First round of workshops

November 2014

Report

Summary

The public presentation and the first technical workshops of the BEST III project were carried out in five cities from the three Macaronesian archipelagos: Angra do Heroísmo and Ponta Delgada (Azores), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and La Laguna (Canary Islands), and Funchal (Madeira). In each place the work consisted of a session for the public presentation of the project and a technical workshop where the KBA definition methodology and the current state of data collection and analysis was presented, followed by a structured discussion around the workshop's objectives. In total 80 people have been mobilized, mostly from the public and research sectors, but also including civil society and the private sector.

The main highlights of this series of meetings are

1. Consolidation of the visibility of the project, and of the stakeholder engagement with it. In particular, regional governments in all the 3 archipelagos are aware and support BEST III.
2. Perceived need to reinforce the buy-in of stakeholders (mainly researchers) who have invested in previous compilations of research and conservation needs and who may see this process as a redundancy, or even a menace to what was built previously.
3. Secured access to distribution data and to maps of classified areas.

The outcome of this consultation process is very positive. In our view the key actors in biodiversity research and conservation have been involved and are aware of the BEST III goals and of the methodology involved. In particular, regional governments are aware of the project and look at it very positively, and researchers are engaged and motivated. Workshop participants have provided important information and suggestions, and have shown their motivation to continue collaboration with the project. From these actors we believe it will be possible to reach others, whose different competences and knowledge will be needed for the subsequent phases of the project.

Methodology

In each place the work consisted of a 30 minute general presentation of the project (see presentations on the Macaronesian Hub website), followed by a period of discussion. The technical workshop consisted of a 30 minute presentation to introduce the methodology of KBA definition and to present the work done by the Macaronesian Hub and the objectives of the workshop, followed by a structured discussion around each of these objectives.

The workshops were carried out on the following locations and dates:

Date	Place	# participants public session	# participants technical session
10 Nov	Angra do Heroísmo Terceira Island, Azores, (campus of the University of the Azores)	9	8
11 Nov	Ponta Delgada São Miguel Island, Azores (campus of the University of the Azores)	22	9
18 Nov	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria Gran Canaria Island, Canary Islands, (campus of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria)	14	3
19 Nov	La Laguna Tenerife Island, Canary Islands (campus of the University of La Laguna)	12	11
24 Nov	Funchal Madeira Island, Madeira (Clube Naval do Funchal)	14	10

In total 80 persons were mobilized, covering the public and research sectors, as well as the civil society. Annex 1 gives the lists of presences at each workshop.

Evaluation sheets were provided in all sessions. The overall rating exceeded 4/5. The opportunity for cooperation between institutions, the identification of knowledge gaps and the potential funding were some of the positive comments received. On the negative side, participants pointed out the low dissemination of the event and the reduced previous information received, and many questioned particulars of the methodology used. A summary of the answers received has been compiled in Annex 2.

Issues raised and decisions taken

Legal value of KBAs

A common initial misconception was that the project aimed at establishing yet another protection figure. We made clear that the delineation of KBAs had no management implications, but was a tool to be used in the context of the future project selection procedures. Nevertheless, in the Azores, the representative of the Nature Conservation department expressed interest in the process, particularly if it would lead to the identification of interesting areas that are presently not protected. On a similar note, in the Canaries our attention was called to the work being done in La Palma Island, where the Biosphere Reserve consortium has been leading an extensive monitoring and analysis program with implications for the reconfiguration of the marine protected areas on that island (see, *e.g.*, the paper by Martín-Garcia et al. 2014[1]). It is therefore possible that the present effort of KBA definition will contribute to and reinforce ongoing work of redesigning the protected areas network.

Methodological issues

Some researchers expressed their view that if one objective of BEST is to preserve ecosystem services, then the focus should not be only be on rare and endangered species but on those that are functionally important.

Several stakeholders also expressed concern over the bias in the methodology towards particularly well-known groups. Invertebrates, for instance, which constitute the largest majority of endemic species, will not get the conservation focus they need. This was aggravated by the perception that previous collective work in compiling lists of priority species for conservation[2] is being wasted and BEST III is starting from scratch.

There were several comments on the Red List itself:

- Most of the species listed belong to particularly well known groups (birds, plants)

[1] Martín-García, L., Sangil, C., Brito, A., & Barquín-Diez, J. Identification of conservation gaps and redesign of island marine protected areas.*Biodiversity and Conservation*, 1-19.
[2] Martín, J. L., M. Arechavaleta, P. A. V. Borges & B. Faria (eds.). 2008. Top 100. Las 100 especies amenazadas prioritarias de gestión en la región europea biogeográfica de la Macaronesia. Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Ordenación Territorial, Gobierno de Canarias. 500 pp..

- In the Azores, there was immediate communication of the Government's availability to push for a revision of the Red Lists to include existing information on lesser known groups.

- The Red List criteria need to be adapted to the particular case of small, isolated islands with high endemism rates. Stakeholders have claimed that the need to adapt the criteria has been mentioned in several occasions[3], with no success.
- There are inconsistencies in the specific/sub-specific status of entries in the Red List. The entries for *Euphorbia stygiana* or *Pericallis malvifolia*, for instance, refer in fact to one of the Azorean subspecies of each taxa.

Sources of distribution data

In Macaronesia, species distribution data has been compiled from scientific publications, thesis, government reports and other authoritative sources using the dedicated ATLANTIS software. The resulting database is, in the Azores[4] and the Canaries[5], freely available on the internet. These databases are a major step forward, but it was recognized that important information, mainly primary records and untreated data, is not being captured in the process. This issue is being addressed at the government level through requirements being included in present and future research contracts and sampling permissions stating that all the geographic information dealing with species distribution must be transmitted to the granting authorities.

BEST III will contribute to this concentration effort by using the ATLANTIS data as its main source, and requesting researchers or other actors wishing to contribute geographical information to do so through the official channels. Access to the information on the Madeira database (which mainly concerns vascular plants and terrestrial gastropods) will be granted by the respective Regional Government. In Portugal, an additional source of distribution data that will be used is that produced for the Natura 2000 requirements.

Criteria for extracting data from the ATLANTIS databases

The ATLANTIS databases compile distribution records from various sources. The date of the observation is recorded, and a level of precision is assigned to the record, from 1 (meaning the position is traceable to a 500*500 m grid) to 5 (when the only geographical information is presence in the archipelago)[6]. To use this information for KBA delineation, therefore, it is necessary to decide on the time frame and the level of precision to use. It was agreed that the same criteria should be used in all regions, but that they could vary between taxonomic groups. One initial suggestion was that the 1990s should be an adequate threshold for terrestrial species and that precision 1 should be selected for plants and invertebrates, while 1+2 would be adequate for vertebrates. Spatial precision should be always 500*500m. Additional expert consultation will be sought for this.

[3] e.g. Cardoso, P., Borges, P. A., Triantis, K. A., Ferrandez, M. A., & Martin, J. L. (2011). Adapting the IUCN Red List criteria for invertebrates. *Biological conservation*, *144*(10), 2432-2440.
[4] http://www.atlantis.angra.uac.pt/atlantis/common/index.jsf
[5] http://www.biodiversidadcanarias.es/atlantis/
[6] Manual de usuário de Atlantis 3.1, http://www.biodiversidadcanarias.es/atlantis/Manual.pdf

Delineation of KBAs

The methodology of Langhammer et al. was understood by all (with caveats, see above) and will be implemented in the following steps:

a) Integrate IBA and AZE areas
b) Evaluate existing protected areas, applying the Langhammer et al. criteria to the distribution data. Make preliminary KBA delineations, discuss and validate them with expert opinion.
c) Ask experts for additional KBA proposals, to be discussed and validated with experts. Particular attention will be given to marine and freshwater areas, for which the Langhammer et al. methodology is not well adapted.

Having online access to all the geographic information (species ranges, protected areas) would greatly facilitate the communication about species distribution and KBA delineation. The possibility of building a dedicated geoportal is therefore being analyzed, with the support of the Azores Government.

The possibility was raised on the Azores workshops of using specific GIS tools for KBA delineation[7]. This was seen as something to be explored in the future.

Strategy

The last chapter of the ecosystem profile, and the main reason for the entire exercise, is a 5-year investment strategy. Below are some notes on issues raised during the workshop that must be kept in mind in the process of building the investment strategy. Some of them must be discussed within the BEST Team in the short term.

Funding and decision processes

- The INTERREG mechanism was seen as a potential source of funding for BEST III projects, in the areas where it is applicable.
- If priorities are being developed at the level of biogeographical regions, how can inter-regional projects be proposed (and funded)?
- There is potential for conflict between BEST strategies and the public policies of ORs and OCTs, e.g. when the conservation value of a site is being threatened by actions sanctioned by public authorities. How can this be accommodated in the ecosystem profile?
- How will project selection be made? Does the BEST Team decide alone, or is there stakeholder (namely government) involvement?
- Strategy should not be restricted to KBAs, but to consider other conservation needs, like fisheries management.

[7] Such as those reviewed in Sarkar, Sahotra, et al. Biodiversity conservation planning tools: present status and challenges for the future. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, 2006, 31: 123-159.

Conservation actions

- Habitat restoration was seen by many participants as the priority action in many areas. This includes control of invasive species.

Research priorities

- To reduce the taxonomic bias of IUCN's Red List, based on existing prioritization suggestions[8].
- Baseline studies of abundance and distribution of endemic species.
- Basic taxonomy studies, including the genetic component.
- Take into account existing priorities, such as those discussed within NetBiome-CSA and emanating from the Guadeloupe Conference.
- Relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem services, including functional biodiversity.
- Biological control of invasive species.
- Cetacean movements in the Macaronesia

Next steps

In December

- Constitution of the Advisory Group
- Define time frame and precision of the species distribution data, export the shapefiles
- Compile lists of experts per taxonomic group
- Start work on the socio-economic part of the EP

In January, 2015

- Implement geoportal
- First draft of the EP

By March

- Make a preliminary delimitation of KBAs and circulate it for comments and suggestions of additional KBAs and non-site conservation priorities.

By May

- KBA prioritization

[8] e.g Gerlach, Justin, et al. Prioritizing non-marine invertebrate taxa for Red Listing. *Journal of Insect Conservation*, 2014, 18.4: 573-586.

ANNEX 1

List of participants on the November 2014 workshops, per locality, affiliation, session (public or technical) and sectorial provenance (knowledge/research, non-governamental organization, public or private)

			Sector			
Name	**Entity**	**Session**	**Knowl**	**NGO**	**Publ**	**Priv.**
Azores (Terceira Island, Nov. 10)						
Cândida Mendes	Azores University - Geva	P/T	1			
Diana Pereira	Azores University	P/T	1			
Eduardo Dias	Azores University	P/T	1			
Enésima Pereira Mendonça	Azorean Biodiversity Group - Azores University	P/T	1			
Maria Conceição Rodrigues	Azorina	P	1			
Maria Teresa Ferreira	Azores University	P/T	1			
Nuno Vaz Álvaro	Azores University -PhD Student	P/T	1			
Paulo Borges	Azorean Biodiversity Group - Azores University	P/T	1			
Rui Bento Elias	Azores University	P/T	1			
	Sub-total	*9*	*9*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Azores (São Miguel Island Island,Nov. 11)						
Afonso Prestes	Azores University	P	1			
Ana C. Costa	CIBIO-Açores; Azores University	P	1			
Ana Isabel Neto	CIRN; Azores University	P	1			
Ana Moreira	SRAA - Gab. Planeamento	T			1	
António Frias Martins	Azores University	P	1			
Artur Gil	Private	P	1			
Diogo Caetano	Amigos dos Açores	T	1			
Emanuel Verissimo	DRA/DSCNSA	P/T			1	
Eva Cacabelos	CIIMAR; Azores University	P	1			
Fátima Melo	Azores University	P/T	1			
Fernando Diogo	Azores University	P	1			
Helena Calado	CIBIO Açores; Azores University	P	1			
Jessica Coulon	Azores University	P	1			
João Faria Santos	Azores University -PhD Student	P	1			
Joaquim Teodósio	SPEA	P/T		1		
José Simas	AZORINA, S.A.	P			1	
Luz Paramio	Private	P	1			
Mafalda Sousa Moniz	AZORINA, S.A.	P/T			1	
Manuel Leitão	Direção Regional dos Recursos Florestais	P			1	

				Sector		
Name	**Entity**	**Session**	**Knowl**	**NGO**	**Publ**	**Priv.**
Maria Isabel Condessa	DCE; Azores University	P	1			
Maria João Pereira	Azores University	T	1			
Maria Vale	Azores University	P	1			
Marta Vergílio	Azores University	T	1			
Mónica Moura	Azores University	T	1			
Rosa Neves Simas	DLLM, Azores University	P	1			
Sílvia Pontes de Oliveira	SRTT / DSE	P			1	
Virginie Leyendecker	Azores University	P	1			
	Sub-total	*27*	*20*	*1*	*6*	*0*
Canary Islands (Gran Canaria Island, Nov. 18)						
Alejandro Padrón Padrón	DRACAENA Consultores	P				1
Almudena Suárez	FCPCT - Universidad Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	P	1			
Bruno Berheide	Banco Español de Algas	P	1			
Carlos Garcia-Verdugo	Jardin Botanico Canario	P			1	
Cristian Ortiz García	Student ULPGC Geography and Spatial Planning	P	1			
Fernando Tuya Cortés	Universidad Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	P	1			
Isabel Santana López	Servicio Biodiversidad, Gobierno de Canarias	P/T			1	
Javier Rodríguez	Fundación Canaria Parque Científico Tecnológico	P	1			
Juan Martinez	Gobierno de Canarias	P/T			1	
Mª Rafela Rivero Suárez	Servicio Información Ambiental. Viceconsejería de Medio Ambiente	P			1	
Marimar Villagarcia	PLOCAN	P			1	
Marta Martínez Pérez	Gesplan	P	1			
Pablo Manent	Universidad Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	P/T	1			
Pedro Sosa	Universidad Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	P	1			
	Sub-total	*14*	*8*	*0*	*5*	*1*
Canary Islands (Tenerife Island,Nov. 19)						
Alberto Brito Hernández	Universidad de La Laguna	P/T	1			
Carlos Sangil Hernández	Universidad de La Laguna	P/T	1			
Fabiana Brasil	Private	T		1		
Giuseppe Nerilli	Universidad de La Laguna	T	1			
Jorge Alfredo Reyes Betancort	Instituto Canario de Investigaciones Agrarias	P/T	1			
José María Fernández-Palacios	Universidad de La Laguna	P/T	1			
José Ramón Arévalo	Universidad de La Laguna	P	1			
Juana María Gonzalez-Mancebo	Universidad de La Laguna	P/T	1			
Laura Martín	Universidad de La Laguna	P/T	1			
Manuel Arbelo Perez	Universidad de La Laguna	P	1			

			Sector			
Name	**Entity**	**Session**	**Knowl**	**NGO**	**Publ**	**Priv.**
María Nieves Zurita Pérez	Dirección General de Protección de la Naturaleza, Gobierno de Canarias	P/T			1	
Mariano Hernandez Ferres	Universidad de La Laguna	P	1			
Marta Sansón Acedo	Universidad de La Laguna	P/T	1			
Natacha Aguilar de Soto	Universidad de La Laguna	T	1			
Sonia Ramos Maura	SEO/Birdlife	P		1		
	Sub-total	*15*	*12*	*2*	*1*	*0*
Madeira Island (Nov. 24)						
Ana Margarida Salgueiro Rodrigues	CIERL-UMa, Centro de Investigação em Estudos Regionais e Locais	P/T	1			
Carolina Santos	Serviço do Parque Natural da Madeira - SRA	P/T			1	
Dília Menezes	Serviço do Parque Natural da Madeira - SRA	P/T			1	
Dinarte Teixeira	Direcção Regional de Florestas e Conservação da Natureza	P/T			1	
Duarte Barreto	Direção Regional de Florestas e Conservação da Natureza (DRFCN)	P			1	
Humberto Nóbrega	ISOPlexis - Universidade da Madeira	P/T	1			
Luis Freitas	Museu da Baleia da Madeira	P	1			
Mafalda Freitas	Estação de Biologia Marinha do Funchal	P/T	1			
Manfred Kaufmann	Univ. Madeira + CIIMAR-Madeira	P/T	1			
Manuel Filipe	Direção Regional de Florestas e Conservação da Natureza	P			1	
Pedro Diniz	ITB - Investigação e Transferência de Biotecnologia, Lda	P	1			
Ricardo Araújo	Museu de História Natural do Funchal	T			1	
Rita Ferreira	Museu da Baleia Madeira / OOM-ARDITI	P	1			
Sandra Hervías Parejo	SPEA	P/T		1		
Sara Freitas	Serviço do Parque Natural da Madeira - SRA	P/T			1	
	Sub-total	*15*	*7*	*1*	*7*	*0*
	TOTAL	***80***	***56***	***4***	***19***	***1***

ANNEX 2

Feedback from evaluation forms

Public session – 64 participants (Terceira - 10; São Miguel – 22; Gran Canaria – 6; Tenerife – 12; Madeira - 14)

	Number of scores (1=poor; 5=excellent)					**Comments**
Questions	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Public session dissemination	1	5	8	23	19	**Positive –** Opportunity to clarify objectives; interdisciplinary nature of the project; multi-stakeholder consultation process; potential funding. **Negative –** Dissemination of the event; information made available previously; no clear the benefits for the region.
Clarity of the information presented			5	22	29	
Potential benefits of the project for the region			12	21	20	
Credibility of the project to reach its objectives and implement its results	1	1	16	27	9	
Average rating – 4,1 / 5						

Technical session – 41 participants (Terceira – 9; São Miguel – 9; Gran Canaria – 3; Tenerife – 11; Madeira – 10)

	Number of scores (1=poor; 5=excellent)					**Comments**
Questions	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Workshop information provided in advance (e.g. dates, venue, programme)	2	1	6	11	12	**Positive** – Knowledge/information exchange; inclusive/participatory process of KBA definition; cooperation between institutions; identification of information gaps. **Negative** – Lack of applicability of methods to islands; generalization of IUCN red list criteria to all taxonomic groups; dissemination of the event; information made available previously; low participation of researchers and public administration officers of relevant departments.
Workshop venue (adequacy of the room where the workshop took place)		1	4	15	13	
Materials used during the workshop to support the sessions		1	6	11	16	
Attainment of the objectives of the workshop			4	16	14	
Positive and collaborative atmosphere among participants				14	20	
Duration of the workshop			5	14	14	
Opportunity for individual participation and input in the workshop				10	24	
Clear explanation of next steps and tasks after the workshop		1	4	15	14	
Average rating – 4,4 / 5						