



What's new about Important Plant Areas identification in northern Algeria?

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Abstract



- In 2009, PlantLife, the IUCN Mediterranean Center for Cooperation and the WWF initiated the process for identifying Important Plant Areas (IPAs) in northern Algeria, including capacity building, data review, and help for publication. The first step was the edition of a first IUCN report on "Important plant areas of the south and east Mediterranean region" in 2011. At this stage, 21 IPAs had been identified in northern Algeria, and the process more detailed in an international publication by Yahi et al. in 2012, adding a 22nd at the same time.
- Then, a national dynamic started and few new IPAs were added opportunely, until a new editing process supported by IUCN and the MAVA foundation that permitted the publication of a second report in 2018 on "Conserving wild plants in the south and east Mediterranean region". At this stage, northern Algeria totalized 39 Key Biodiversity Areas for plants (i.e. IPAs).
- At national level, Algerian botanists pursued their field inventories and the identification process of new IPAs. At end of 2024 more than 40 IPAs are identified and several others are already on their way thanks to targeted field studies, PhD thesis and their corroborated scientific publications through diverse areas of the country.
- From a methodological point of view, three generations of Algerian IPAs are parallelly developed and progressively incremented. The first generation was created based on historical bibliography, aiming to generate a first list of trigger species. The second generation was based on frugal field surveys aiming to rediscover and confirm the occurrence of trigger species. The third generation, now beginning, both aims to redefining the trigger species list based on a revised taxonomy and to redelimiting the IPA perimeters based on a concrete terrain mapping. These new ambitions face various difficulties which will have to be addressed and gaps which will have to be filled.
- From a conservational point of view, NGOs and administrative services are gradually taking ownership of this informative but non-binding classification and are using it to support their requests for the classification of natural sites and the creation of protected areas.
- Keywords : biodiversity mapping, capacity building, decision support, field surveys, in situ conservation, taxonomical shortfalls