



WWF

FACTSHEET

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WWF MDCO priority landscapes

Northern Highlands Landscape

Remote and rugged, the Northern Highlands are one of the last expanses of Madagascar's primary forests and a biodiversity hotspot



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AT A GLANCE

- **Size:** 2,535,000 ha
- **Population:** 580,000
- **Ecosystems:** moist forests, aquatic ecosystems and savannas
- **Landscape features:** Tsaratanana - the highest summit in Madagascar, thermal springs, the World Heritage Site of Ala Atsinanana
- **Key species:** *Propithecus candidus* (silky sifaka), Madagascar pochard duck (Only 30 left in the wild), Madagascar red owl

The most important forest corridor in northern Madagascar

The landscape of the Northern Highlands is formed by several types of ecosystems, dominated by a vast expanse of forests. A very humid and wet climate and extreme variances in altitude, from 75 m to 2,876m, have made the landscape a hot spot of biodiversity. More than 2,281 species have been identified there, including 538 endemic. The landscape has a particularly rich collection of Herpetofauna, housing 50% of all reptiles and amphibians in Madagascar.

The rugged territory is one of the last truly unknown corners of the world, with large areas not yet explored. It is also a critical wildlife corridor and the headwaters of rivers flowing to both the western and eastern sides of Madagascar.

The immensity of the landscape means there are distinct challenges in different sections. In the west deforestation is a particular threat, while the eastern section is troubled by the illegal collection of forest products and small scale mining.

Vision and Goals

Vision: *The connectivity and area of the northern landscape ecosystems are maintained, and the area's exceptional biodiversity is preserved, ensuring their contribution to the sustainable economic development and social welfare of local communities.*

Goal 1: By 2020, the functional connectivity of the forest ecosystems in the landscape's main Protected Areas is maintained, considering the effects of climate variability, and the deforestation rate is reduced by at least 25%.

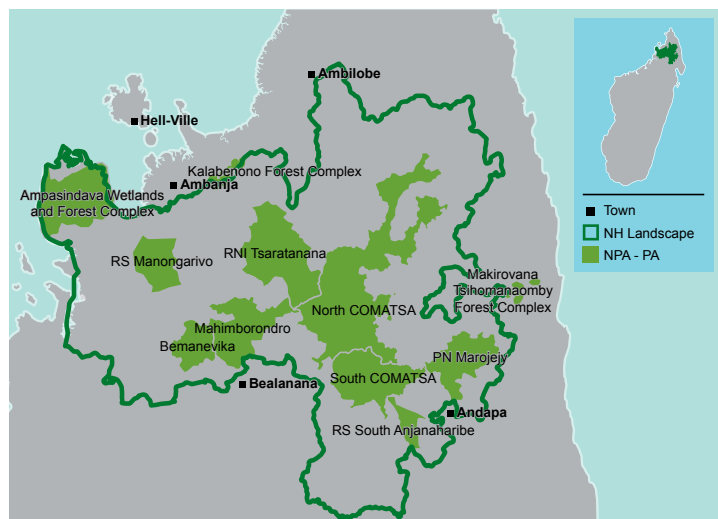
Goal 2: By 2020, The viability of the three target species is maintained or improved.

Goal 3: By 2020, at least 25% of the most vulnerable populations, in at least 40 communities around the landscape, have their living conditions improved through the adoption of alternative economic activities and better access to basic services.

Key Results

WWF has been in the Northern Highlands region since 2004. Here are a few key achievements:

- Achieving definitive protection status for the protected area CAPAM. This includes COMATSA where WWF has been delegated management responsibility by the Ministry
- Provided training in patrol and law enforcement monitoring for 53 community associations
- 43 resource management associations have been legally created to support the greenbelt around the COMATSA protected area
- Six associations received climate smart agriculture training
- Created eight village cooperatives to negotiate trading with private sector partners
- Then negotiated an agreement to supply the company Ramanandraibe with sustainably produced vanilla from the established cooperatives



Main Activities and Partners

With its long history in the landscape, WWF is a trusted partner. Accordingly WWF is a catalyst promoting effective partnerships in the landscape and the adoption of innovative, sustainable development solutions. WWF is developing sustainable agri-business and tourism models in the west and will then replicate those models in the east. We are also working to bring the conservation model (effective PAs and

Community Based Organization management) developed in the east to the west.

Partner and stakeholder links are critical for success. Some of WWF's main partners are the regional and district authorities, technical service providers (agriculture etc.), the Protected Areas System of Madagascar, Madagascar National Parks, other local and national NGOs, notably The Peregrine Fund and Missouri Botanical Garden, universities and research institutes, like the Regional University in SAVA, local communities around protected areas and civil society.



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CURRENT PROJECTS

- Protection of the rainforest and improving local livelihood options.
- Strengthening the capacity of CBOs to monitor illegal activities involving endangered natural resources and ensuring compliance with laws.
- Strengthening the protected areas system.
- Reducing of greenhouse gas emissions, preserving natural forest ecosystems and improving the living conditions among the local people.

People

In this part of the country the local people still have very strong ties to ancestral traditions, with special worship practices and sacred locations. The dominant ethnic group is the Tsimihety, but the Sakalava, Betsimisaraka, Sihanaka, Betsileo and Merina tribes are also present.

The population is mostly farmers and cattle breeders, with 90% of people living in rural environments. Accordingly the local economy is dominated by agriculture and livestock. Farmers produce cash crops (cocoa, vanilla and coffee), Annual crops (rice, cassava and banana) and do cattle breeding. Almost all farmers grow rice and at least one cash crop.

Motivation for sustainable environmental practices has been high, with strong participation from local NGOs, CBOs and community members.

Spotlight Story

This past spring eight farmers from the Sava region crisscrossed the country on a tour to discover new ideas they bring back to their communities.

WWF arranged for these farmers, part of new farming cooperatives in the Northern Highlands Landscape, to visit other, more established, cooperatives. There, they learned techniques to improve their operations and reduce their dependency on forest resources.

Among the techniques they observed was the adoption of community granaries, which saves individual farmers money while ensuring there will be seeds for future harvests. The tour incorporated many type of farming, including fish farming, and was greatly appreciated by the participants.

“We discovered fish farming techniques that can double our returns,” said Gilbert, a farmer from Andapa.



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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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