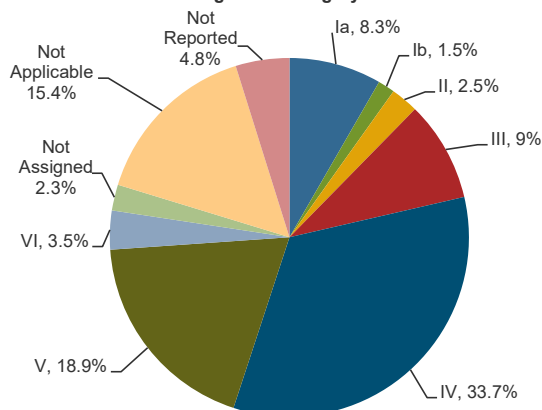
There are 32,535 protected areas and 38 conserved areas in the WDPCA designated under regional conventions or agreements. For protected areas, 29,205 are Natura2000 sites, 740 sites are designated under regional seas conventions, 2,578 are Areas of Special Conservation Interest (Emerald Network) and 12 are ASEAN Heritage Parks. For conserved areas, all 38 sites are designated under regional fisheries commissions/organizations.

Data for national-level protected and conserved areas

There are 278,018 national-level protected and conserved area records in the WDPCA. IUCN Management Categories have been reported for 215,234 of these records. The remaining 56,323 are recorded as Not Reported and Not Assigned. All 6,461 conserved areas are recorded as Not Applicable as these categories do not apply.

Figure 3 shows the allocation of IUCN Management Categories across national-level protected and conserved area records in the WDPCA (numbers of sites in each category are shown in Table 2 at the end of this report).

Figure 3: National-level protected and conserved areas by IUCN Management Category



Data for areas protected by local communities, indigenous people and private entities, through non-legal means

There are 428 records in the WDPCA that are established through non-legal means.

Completeness of WDPCA Data Attributes

The WDPCA requires that a minimum set of information is provided with each protected and conserved area record. These data attributes are defined by the WDPA and WD-OECM Data Standard.

Table 1 shows the extent to which key attributes have been reported by data providers for all protected and conserved area records in the WDPCA.

Table 1: Completeness of selected attributes

Attribute	Completeness
IUCN Category	77%
Status (designated or proposed)	99%
Status Year	89%
Governance Type	94%
Management Authority	85%
Link to Management Plan	15%

The WDPA and WD-OECM User Manual 1.6 can be viewed at https://resources.unep-wcmc.org/products/WCMC_CB007.

Data sources in the WDPCA

Data for protected and conserved area records in the WDPCA have been obtained or validated from approximately 400 sources.

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of when protected area records in the WDPCA were last updated or validated.

Data for protected and conserved areas designated under international agreements and conventions have been sourced from the relevant convention secretariat. This includes: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Ramsar Convention Secretariat and UNESCO Man and The Biosphere Programme.

Data for national-level protected and conserved areas in the WDPCA have been sourced from national authorities wherever possible. Information may also be supplemented by data from other agencies or organisations working in each country. As part of the update process for national data, national authorities are given the opportunity to review, validate and, where necessary, edit all existing WDPCA records for their country. All updates to the WDPCA by national authorities take priority over other sources and are considered to be the authoritative version.

There are 689 records in the WDPCA with no reported source.

Figure 4: Percentage of records updated or validated by year

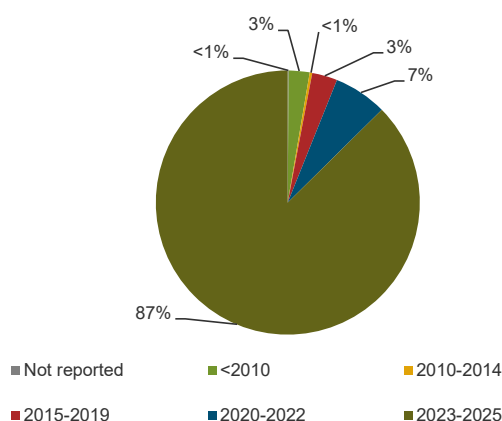


Table 2: WDPCA Data (as of December 2025)

	Polygons	Points	Total
Realm			
Terrestrial	285,722	11,407	297,129
Coastal*	10,536	0	10,536
Marine	6,269	451	6,720
* under validation by data providers			
Status			
Designated	297,645	11,420	309,065
Proposed	1,183	100	1,283
Established	3,667	328	3,995
Status not reported	32	10	42
Areas designated under international conventions and agreements	2,753	613	3,366
UNESCO World Heritage sites (natural or mixed)	2,183	328	2,511
Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)	304	285	589
UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves	266	0	266
Areas designated under regional conventions, agreements and commissions	32,572	1	32,573
Areas of Special Conservation Interest, Emerald Network (Bern Convention)	2,577	1	2,578
ASEAN Heritage Park	12	0	12
Baltic Sea Protected Area (HELCOM)	177	0	177
Marine Protected Area (CCAMLR)	6	0	6
Marine Protected Area (OSPAR)	494	0	494
Site of Community Importance (Habitats Directive)	2,268	0	2,268
Special Areas of Conservation (Habitats Directive)	21,503	0	21,503
Special Protection Area (Birds Directive)	5,434	0	5,434
Specially Protected Area (Cartagena Convention)	29	0	29
Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance (Barcelona Conv.)	34	0	34
Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM)	38	0	38
National-level protected and conserved areas: IUCN Management Category	267,101	10,917	278,018
Ia: Strict Nature Reserve	23,093	66	23,159
Ib: Wilderness Area	4,219	4	4,223
II: National Park	6,775	125	6,900
III: Natural Monument or Feature	18,429	6,694	25,123
IV: Habitat / Species Management Area	92,260	1,342	93,602
V: Protected Landscape / Seascape	52,319	134	52,453
VI: Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	9,656	118	9,774
Not Applicable	6,452	9	6,461
Not Assigned	41,713	1,202	42,915
Not Reported	12,185	1,223	13,408
Areas protected by local communities, indigenous people and private entities, through non-legal means	101	327	428
Established	101	327	428
Total number of records in the WDPCA	302,527	11,858	314,385

WDPCA Quality Indicators

The percentage of records with boundaries in polygon format

The WDPCA stores all records with spatial (location) data. These data can be polygons which represent the boundaries of the protected area, or a single latitude/longitude point which shows the general location of the protected and conserved area. This indicator shows the percentage of records with boundaries - the preferred spatial data.



The percentage of data attributes which have been reported by the data provider

Each record in the WDPCA has 25 fields for which data attributes are requested. This indicator shows the weighted percentage of data fields which have been reported, based on the minimum and complete attributes.



The percentage of records updated or validated by the data provider in the last 5 years

UNEP-WCMC sets a target to update each record in the WDPCA at least every five years. This indicator shows the percentage of records updated in the last 5 years (December 2020 to December 2025).



The percentage of records where the area of the polygon is within 5% of the area reported

The area (km²) reported for a protected and conserved area may sometimes differ from the area of the boundary polygon provided, possibly indicating a discrepancy within the information submitted. This indicator shows the percentage of records where the area of the polygon is within a threshold of 5% of the area reported. The threshold allows for differences due to projections and software used for calculating the GIS area.

