

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Honourable Ms Bernice Swarts, launches National Biodiversity Assessment 2025 to guide South Africa's sustainable future

Today, the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Honourable Ms Bernice Swarts officially launched the National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA) 2025, South Africa's most comprehensive and up-to-date report on the state of the country's biodiversity. The launch highlights the government's commitment to safeguarding the nation's rich natural heritage, ensuring sustainable use of biodiversity, and meeting global environmental obligations.

South Africa is one of 17 megadiverse countries, with exceptional species richness, high levels of endemism, and three of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots. The country also ranks third globally in marine species endemism. Biodiversity is not only a national treasure — it underpins the economy, jobs, food and water security, and climate resilience, making it central to the country's development priorities.

"Biodiversity underpins both our economy and society," said Deputy Minister Ms Bernice Swarts. "It provides essential services and products that sustain human wellbeing and drive inclusive growth and job creation. NBA 2025 equips us with evidence-based insights to guide policy, strengthen governance, and mobilise collective action across government, business, and civil society."

A 20-year legacy of biodiversity assessment

Marking 20 years since the first NBA was released in 2005, NBA 2025 tracks the state and trends of ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity across South Africa's terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine, and marine realms – as well as the subantarctic Prince Edward Islands and the cross-realm coastal zone. The assessment drew on the expertise of over 490 experts from more than 110 institutions, producing a rigorous, inclusive, and forward-looking scientific resource.

"NBA 2025 demonstrates the power of collaboration and science to support effective decision-making and biodiversity stewardship," said SANBI CEO Mr Shonisani Munzhedzi. "By integrating data, analysis, and innovation, the NBA enables all sectors of society to contribute to conserving our natural heritage while supporting sustainable development."

Insights for South Africa: what the NBA tells us

NBA 2025 has an enormous scope with substantial detail for users who wish to delve deep into the analyses, datasets and results for specific species groups or ecosystems. At the highest level, it brings together the best available science into national-level findings and 15 key messages. Together, these provide a summary picture of the state of South Africa's biodiversity and the opportunities ahead. Three main insights stand out:

The NBA shows that climate change, unsustainable land and sea use, pollution, invasive alien species, reduced freshwater flows and illegal harvesting continue to affect South Africa's ecosystems and species, and therefore the services they provide. For example, these pressures influence food production, water quality, jobs, tourism and our resilience to natural disasters. The positive news is that



the country now has clearer evidence than ever before, helping government and partners plan practical and targeted responses.

Some ecosystems and species are still threatened and have declining trends. However, the NBA also highlights encouraging improvements. These include areas where good environmental management, community stewardship, restoration projects and better data are making a measurable difference. This shows that investments in biodiversity are working, and the NBA offers a reliable national baseline to guide further progress.

A key message from NBA 2025 is that partnerships across government, business, communities, researchers and civil society lead to better outcomes. The findings point to practical opportunities to strengthen wellbeing, support local economies, and improve climate resilience by looking after South Africa's biodiversity. With shared effort, the country can build on existing successes and expand them.

From science to action

NBA 2025 informs several global initiatives, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals, amongst others. Nationally, it supports the state of environment reporting, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) development and implementation, and the National Development Plan 2030, linking biodiversity directly to development priorities.

This assessment is digital-first and utilises the tools of the information age – offering open access to datasets, analytical scripts, and numerous linked resources. This transparency empowers stakeholders, encourages wider use, and promotes evidence-based decision-making at all levels.

A call to action

NBA 2025 demonstrates that biodiversity is crucial for our economy and our society. Its findings provide a blueprint for coordinated action across government, civil society, the private sector, and communities, enabling South Africa to meet both national and global biodiversity commitments.

In closing the launch event through a vote of thanks, Ms Mohlago Flora Mokgohloa, Deputy Director-General of the Biodiversity and Conservation Branch in the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment said “SANBI extends its gratitude to all contributors, whose collective expertise ensures that South Africa continues to lead with integrity, innovation, and inclusiveness in biodiversity science. The National Biodiversity Assessment gives us the knowledge we need to act – now it is up to all of us to turn this knowledge into lasting change for our country and our people.”

For more information and access to NBA 2025 data products: <http://nba.sanbi.org.za/>

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