

## NATURAL HERITAGE BULLETIN

Information and Updates from World Natural Heritage Sites in Asia and the Pacific Region

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Ministry of Environment and Energy, Maldives\*

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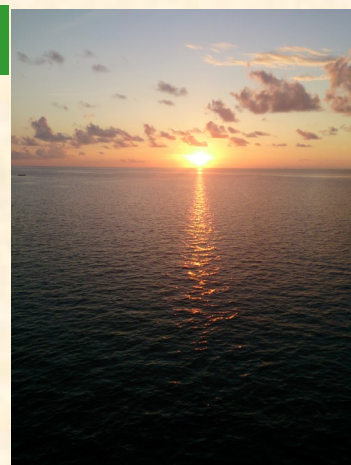
**UNESCO Category 2 Centre for World Natural Heritage  
Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region,  
Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. India**

The Natural Heritage Bulletin is a compilation of information on World Natural Heritage Sites in the Asia-Pacific Region which is obtained from free and publicly available sources such as the internet, newspapers and other publications. The publisher of this bulletin does not make any claim on the authenticity of the contents of the secondary sources of information. The information does not necessarily represent any official views of the publishing institution.

## FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

As we move on from an eventful 2015, this issue of the Natural Heritage Bulletin rounds off with an update on the issues and events from the last quarter of the year. Major news include the World Heritage Centre's Director highlighting climate change impact on World Heritage Sites, election of Azerbaijan and Indonesia to the World Heritage Committee from the Asia-Pacific region, efforts for removal of East Rennell from the Danger List and Tubbataha Reef Natural Park's designation as ASEAN Heritage Park, among others. We

continue with site profiles from the World Heritage Outlook. UNESCO C2C at Wildlife Institute of India was active with the IPBES, Open Standards and Keibul Lamjao workshops. The Centre was successful in raising additional resources for its workshops as well as hosting participants and resource persons from countries in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. We solicit your feedback as we strive to improve the Bulletin which completes a year of its publication.



Indian Ocean, Maldives

## UNESCO REGIONAL NEWS

**Almaty Agreement on World Heritage Serial Nomination of the Silk Roads**

Following the 4th meeting of the Coordinating Committee on the World Heritage Serial Nomination of the Silk Roads in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 24-25 November 2015, more than 50 representatives and experts from twelve countries together with UNESCO representatives, international experts and representatives of IICC Xi'an (China), Secretariat of Silk Roads Coordination Committee, released a list of recommendations for further activities to pave the way forward for the Silk Roads

World Heritage Serial and Transnational Nomination. 14 countries (Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are members of the Silk Roads Serial Transnational World Heritage Nomination Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee, as well as Bhutan as an observer.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1415>

"Climate change concerns all of us. It concerns World Heritage sites, especially islands in the Pacific and the Caribbean."  
— Mechtild Rössler

**World Heritage Centre Director Highlights Climate Change Impact on World Heritage Sites**

In the framework of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21), Mechtild Rössler, Director of the World Heritage Centre, highlights the importance of understanding climate change and its impact on UNESCO World Heritage sites. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are generally more vulnerable to environmental challenges and hence the first to be

impacted by climate change. SIDS have become an important area for World Heritage identification and protection. "Climate change concerns all of us. It concerns World Heritage sites, especially islands in the Pacific and the Caribbean," says Mechtild Rössler.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1404>



Recreational diving In Maldives

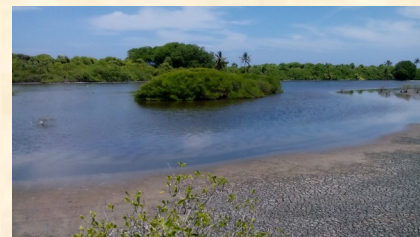


## Regional Conference for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Asia-Pacific

A “Regional Conference on Harmonizing Actions to Reduce Risks for Cultural Heritage in Asia and the Pacific” was held in Malaysia in December 2015 seeking to advance the Sendai commitment by raising awareness of the importance of protecting cultural heritage in the face of increased risks from disasters and armed conflicts, showcasing best practices in protecting

heritage and identifying obstacles and priorities for the integration of culture and heritage into regional initiatives and institutional frameworks for managing risks.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1402>



Tropical vegetation in Maldives

## Sustainable Tourism and World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia

In the framework of the project entitled “The Power of Culture: Supporting Community-Based Management and Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Sites in Malaysia and Southeast Asia” made possible thanks to support from the Government of Malaysia via the Malaysia Funds-in-Trust (MFIT) under the Malaysia-UNESCO Cooperation Programme (MUCP), UNESCO is spearheading a new approach

to sustainable tourism management at World Heritage properties in South-East Asia (SEA).

This project represents the first regional effort in SEA for implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism (WH+ST) Programme.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1394>

“Two new members from Asia-Pacific, Azerbaijan and Indonesia, elected to the World Heritage Committee.”

## UNESCO WHC Director visits Ha Long Bay, Viet Nam

On 24 November 2015, at the occasion of a visit to Viet Nam to attend the celebration of the 70th anniversary of UNESCO, Mechtild Rossler, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, visited Ha Long Bay World Heritage site. Accompanying her were Mr. Le Hoai Trung, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO, and Mr. Pham

Sanh Chau of the Department for Culture and Secretary General of Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1409>

## New Asia-Pacific Members of World Heritage Committee

The 20th General Assembly of the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention met from 18 to 20 November 2015 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, nine States Parties were elected to the World Heritage Committee: Angola, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Indonesia, Kuwait, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

Azerbaijan and Indonesia were the two new members from Asia-Pacific elected to the World Heritage Committee.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1384>



Black-Naped Tern,  
*Sterna sumatra*, Maldives

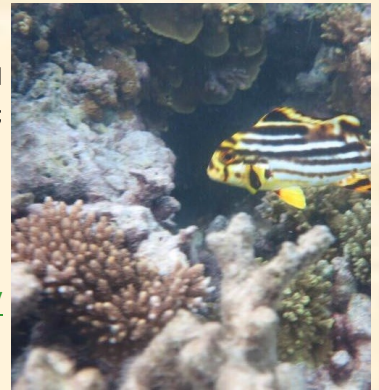
## Regional meeting on the Pacific World Heritage Action Plan 2016-2020

The Regional meeting on the Pacific World Heritage Action Plan 2016-2020 took place in Suva (Fiji) from 1 to 4 December 2015, and was jointly organized by the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO Apia office, Fiji Museum and the Pacific Heritage Hub. The objectives of this meeting were:

- To review the current Pacific World Heritage Action Plan (2010-2015);

- To develop and approve a regional Action Plan for the Pacific (2016-2020); and
- To enhance regional cooperation among the Pacific World Heritage Network.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1269/>



Coral reef in Maldives

## First World Heritage Youth Forum in Asia

The 1st World Heritage Youth Forum (WHYF) in Asia, held from 25 November to 3 December 2015 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, successfully concluded with serious and realistic suggestions by young people to promote participation in World Heritage preservation among their peers in the Asia-Pacific region. The WHYF in Asia, organized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the Cambodian National Commission for UNESCO and APSARA National Authority, brought together 38 young people between 20 and 30 years old, from 20 countries in the

Asia-Pacific region. The highlight of the forum was presenting their Youth Declaration during the 25<sup>th</sup> Technical session for the International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor (ICC-Angkor), on 2 December.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1417>

“1st World Heritage Youth Forum (WHYF) in Asia, held from 25 November to 3 December 2015 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.”

## ASIA-PACIFIC SITE UPDATES

### Strengthening Capacity for East Rennell's Removal from Danger List (Solomon Islands)

East Rennell, on the southern end of Rennell Island, in Solomon Islands in the western Pacific, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1998 for its role as a major stepping stone in the migration and evolution of species in the western Pacific. East Rennell was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2013 for threats to its Outstanding Universal Value posed by commercial logging of its forests and the uncontrolled invasion of rats. The Marine World Heritage Program's advisory mission was undertaken in November 2015 to assist

Solomon Islands government with the design of a Desired State of Conservation for Removal (DSOCR) of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1389>



Sea view off Maldives

## Green Army Program support for Fraser Island (Australia)

Local efforts to maintain the environmental health of Fraser Island will receive a boost under the latest round of Federal Government's Green Army program, Federal Member for Wide Bay and Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss announced in December 2015. These projects will move to address the proliferation of weed species on the Island. Projects under Round 4 of the

Green Army have a particular focus on conserving national and world heritage sites, with 32 of the projects designed to improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

Source: <http://mysunshinecoast.com.au/news/news-display/new-green-army-projects-to-boost-fraser-island-conservation-efforts,41348>



Coastal vegetation of Maldives

## Robot to Patrol Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

The Great Barrier Reef will have a robotic protector soon. The underwater autonomous vehicle is programmed to patrol the massive living structure in search of destructive crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS), which it then kills by lethal injection. These starfish prey on coral polyps, and although they are native to the reef, their population has exploded in the

past few years, possibly because of over-fishing of their natural predators.

Source: John R. Platt, Scientific American  
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-starfish-killing-artificially-intelligent-robot-is-set-to-patrol-the-great-barrier-reef/>

## Ancient Cave Discovered in Gunung Mulu (Malaysia)

In October, 2015, famed British caver Andy Eavis discovered what is now known as "Conviction Cave", an ancient subterranean tunnel over 6 million years old and potentially among the world's top 15 largest caves, located in the midst of Gunung Mulu National Park, Sarawak, Malaysia. The cave's size, great age, and the likelihood that it is completely untouched make it an important scientific discovery. Conviction Cave could

also provide a boost to Sarawak's ecotourism industry, encouraging further protection and exploration of the region's diverse wilderness.

Source: <http://cleanmalaysia.com/2015/12/20/6-million-year-old-cave-discovered-in-gunung-mulu-national-park/>

"6 million year old cave discovered in Gunung Mulu National Park, Malaysia."

## High Tiger Populations in Sundarbans (Bangladesh and India)

The Forest Department of Bangladesh has officially announced that the number of the country's iconic Royal Bengal Tiger is 106 in Bangladesh territory of the Sundarbans, as per the Tiger Census of 2015. According to the Indian findings, there are 76 tigers in the Sundarbans of India that made the total number of tigers 182 in the largest mangrove forest in the world, shared

60% by Bangladesh and 40% by India. This is the first time the tiger counting was conducted through best modern camera trapping technology using GPS in Bangladesh.

Source: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/environment/2015/oct/04/bangladesh-finds-106-tigers-sundarbans-india-76>



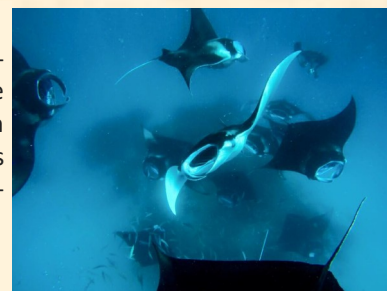
Island in Maldives



## Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage property (Australia)

A reactive monitoring mission by IUCN and ICOMOS to assess the state of conservation of the "Tasmanian Wilderness" World Heritage Site took place from 23 to 29 November, at the invitation of Australia and in keeping with the request made by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th ses-

sion in 2015. The monitoring mission will assess the overall state of conservation of the property and provide advice for the revision of its management plan and re-drafting of its retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value.



Manta rays aggregating at the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve, Maldives

## Tubbataha Reef declared ASEAN Heritage Park (Phillipines)

The Philippines' Tubbataha Reef Natural Park (TRNP) was officially launched as the 35th ASEAN Heritage Park on November 5, 2015 at Palawan. "A piece of heaven on Earth" is how ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity's Executive Director Atty. Roberto Oliva described the Tubbataha Reef Natural Park, which is recognized as having the highest coral diversity in the world.

Oliva added that the TRNP is located at the apex of the Coral Triangle, the global centre of marine biodiversity.

Source: <http://cnnphilippines.com/lifestyle/2015/11/05/Palawan-Tubbataha-Reef-35th-ASEAN-Heritage-Park.html>

## WORLD HERITAGE OUTLOOK

### Heard and McDonald Islands (Australia)

(Inscribed in 1997), Criteria viii, ix

Conservation Outlook: Good

Heard Island and McDonald Islands, located in the Southern Ocean, as the only volcanically active sub-antarctic islands they 'open a window into the earth', thus providing the opportunity to observe ongoing geomorphic processes and glacial dynamics. The distinctive conservation value of Heard and McDonald lies in the complete absence of alien plants and animals, as well as human impact. The values for which the site was inscribed remain well preserved, largely as a result of its

isolation and challenging logistic needs to access the islands. The site's extreme geographical remoteness and funding constraints, however, also limit the ability to undertake regular on-site management operations. It is considered unlikely that threats to the values will increase in the near future.

Source: [http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/search-sites/-/wdpaid/en/145576?p\\_auth=9SBoMnOU](http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/search-sites/-/wdpaid/en/145576?p_auth=9SBoMnOU)

### Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (India)

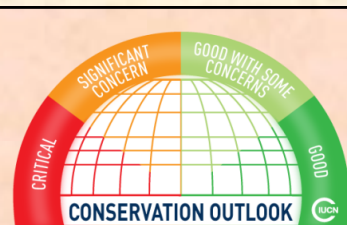
(Inscribed in 2014), Criteria x

Conservation Outlook: Good with some concerns

GNPCA is of global significance for the conservation of Western Himalayan biodiversity. Its size, remote location, rugged topography and inaccessibility contribute to the effective conservation management of important habitats and endangered species present at the property. Human settlement related threats pose the greatest concern and include agriculture, localised poaching,

traditional grazing, human-wildlife conflicts and hydropower development. The context of the site within a larger complex of protected lands bodes well for its conservation outlook and provides opportunities for progressive expansion of the property.

Source: <http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/search-sites/-/wdpaid/en/555577557?>



The assessments have classified the sites according to five rating categories namely, (i) Good; (ii) Good with some concern; (iii) Significant concern; (iv) Critical; and (v) Data Deficient.

This Conservation Outlook Gauge has been reproduced from:

<http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/web/iucn/understanding->

## UNESCO C2C INDIA: CURRENT ACTIVITIES

## First IPBES Capacity Building Forum

The First Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) capacity building forum was hosted by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun with technical and logistic support of the UNESCO C2C India from 19-22 October, 2015. Nearly 75 participants from 50 countries actively participated in the workshop. The first meeting of the Forum was aimed to promote dialogue amongst receivers, implementers and funders of capacity-building activities. The meeting explored opportunities for cooperation on aligned investments in capacity-building needs, further partnerships for piloting and delivering the IPBES capacity-building programme and plan further action, including preparation for future meetings of the forum.



Dr. Zakri Abdul Hamid IPBES Founding Chair, Science Advisor to Malaysia's Prime Minister and member of the UN Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board.

The Forum was chaired by Dr. Zakri Abdul Hamid, IPBES Founding Chair, Science Advisor to Malaysia's Prime Minister and member of the UN Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board.

## International Training Workshop on Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation in World Natural Heritage Sites for SAARC Countries

An 'International Training Workshop on Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation in World Natural Heritage Sites for SAARC Countries' was organised by the UNESCO C2C at Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Uttarakhand from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. The Open Standards bring together common concepts, approaches, and



Field visit during International Training Workshop on Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation in World Natural Heritage Sites for SAARC Countries

terminology in conservation project design, management, and monitoring in order to help practitioners improve the with enhanced capacity for developing and monitoring conservation plans to be practice of conservation. Among the major outcomes of the training



Dr. Adam Barlow, Director, WildTeam UK, Resource Person for Open Standards Workshop

was the creation of a network of World Heritage Site personnel implemented in their respective sites. A total of 26 participants representing World Heritage Sites from SAARC countries, including India, both Government and Non-Government Organisations, attended the workshop. The workshop was facilitated by resource persons from WildTeam United Kingdom. Financial support was provided by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India and Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST), Dehradun.

"IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessments are a projection of the potential for a natural World Heritage Site to conserve its value over time."



## First Stakeholder Consultative Workshop for Nomination of Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Following a request to UNESCO C2C at Wildlife Institute of India by the Manipur Forest Department for nomination of Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLNP) as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the first stakeholder consultation and on-site assessment was undertaken between 19 - 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2015 in Manipur province, northeast India. The habitat of KLNP is characterised by a unique ecosystem called 'Phumdi' (a Manipuri word meaning floating mats of soil and vegetation) on the Loktak Lake. The National Park harbours the Endangered Manipur brow-antlered deer (*Rucervus eldii eldii*) also popularly known as the *Sangai*. The programme included consultations with local stakeholders around KLNP; workshop with State-level government



Phumdi in Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area



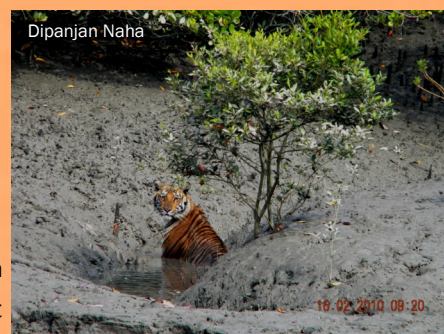
First Stakeholder Consultative Workshop for Nomination of Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

departments, NGOs, academia, etc.; field visit to the site and buffer areas; and tour to the Sangai population in captivity. The stakeholders in general were supportive of pursuing the World Heritage Site status to KLNP and were proud of their cultural association with the Sangai. Two main recommendations emerging from the visit included, firstly, proposing the National Park boundary as the World Heritage property area, with buffer of Loktak Lake in the North and Pumlen Pat in the Southeast; and secondly, that the site should be nominated in the mixed category for its outstanding cultural and natural values.

### Upcoming Event

**International Training Workshop on Enhancing Capacity for Effective Management of Coastal and Marine World Heritage Sites of the Asia-Pacific Region**  
Sundarbans, West Bengal  
26-28 February, 2016

UNESCO C2C at Wildlife Institute of India, in partnership with GIZ – Conservation and Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Protected Areas Project (CMPA) and the West Bengal Forest Department will be conducting an International Training Workshop on “Enhancing Capacity for Effective Management of Coastal and Marine World Heritage Sites of the Asia-Pacific Region”, at Sundarbans World Heritage Site, West Bengal from 26-28 February, 2016. The major objectives of the workshop will be to sensitize participants to the existing best practices concerning the management of coastal and marine WHS, adoption of Disaster Risk-Reduction strategies; formulation of road map ahead for effective representation of Asia-Pacific coastal and marine sites on the UNESCO WHS list. The main target group will be the field managers of the Coastal and Marine World Heritage Sites from the Asia-Pacific.



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**\*Photo theme of this Issue is Maldives as a proposed Biosphere Reserve. Photographs provided by Ministry of Environment and Energy, Maldives.**