



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



World  
Heritage  
Convention

# ANNUAL REPORT

// 2015



## 2015 in Review

As we reflect on the past twelve months, we have a lot to be grateful for. With your support, we have made big strides in protecting some of the world's most spectacular places. In the Arctic, Russia's Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve—home to the world's largest population of Pacific walrus—is now safe from drilling in the nearby Chukchi Sea. At Australia's Great Barrier Reef, we helped achieve a ban on dumping of dredged material, secured a government commitment of AUS\$200 million to improve water quality and a goal of reducing polluted runoff by 80% by 2025. In Belize, the government announced a permanent ban for offshore oil exploration in the entire Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System and the site now has a clear roadmap aimed at getting off the List of World Heritage in Danger. The Philippines' Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and Mauritania's Banc d'Arguin National Park have both formally applied for better protection against shipping pollution, noise and groundings at the International Maritime Organization. We

ended the year on a high note at COP21, where H.E. President Anote of Kiribati, home to the largest World Heritage site, Phoenix Islands Protected Area, made an impassioned speech about the threat of sea level rise for unique ocean places and world leaders reached the first ever global climate agreement. None of these successes would have been possible without our partners. The Swiss watch manufacture Jaeger-LeCoultre has been a driving force behind our success and we were pleased to renew our partnership with the Government of Flanders and welcomed new collaborations with the French Marine Protected Areas Agency and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. Despite new partner commitments, financial support for marine World Heritage remains too low to meet many of the challenges confronting our iconic marine places. Tackling this pressing problem will remain a key priority throughout 2016.

**Fanny Douvere**  
Coordinator Marine Programme,  
UNESCO World Heritage Centre



© Galapagos National Park

### Learning by doing

Our first ever compilation of best management practices for marine World Heritage sites is now available in French, English and Spanish.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1300/>



© Jose Alejandro Alvarez-Fundacion Amigos de la Isla del Coco

### Fighting poaching in Cocos Island National Park

with support from our treasured partner Jaeger-LeCoultre.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1348/>



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### Marine WH at COP21:

Our staff was there to share climate concerns from the 47 World Heritage marine sites.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1390/>

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<http://whc.unesco.org/document/106793>



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# HIGHLIGHTS → OF OUR IMPACT IN 2015

The Marine World Heritage team traveled all over in 2015 to provide technical and policy support on monitoring and enforcement, threats from oil exploration, sustainable tourism and building stronger alliances with local communities. Below are just four highlights of our impact:



## **MAURITANIA'S BANC D'ARGUIN NATIONAL PARK: YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMMING**

Banc d'Arguin is more than just a feeding ground for tens of thousands of birds. It is also home to a vibrant community of Imraguen tribes, and the World Heritage Marine Programme has helped us inspire the next generation of conservation leaders through youth programming that gets local residents involved."

Maître Ali Mohamed Salem,  
Director of Banc d'Arguin National Park,  
Mauritania



## **WEST NORWEGIAN FJORDS – GEIRANGERFJORD AND NÆRØYFJORD : SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COLLABORATION WITH GLACIER BAY**

The partnership that the World Heritage Marine Programme has made possible with Alaska's Glacier Bay is helping us develop a sustainable tourism plan that will allow visitors from all over the world to enjoy our World Heritage site while minimizing pollution, protecting wildlife, and helping to fund our conservation efforts."

Ms. Katrin Blomvik,  
Director Geirangerfjorden Verdsarv  
Foundation, Norway



### **AUSTRALIA'S GREAT BARRIER REEF: A 30-YEAR PLAN TO SUSTAIN THE GBR**

World Heritage designation sets a high standard for sustainable management, and UNESCO's involvement in the Great Barrier Reef has helped Australia take a long term approach to Reef protection through our Reef 2050 Plan. It includes laws preventing the disposal of dredge material in the site and substantially increase efforts to improve water quality."

Dr. Russell Reichelt,  
Chairperson and CEO, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australia



### **BELIZE BARRIER REEF RESERVE SYSTEM: REMOVING THE SITE FROM THE DANGER LIST**

Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System is a global treasure, and a source of pride for our nation. UNESCO is raising our understanding of the tremendous socio-economic benefits our precious reef can bring to local communities and is providing much-needed technical assistance toward getting the Reef off the List of World Heritage in Danger over the next years."

Ms. Beverly Wade,  
Belize World Heritage Focal Point,  
Belize

# WORLD HERITAGE CONSERVATION: A WORK IN PROGRESS

The work of conserving the world's most unique and treasured ocean places is far from done. The very core of our work concerns safeguarding sites against threats like industrial development, illegal fishing, and pollution, and helping them prepare for the effects of a changing climate. While Marine World Heritage sites have been designated in 36 countries, IUCN technical advice concluded that the Arctic region is underrepresented on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The 2011 evaluation on World Heritage Lists' Global Strategy recommended the World Heritage Committee explore the potential for Outstanding Universal Value in the High Seas. IUCN is the official technical advisor for all natural sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List and assists in that capacity with oversight of marine sites. Below are but a few examples of our ongoing work.



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## Building capacity in East Rennell, Solomon Islands

Rennell Island in the western Pacific is the largest raised coral atoll in the world. East Rennell, on its southern end, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1998, the first natural property inscribed with customary ownership and management. The site currently suffers from commercial logging and invasive rats and was listed in Danger in 2013. The Marine World Heritage team teamed up with IUCN last November for a mission to East Rennell to assist the local government with a plan for restoring the site's natural values. Our work was made possible by the Government of Flanders.

## Reviewing the state of conservation

At this summer's World Heritage Committee meeting, held in Bonn, Germany between 28 June and 8 July, the Committee reviewed the state of conservation for 11 World Heritage marine sites, including the highly anticipated decision on the status of Australia's Great Barrier Reef. At that meeting, the Committee also adopted the roadmap to get the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System off the List of World Heritage in Danger, and applauded the Government of Kiribati's decision to close the entirety of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area to commercial fishing; Link to the decision draft and adopted: <http://bit.ly/1Npb0MI>

## Exploring World Heritage potential in the High Seas

Imagine a world with sunken fossilized islands covered in corals, vast seamounts, and a floating golden rainforest. All of this exists in the High Seas. The High Seas lie beyond national jurisdiction, and they are the last major frontier for Marine World Heritage. Last year, we brought together scientific experts to assess the potential for applying the concept of Outstanding Universal Value—the bedrock the World Heritage concept is built on—to the High Seas. The results of their assessment will be presented at the forthcoming 40th session of the World Heritage Committee next July in Istanbul, Turkey. This work was made possible by the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation and the French Marine Protected Area Agency.



The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provides technical advice to help the World Heritage Committee make informed decisions on natural World Heritage. IUCN assists in the World Heritage Marine Programme's work for assessing World Heritage potential in the High Seas and will lead the identification of potential new sites in the Arctic region throughout 2016.

# COMING UP IN 2016



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## A review of The Sundarbans in Bangladesh

The Sundarbans in Bangladesh encompasses one of the world's largest mangrove forests spread across a labyrinth of tidal waterways, mudflats and islands. It lies at the Delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal, and is home to the renowned Bengal tiger as well as Ganges and Irrawadi dolphins, estuarine crocodile and Indian python. The site was listed as World Heritage in 1997 following the earlier

inscription of Sundarbans National Park in India with which it forms one of the most productive natural systems in the world.

The site was affected by a substantial oil spill in December 2014, and the construction of a proposed super thermal power plant has also raised concerns. The World Heritage Centre and IUCN will travel to The Sundarbans in Spring of 2016 to assess the state of conservation, and will then report back to the World Heritage Committee.



© Alexander Gruzdev

## Exploring new marine World Heritage sites in the Arctic

The Arctic's icy waters are home to wildlife found nowhere else, including bowhead whales, narwhals, and walrus. The region is also ground zero for climate change, as rising temperatures and melting sea ice are opening up new shipping routes and potential oil and gas developments. The Arctic is currently home to just two World Heritage sites: Russia's Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve and the spectacular tidal icefjords of Ilulissat Icefjord in Greenland [Denmark].

A new partnership between the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, IUCN and New York-based Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) will focus on exploring the potential for new World Heritage sites in the Arctic. The first scientific expert meeting will convene at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre's headquarters late February. The aim of this new cooperation is to inform State Parties to the 1972 World Heritage Convention about places of possible Outstanding Universal Value in the Arctic that might be located in their territories.



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## 2016 Annual World Heritage Committee

The 40th session of the World Heritage Committee will be held in Istanbul, Turkey from 10 to 20 July 2016. At least 8 marine sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List will be officially reviewed for their state of conservation this year, including Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection in Panama, the Galápagos Islands in Ecuador, the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System in Belize, East Rennell in Solomon Islands, Socotra Archipelago in Yemen, Banc d'Arguin National Park in Mauritania, Everglades National Park and Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve system in Russia.

The goal of this periodic review is to ensure every World Heritage site is managed in a way that protects its Outstanding Universal Value, and to flag threats from development, pollution, invasive species or illegal fishing and work with governments toward sustainable solutions. Our programme works with sites throughout the year to manage challenges that could jeopardize their Outstanding Universal Value and inspire a stewardship ethic in both local communities and visitors. During a special event in the first half of the Committee session, we will launch the results of our High Seas work.



© Mario Santana

## Managers of the oceans icons convene in Galapagos for 3rd time

This year we are bringing all of the marine World Heritage site managers from 47 sites in 36 countries together for the third time. The Galápagos Islands in Ecuador will host the unique gathering from 27 to 31 August 2016. Mitigating climate change impacts like rising sea levels and warmer temperatures in World Heritage marine sites, and market-based solutions for sustainable fisheries will be the

core focus of this year's conference. Managers will share their experiences working on these challenges, exchange solutions that worked and could be replicated elsewhere and help chart the future course of World Heritage marine sites. The conference is being organized through a partnership with Lindblad Expeditions, and will include a tour of the Galápagos Islands, where the Marine World Heritage Programme has been helping site managers build their capacity for monitoring and enforcement to counter illegal fishing.

# OUR PARTNERS

## Our key partners



### Jaeger-LeCoultre

The Swiss watch manufacture Jaeger-LeCoultre was the first to partner with the World Heritage Marine Programme in 2008. The partnership has been instrumental in building a global managers network and securing key conservation achievements in Australia's Great Barrier Reef, increased radar capacity against poaching in Cocos Islands National Park and surveilling illegal fisheries in Tubbataha Reefs National Park.



### Government of Flanders

The Flanders Government (Kingdom of Belgium) first partnered with the Marine Programme in 2010. The partnership made it possible to create and facilitate the adoption of the roadmap that can lead to the removal of Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System from the List of World Heritage in Danger. The Government of Flanders recently agreed to extend the partnership until March 2018. The renewal will concentrate on the first comprehensive review of sustainable fisheries in marine World Heritage sites.

## Supporting partners



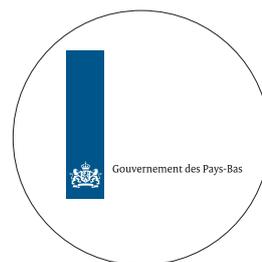
### Fonds Pacifique

The *Fonds Pacifique* of the Government of France supported the programme's activities to strengthen management capacity in the Pacific region. The partnership allowed the exchange of managers between the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Galápagos Islands to scale up compliance monitoring. It also supported an exchange between the Great Barrier Reef and Tubbataha Reefs Marine Park to help Tubbataha develop a revised management plan that is now fully focused on the sites' outstanding World Heritage values.



### French Marine Protected Areas Agency

Following successful initial collaborations with the Marine Programme in 2012 and 2013, l'Agence des aires marines protégées (AAMP) decided to sign a multi-year partnership to strengthen the World Heritage Convention's capacities to protect exceptional and unique marine protected areas. The partnership will support the third marine World Heritage site managers conference in the Galápagos Islands and the programme's work toward the potential for World Heritage in the High Seas.



### Government of the Netherlands

The Government of the Netherlands, via its UNESCO Netherlands Funds-in-Trust, first collaborated with the World Heritage Marine Programme in 2010 which led to the first global conference of marine World Heritage site managers. The cooperation in 2015 to 2016 will bring together an overview of the core challenges and opportunities for marine World Heritage over the coming decade. The results will be published in November 2016 as part of a UNESCO's World Heritage Series.



### Resource Media/Marisla Foundation

With support from Marisla Foundation, the Marine Programme has been working with the communications experts at Resource Media since 2013. Resource Media is helping us develop the outreach capacity of individual sites and the marine World Heritage network as a whole. They provided media training at our Corsica site managers conference in 2013, and have since been helping the programme capture success stories and lessons learned to share across our network and around the world with the broader marine conservation community.



### Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation

The Foundation started its cooperation with the World Heritage Marine Programme in 2014. The innovative and groundbreaking new work on the potential of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in the High Seas is made possible through this partnership. A special event is scheduled to take place during the World Heritage Committee meeting in 2016 where the results of this partnership will be made public.

### Anonymous donations

Our work for the Banc d'Arguin National Park is made possible thanks to anonymous donations following the Tides of Time article about the site in the International New York Times in 2010.

# OUR TEAM

Experts from all over the world have helped make our work possible throughout 2015. We are grateful for their support and look forward to working together in 2016.



World Heritage Marine Programme staff, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris



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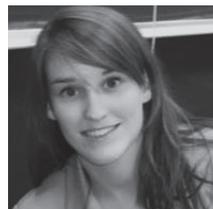
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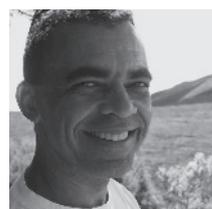
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## WHAT WE DO

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### Conservation

Our core task: ensuring the long-term conservation of World Heritage marine sites through state of conservation reporting



### Networking

Building a network of World Heritage marine site managers who share management solutions and best practices across 47 sites



### Training

Training site managers to use ecosystem-based marine spatial planning as a tool to optimize marine World Heritage site conservation.



### Exploring

Exploring the potential of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in the High Seas, an area covering nearly 60% of our ocean



### Safeguarding

Our Mission: To Ensure Long-Term Conservation of World Heritage Marine Sites – 20 % of all MPAs on Earth by surface area

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