



## BEST III Azores workshops Report

### Meetings held

- Plants. February 2, 9:00-12:00. Experts: Mónica Moura. Other participants: Emanuel Veríssimo (Diretor Regional Conservação da Natureza), Conceição Rodrigues (Azorina), Mafalda Moniz (Azorina)
- Terrestrial invertebrates. February 2, 14:00-15:00. Experts: Paulo Borges. Other participants: Emanuel Veríssimo (Diretor Regional Conservação da Natureza), Artur Gil, Conceição Rodrigues (Azorina), Mafalda Moniz (Azorina)
- Marine animals, February 3, 9:00-12:00. Experts: Mónica Silva (IMAR); Marco Santos (DRAM). Other participants: Anunciação Ventura (DB-UAc)
- Birds and bats, February 4, 14:30-17:30. Experts: Ana Rainho (FC-UL); Verónica Neves (IMAR); Joaquim Teodósio (SPEA). Other participants: Amélia Fonseca (DB-UAc); Emanuel Veríssimo (DRA-DRCN)
- Molluscs, February 5, 9:30-11:00. Experts: Frías Martins (UAç)

### Highlights

1. The Macaronesian islands have a complex and rich pattern of endemic species, with a particular focus on terrestrial plants and invertebrates.
2. The network of protected areas in the Azores does not cover all the KBAs. Some participants were surprised by the large extension of the area covered by KBAs. A more conservative drawing of the KBAs, however, is dependent on improving the accuracy of the species distribution areas and on crossing that information with soil usage and vegetation maps. This should be a priority for later versions of the EP.
3. The management of protected areas could be improved with spatial planning and management plans, which do not exist at present.

### Main threats

Plants	“Cabeços” on Pico Island are very vulnerable because most pasture areas have no fences.
Cetaceans	The main negative impact on cetaceans in the Azores is noise and direct interference from whale watching boats. Collision with fast ferries is a present concern, while plans for exploitation of deep-sea minerals could be a threat in the future.

### Research priorities

KBA Definition and Priorization | Conservation Actions  
Second Series of Stakeholder Workshops | Part II



1. There is a need to revise the taxonomy of Macaronesian native species. Besides acknowledging the genetic biodiversity of this region, this may reveal many endemic species or subspecies. This is particularly valid for bats and passerines.
2. A significant proportion of arthropods and land molluscs is still to be described. Besides the scientific implications, taxonomic efforts focused on these groups will result in important insights for conservation.
3. There is a need to revise and update the conservation status of Macaronesian endemic species. This may lead to redrawing KBAs or creating new ones
4. The existing geographic information on threatened species is incomplete and often out-dated. Systematic mapping efforts are needed, particularly for plants.
5. Special attention should be given to terrestrial molluscs: the 50% of described endemics could increase to over 70%. The molluscs in the Azores are the taxonomic group that places the archipelago at the same level of Madeira and the Canaries in what concerns biodiversity; it is the group with the highest number of endemics in the Azores; molluscs are important indicators of biodiversity; every single field expedition leads to the discovery of new species.

### Conservation priorities

Plants, arthropods, birds	Exotic species are menacing many threatened species. Actions to control predators in bird colonies and removing invasive plant species in selected areas are critical. Arthropods are protected via habitat protection (plants – soil and vegetation canopy).
Plants	Conservation/recovery plans similar to the ones existing in the Canary Islands could be implemented (there's already baseline work for some species).
Marine species	1. Observers on board longliner fishing boats could collect important data for the management of the fishery while also being a powerful tool to diffuse good practices to reduce the impact on marine turtles.
	2. Dynamic conservation measures (similar to the ones already implemented in the Pacific) could be implemented to avoid by-catch of marine turtles.
	3. Actions targeting whale watching operators could disseminate good practices to reduce noise, or even lead to replacement of boats and/or engines for more silent solutions as well as less harmful propellers. A 12 mile buffer area around Pico, Faial and S. Miguel would be an ideal solution for fin whales.
	4. The Azores Biodiversity Database needs to be brought up to date for many taxonomic groups, particularly in the marine realm. A



	more institutional framing, similar to the one in the Canary Islands, could improve the situation.
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**Follow-up / Information requested:**

<i>BEST Macaronesian team</i>	The KBAs with priority 1 are often too large and do not reflect the distribution of the species that triggered it. This was a result of aggregating KBAs into larger units following the management criterion. Nevertheless, areas corresponding to species-based vulnerability criteria leading to priority 1 will be separated from the rest, so that the classification better reflect conservation priorities.
Mónica Moura	Available paper on P. Azorica (collection areas)
Marco Silva	Available papers on coastal fish and manta ray
Verónica Neves	Up to date shapefile of H. monteiroi