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Unlocking the untapped potential of transboundary conservation across Africa

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Today, the pressing issue of climate change takes center stage in countless conversations, due to its profound and far-reaching impact on fragile ecosystems. Nowhere is this impact more pronounced than on the continent of Africa, where biodiversity loss has escalated at an alarming rate. Among the most vulnerable victims of this ecological crisis are the large, highly mobile, migratory, terrestrial animals that call the region home.



Zebras on the African Savannah. Courtesy:Pexels-Hendrik-Cornelissen on <https://unsplash.com>

Amidst the turmoil, there is a unique opportunity to safeguard these imperiled species: transboundary conservation. Transboundary conservation facilitates coordinated land and wildlife management across national borders. The approach has the potential to simultaneously protect wildlife, preserve ecological integrity across shared landscapes, and foster cooperation among nations.

There are at least 27 existing Transboundary Conservation Areas (TBCAs) in Africa, covering an area of 847,158 square kilometers (about 327,089 square miles)¹. Mountain gorilla protection is a remarkable example of transboundary conservation at work. These mammals are critically endangered, and their habitat spans the borders of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. Several studies have shown that collaboration among these nations to protect gorillas has both curtailed deforestation and prevented these majestic creatures from reaching extinction.

The United Nations Environmental Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) has taken on the vital task of researching and mapping African TBCAs in conjunction with its partners. The aim of its recently published [study](#) is to identify existing Protected Areas that could be transformed into newly established TBCAs, thus unlocking a world of potential benefits for both humans and wildlife.

The implications of this study extend far beyond the African continent, resonating globally. The potential for transboundary conservation to contribute to the global ambitions laid out in the Kunming-Montreal Global [Biodiversity Framework](#) is immense. When implemented with care and international best practice, these approaches serve as one model for collaborative, cross-boundary strategies that will secure large-scale, long-term conservation over the coming decades.

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¹ Kamath, V., et al, (2023) "Identifying opportunities for transboundary conservation in Africa". *Frontiers in Conservation Science*. Volume 4 - 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcosc.2023.1237849>