

Freshwater biodiversity workshops pave the way for further research in the Mediterranean Basin

Title

BirdLife's Mediterranean Basin Regional Implementation Team (RIT) has an update from their very first grantee within the hotspot.

A \$248,332 grant was awarded to the [International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources \(Global Species Programme; Freshwater Biodiversity Unit\)](#) in July 2012. The grant, *Freshwater Biodiversity Assessment and Conservation Priorities for the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot*, is funding the research and mapping of ecological data for key freshwater species groups in the eastern Mediterranean, to identify Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and assess human use. A key output of the grant is organising stakeholder workshops throughout the hotspot, focusing on the identification of KBAs, sustainable management techniques, conservation actions, and organizations to take the lead on conservation actions at each site.

The freshwater KBAs will be entered into the WBDB enabling them to be publicly recognised alongside the IBAs, AZEs, and other terrestrial KBAs. This represents an important step forwards in the protection of freshwater biodiversity in the face of development. IUCN has now carried out two workshops to validate and create awareness of proposed sites. The first of these was the [IUCN workshop on Freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). In this workshop experts compiled information for 90 freshwater KBAs, within a network of river and lake catchments; identifying the species present, the major threats, priority actions, and potential champions in a position to raise the profile of each KBA site.

The next step is to complete the data sets for each site, aiming to provide the foundation for the creation of a representative Protected Areas network for freshwater species, as well as providing information on important sites for freshwater biodiversity for decision makers involved in the conservation and sustainable management of freshwater biodiversity in the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot.

The second workshop was the [IUCN Red List review workshop on freshwater biodiversity of the eastern Mediterranean](#), hosted in Jordan. The eastern part of the Mediterranean Basin is the only region within this Hotspot where the conservation status of freshwater biodiversity is unknown. Draft Red List assessments and distribution maps for almost 500 species of freshwater fishes, molluscs and plants were reviewed by biodiversity experts from across the region and Europe. The next steps are to finalise the species assessments, digitise species distribution maps and finish the review process for taxa unable to be looked at during the workshop. When completed, this data will be used to identify freshwater KBAs by running similar workshop as already undertaken in the Balkans. This grant term will end in June 2014 and further updates will be included in the RIT's monthly e-newsletter.

For more information about this or the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot please contact the RIT on CEPF-Med-RIT@birdlife.org or visit their website: www.birdlife.org/community/cepf-mediterranean.

About the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund - The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.