

© Matthew Judge, fishermen on shores of the island, Comoros

8.3 Comoros

Protected and conserved areas in Comoros⁴⁰

Comoros has eight protected areas covering 173 km² of land and 37 km² of the ocean (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2019d).

Terrestrial and inland areas in protected areas remain small and are not connected in ecologically representative protected areas networks. There is a need to increase the coverage to meet Aichi Target 11, which will involve creating new protected areas in fragile ecosystems with high and sensitive biodiversity and increasing conservation and biodiversity management actions of NGOs and private individuals. However, it is important to note that since 2014, the Union of the Comoros has increased its protected area estate from one to five protected areas. This increase in protected area coverage involves local communities in the development process and management of the protected areas. The creation of new protected areas in addition to the existing Mohéli National Park is part of the commitment of the Government to reach Aichi Target 11.

Transboundary protected and conserved areas

Comoros is not a part of any transboundary conservation areas.

Policy context

A comprehensive report on legislation and policy related to protected area management, governance, and equity was undertaken by the BIOPAMA programme. It identified 15 relevant laws and policies in Comoros (Tessema, 2019).

Key species⁴¹

Ninety-six bird species have been recorded in Comoros, of which 33 are threatened. The Union of the Comoros is home to a number of threatened mammals, including the endemic Comoros rousette (*Rousettus obliviosus*), the mongoose lemur (*Eulemur mongoz*), the endemic Livingstone's flying fox (*Pteropus livingstonii*), the dugong (*Dugong dugon*), the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and the tailless tenrec (*Tenrec ecaudatus*).

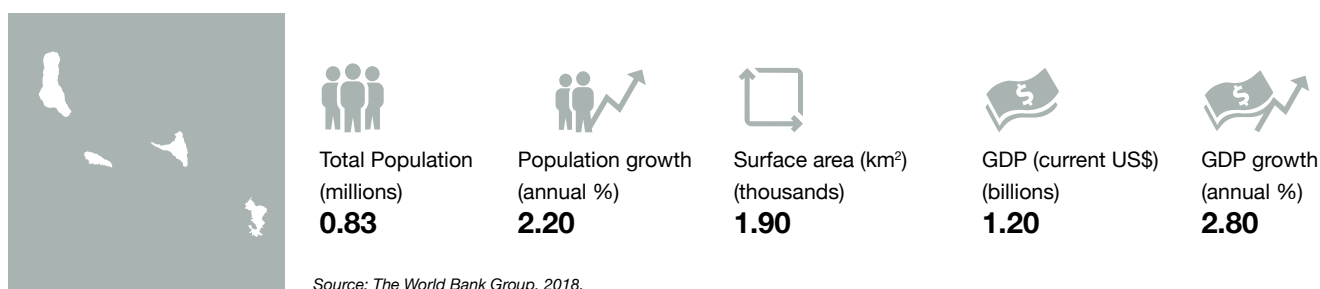
More than 1,200 insect species have been recorded in the Comoros and at least 16 plants species are threatened with extinction.

Two species of amphibian and 29 reptiles have also been recorded. The two amphibian species and 14 of the 29 terrestrial reptiles are endemic. A number of the reptiles are threatened with extinction. A number of species of marine turtles also nest in the Comoros, and their conservation status is improving.

⁴⁰ The section draws on information contained in the Sixth National Report to the CBD (Union des Comores, 2019).

⁴¹ The section draws on information contained in Comoros' Fifth National Report to the CBD and its Second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) (Union des Comores, 2014; 2016) and its 2017–2021 Strategy to expand the national system of protected areas (Union des Comores, 2017).

Figure 8.5 Comoros Summary



Area Protected:

8 protected areas



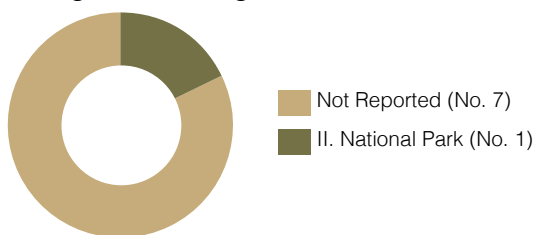
covering **173 km²** of land



covering **37 km²** of ocean

Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2019d

Protected and conserved areas in Comoros in IUCN Management Categories



Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019d).



96 bird species
33 are threatened



16 plants species
threatened



2 endemic amphibian
species



14 endemic
reptiles

Coverage of protected areas in Comoros

Type of protected area	Area protected or conserved*	Area protected or conserved**
Terrestrial and inland water	10.15%	22.00%
Coastal and marine	0.02%	Not found

* WDPA dataset

** From National Report on Biodiversity

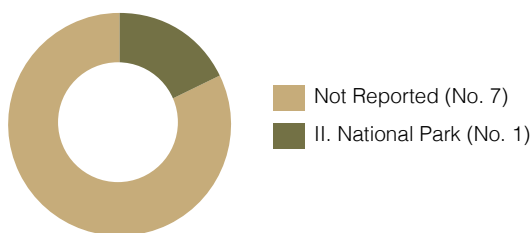
Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019d); Union des Comores (2014).

National designations of protected and conserved areas in Comoros

National designation	No.	Area (km ²)
National Park	1	37
Aire Protégée Nationale	4	573

Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019d).

Protected and conserved areas in Comoros in IUCN Governance Types



Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019d).

Protected and conserved areas designated as global sites of importance in Comoros

Global designation	No. of sites
Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)	3

Source: Ramsar (2019); UNESCO (2019a, 2019b).

Priority areas for conservation



3 sites
Alliance for Zero
Extinction sites



4 sites
Important Bird &
Biodiversity Areas



20 sites
Key Biodiversity
Areas

Source: AZE Secretariat (2019); BirdLife International (2019b & 2019c).

Figure 8.6 Comoros protected areas



The country is also home to the coelacanth (*Latimeria chalumnae*) which is classified as critically endangered. There are a number of cetacean species protected by the CITES, such as the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), Southern right whale (*Eubalaena australis*), Bryde’s whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*) and the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), which frequent the Comorian marine waters.

Certain coral species, such as the black coral (*Antipathes dichotoma*), are listed on the CITES appendices due to high demand for jewellery. At least 16 plant species are threatened with extinction.

Pressures and threats⁴²

The main direct pressures on biodiversity in the Comoros is habitat loss and degradation due to slash-and-burn agriculture, invasive alien species, the growing need for firewood for ylang-ylang distillation, over extraction of coral and sand for construction, and pollution. Overharvesting of certain species, including reptiles and a number of different marine species, is a major threat. A number of mollusc species have disappeared due to overharvesting.

The key indirect causes of these threats include the natural fragility of the ecosystem, with a growing human population that has a very high level of poverty. There are weaknesses in the institutional framework, including low human capacities, insecure tenure, inadequate and unenforced regulatory framework and inefficient public policies.

Climate change represents a major short- and long-term threat to the biodiversity of the Comoros. In some places, reefs have suffered more than 60% bleaching due to rising sea temperatures, while 30–40 meters of coastal grasslands have disappeared due to rising sea levels.

⁴² The section draws on information contained in Comoros’ Fifth National Report to the CBD and its Second NBSAP (Union des Comores, 2014, 2016) and its 2017–2021 National system of explanation of protected area strategy (DGEF, 2017).