



unesco

UNESCO MARINE WORLD HERITAGE

2021-2022

ANNUAL OVERVIEW

Introduction
p.2

Marine World
Heritage at a glance
p.3

Blue carbon
p.4

Successes
from the field
p.5

Building resilience
and adaptation
p.6

Ocean Science for
Decision making
p.8

Environmental
DNA
p.10

Oversight and
accountability
p.11

Join us
p.13



INTRODUCTION

While 2021 remained a challenging year, several marine World Heritage sites made major progress, particularly in attracting new financial support for conservation and management. Over the year, we also made an initial investment to understand the nature-based solutions that marine World Heritage ecosystems offer to mitigate climate change - the results of which are reflected in our blue carbon work.

Consistent with our mandate, the majority of our work in 2021 concentrated on building resilience at the local level through on-the-ground capacity building, sharing of best practices, state of conservation oversight, and through the Resilient Reefs Initiative. With 75% of sites lacking the necessary science to deal with the threat of climate change, we ended the year with a strategic roadmap to close the gap by 2030 through concerted

effort under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

We are deeply grateful for our trusted partners, experts, advisory bodies and the local managers and their teams for their unwavering support to the conservation of marine World Heritage. Without them, none of this work would have been possible.



UNESCO MARINE WORLD HERITAGE AT A GLANCE:

50

outstanding
ocean places
in 37 countries

100%

have
management
systems in place

21%

of the planet's
blue carbon
ecosystems

88%

collect
ocean
science data

70%

under
threat from
climate change

75%

struggle
with invasive
species



Introduction

Marine World
Heritage at a glance

Blue carbon

Successes
from the field

Building resilience
and adaptation

Ocean Science for
Decision making

Environmental
DNA

Oversight and
accountability

Join us

BLUE CARBON

In 2021, we made a first investment to understand how World Heritage-listed marine sites can provide nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change. The resulting research confirmed that an astonishing 21% of the world's blue carbon ecosystems and 15% of the world's blue carbon assets are stored in marine World Heritage sites. Their protection plays a central role in capturing carbon from the atmosphere, but degradation of these ecosystems could also release billions of tons of greenhouse gases.

READ
the Report 

LISTEN
to the Podcast 



SUCCESSES FROM THE FIELD



© Wata51/shutterstock.com

Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (Belize)

The Government of Belize and The Nature Conservancy establish a multi-million dollar debt for nature swap generating sustainable investment, including for World Heritage reef protection.

[READ MORE](#)



© emka74/shutterstock.com

Wadden Sea (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands)

New report shows breeding population of grey seals at the Wadden Sea World Heritage Area (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands) grew 11% annually over the past five years.

[READ MORE](#)



© UNESCO / Daniel Correia

Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dungonab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park (Sudan)

UNDP mobilizes 23 million USD to benefit Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dungonab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park World Heritage site, including mangrove protection and livelihood support.

[READ MORE](#)



© Matthias Balagy / Turtle.nc

Lagoons of New Caledonia: Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems (France)

Indigenous communities sign historic collaboration reconciling traditional customs with preservation of green turtle population.

[READ MORE](#)



© UNESCO / Daniel Correia

Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary (Colombia), Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection (Panama), Galápagos Islands (Ecuador), Cocos Island National Park (Costa Rica)

Presidents sign agreement at COP26 that steps up protection of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor, safeguarding migratory species across the four marine World Heritage sites.

[READ MORE](#)



© iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

iSimangaliso Wetland Park (South Africa)

New equipment steps up compliance and surveillance and will facilitate community and youth awareness.

[READ MORE](#)



© Sean Steinger/Shutterstock.com

Ningaloo Coast (Australia)

Ningaloo Coast launches first economic valuation as part of the Resilient Reefs Initiative, illustrating that the World Heritage status contributes an estimated AU\$110 million to Western Australia annually.

[READ MORE](#)



BUILDING RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

Under a business-as-usual emissions scenario, nearly 90% of the 29 World Heritage-listed coral reefs are expected to severely bleach twice-per-decade by 2040. With the help of a global consortium of partners, we continued our focus on empowering local communities to build resilience in the face of climate change.

As part of the *Resilient Reefs Initiative*, we now have chief resilience officers leading the on-the-ground work in the Lagoons of New Caledonia: Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems (France), Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (Belize) and Ningaloo Coast

(Australia) World Heritage sites and recruitment is in the final stage at the Rocks Islands Southern Lagoon (Palau) World Heritage site.

[READ MORE](#)
about the Resilient Reefs Initiative 

[WATCH](#)
the Film 





Introduction

Marine World
Heritage at a glance

Blue carbon

Successes
from the field

Building resilience
and adaptation

Ocean Science for
Decision making

Environmental
DNA

Oversight and
accountability

Join us

“

“Our duty is not to maintain a static system, but to retain this Outstanding Universal Value of exceptional natural beauty and unique biodiversity.”

Joel Johnsson, Chief Resilience Officer,
Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Site

”





Introduction

Marine World
Heritage at a glance

Blue carbon

Successes
from the field

Building resilience
and adaptation

Ocean Science for
Decision making

Environmental
DNA

Oversight and
accountability

Join us

OCEAN SCIENCE FOR DECISION MAKING

Sound decision-making is underpinned by science. Our most recent survey revealed that 75% of marine World Heritage sites are unprepared to deal with the impact of climate change due to a lack of scientific knowledge. A new strategic roadmap launched with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission will guide science investment throughout the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development with the aim to close the gap by 2030.

DOWNLOAD
the Ocean Science Roadmap 

WATCH
the UNESCO General Conference launch Event 



Introduction

Marine World
Heritage at a glance

Blue carbon

Successes
from the field

Building resilience
and adaptation

Ocean Science for
Decision making

Environmental
DNA

Oversight and
accountability

Join us

2021
2030 United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

“

“UNESCO marine World Heritage sites serve as sentinels and observers of change on the front lines of our climate emergency.”

H.E. Ambassador Peter Thomson,
UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for
the Ocean

”


H.E. Ambassador
Peter Thomson



ENVIRONMENTAL DNA

World Heritage is a legacy of the past that we protect for future generations. In a constantly changing ocean, monitoring biodiversity is critical yet costly when performed long term. For the next two years, we will be engaging local citizens and scientists to help measure sites' vulnerability to climate change through environmental DNA sampling expeditions. Data will be stored in the global open science database OBIS at the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.

[READ the Press release](#) 

[VISIT the Project website](#) 



Introduction

Marine World
Heritage at a glance

Blue carbon

Successes
from the field

Building resilience
and adaptation

Ocean Science for
Decision making


Environmental
DNA

Oversight and
accountability

Join us

OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

World Heritage recognition comes with the responsibility to protect it. Last year, the conservation and management of 17 marine World Heritage sites was evaluated by the World Heritage Committee. Scientific advice and recommendations for these deliberations is done annually and prepared in collaboration with IUCN.

CHECK
the Evaluations 



“

According to the 2020 IUCN World Heritage Outlook, 70% of the 50 UNESCO marine World Heritage sites are threatened by climate change.

”





Introduction

Marine World
Heritage at a glance

Blue carbon

Successes
from the field

Building resilience
and adaptation

Environmental
DNA

Oversight and
accountability

Ocean Science
Roadmap

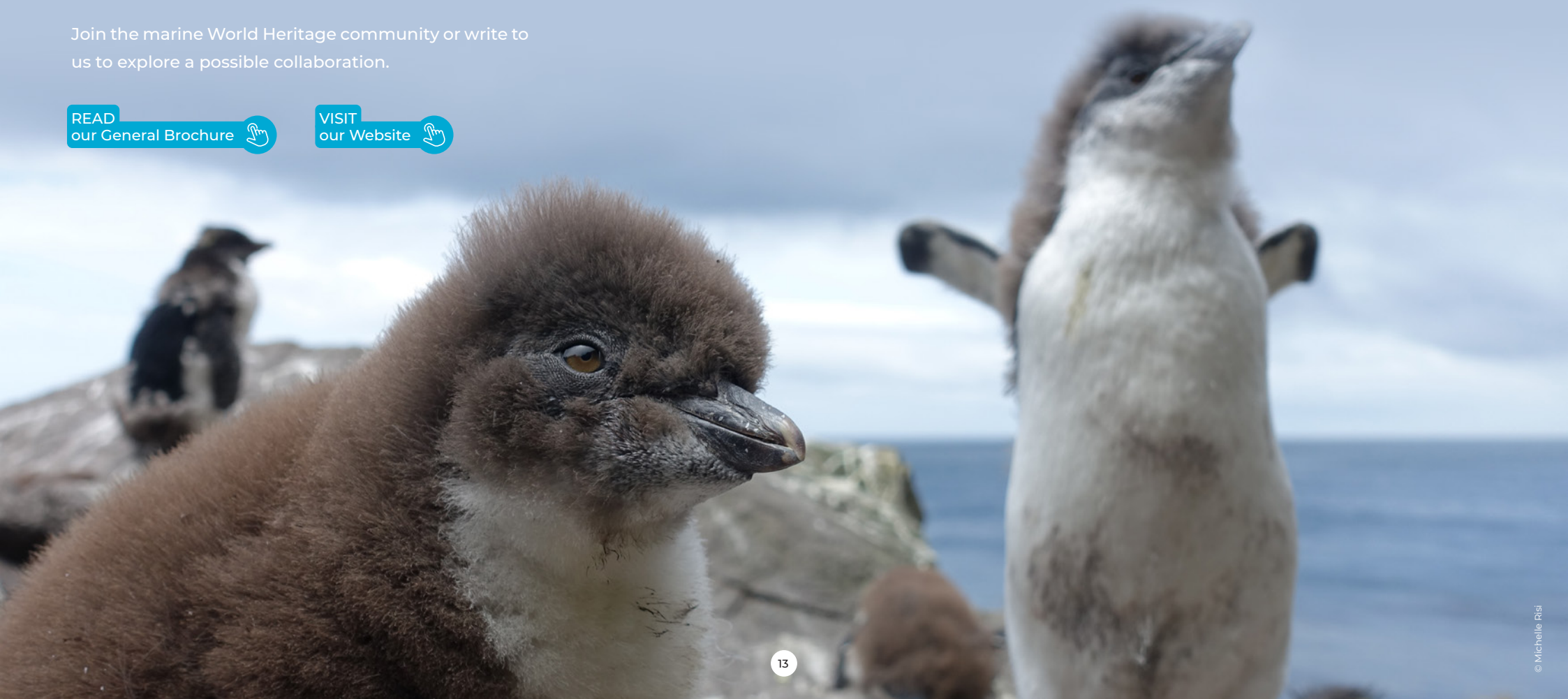
Join us

JOIN US AND SUPPORT OUR WORK

Join the marine World Heritage community or write to us to explore a possible collaboration.

READ
our General Brochure 

VISIT
our Website 





OUR PARTNERS

We thank the governments, charitable foundations and individuals who have supported our conservation work during 2021.



French Biodiversity Agency,
Government of France



Government of Flanders,
Belgium



Great Barrier Reef
Foundation



Prince Albert II of Monaco
Foundation



Principality
of Monaco

In cooperation with the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, official advisory body for natural heritage under the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

We thank the anonymous donors whose generous support enables the World Heritage Marine Programme to fulfil its mandate.



Introduction

Marine World
Heritage at a glance

Blue carbon

Successes
from the field

Building resilience
and adaptation

Environmental
DNA

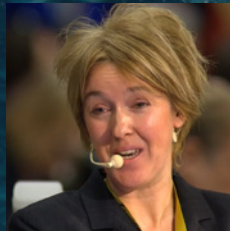
Oversight and
accountability

Ocean Science
Roadmap

Join us

OUR TEAM

World Heritage Marine Programme Staff
Headquarters, Paris



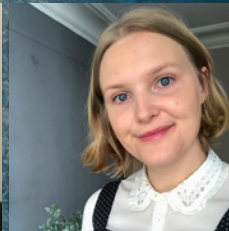
**FANNY
DOUVERE**
Programme
Coordinator



**ROBERT
CASIER**
Associate
Programme Specialist



**VANESSA
LUCOT**
Programme
Assistant



**ELLE
GILLARD**
Consultant



**NOLWAZI
MJWARA**
Associate
Communications
Officer

Contact:

World Heritage Marine Programme
UNESCO | World Heritage Centre | Natural Heritage Unit
Email: wh-marine@unesco.org | <http://whc.unesco.org/en/marine-programme/>



2021 World Heritage Marine Core Consulting Team



**TRISHA
B. ATWOOD**
Utah State
University



**JAMES
KAIRO**
Kenya Marine
and Fisheries
Research Institute



**HILARY
KENNEDY**
Bangor
University



**DORTE
KRAUSE-JENSEN**
Aarhus
University



**CARLOS
M. DUARTE**
King Abdullah
University of Science
and Technology
(KAUST)



**CATHERINE
LOVELOCK**
The University
of Queensland



**OSCAR
SERRANO**
Centre d'Estudis
Avançats de Blanes,
CSIC



**AMY
ARMSTRONG**
Great Barrier Reef
Foundation



**SARAH
CASTINE**
Great Barrier Reef
Foundation



**KRISTEN
MAIZE**
The Nature
Conservancy



**NICK
HOLMES**
The Nature
Conservancy



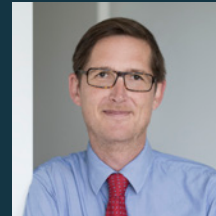
**JAMES
RUSSELL**
University of
Auckland



**INTI
KEITH**
Charles Darwin
Foundation



**DAWN
J. WRIGHT**
Environmental
Systems Research
Institute (Esri)



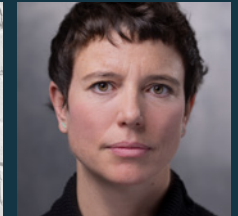
**MARKUS
KNIGGE**
Blue Action
Fund



**DIDIER
THÉRON**
Monaco
Explorations



**DAVID
ADAMS**
Journalist
and Author



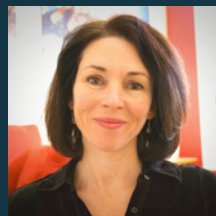
RUTH FRANCIS
Communications
Consultant



**JOSEPH
POLIDORO**
Editorial and
communications
advisor



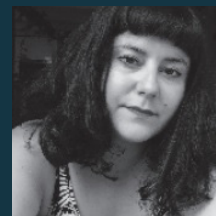
**SALVATORE
VECCHIO**
Film
Director



**ALISON
BARRAT**
Film Writer
Producer



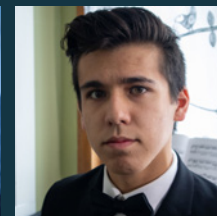
**JOEL
SHEAKOSKI**
Joel S Photo
LLC



**AURÉLIA
MAZOYER**
Graphic
designer



**SHANE
GROSS**
Conservation
Photographer



CARLOS LALONDE
Music
Composer



50 Marine World Heritage Sites Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List



- World Heritage site in Danger
- Natural World Heritage site
- Mixed cultural and natural World Heritage site

Source: UNESCO, 2021
The names and boundaries shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Source: United Nations / Geospatial Information Section of the United Nations

ARGENTINA

[Península Valdés](#), 1999

AUSTRALIA

[Great Barrier Reef](#), 1981
[Heard and McDonald Islands](#), 1997
[Lord Howe Island Group](#), 1982
[Macquarie Island](#), 1997
[Ningaloo Coast](#), 2011
[Shark Bay, Western Australia](#), 1991

BANGLADESH

[The Sundarbans](#), 1997

BELIZE

[Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System](#), 1996

BRAZIL

[Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves](#), 2001

CANADA/USA

[Kluane / Wrangell-St. Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek](#), 1979

COLOMBIA

[Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary](#), 2006

COSTA RICA

[Area de Conservación Guanacaste](#), 1999
[Cocos Island National Park](#), 1997

DENMARK/GERMANY/NETHERLANDS

[The Wadden Sea](#), 2009

ECUADOR

[Galápagos Islands](#), 1978

FINLAND/SWEDEN

[High Coast / Kvarken Archipelago](#), 2000

FRANCE

[Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve](#), 1983
[Lagoons of New Caledonia: Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems](#), 2008
[French Austral Lands and Seas](#), 2019

ICELAND

[Surtsey](#), 2008

INDIA

[Sundarbans National Park](#), 1987

INDONESIA

[Komodo National Park](#), 1991
[Ujung Kulon National Park](#), 1991

JAPAN

[Ogasawara Islands](#), 2011
[Shiretoko](#), 2005

KIRIBATI

[Phoenix Islands Protected Area](#), 2010

MAURITANIA

[Banc d'Arguin National Park](#), 1989

MEXICO

[Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California](#), 2005
[Sian Ka'an](#), 1987
[Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino](#), 1993
[Archipiélago de Revillagigedo](#), 2016

NEW ZEALAND

[New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands](#), 1998

NORWAY

[West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord](#), 2005

PALAU

[Rock Islands Southern Lagoon](#), 2012

PANAMA

[Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection](#), 2005

PHILIPPINES

[Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park](#), 1999
[Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park](#), 1993

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

[Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve](#), 2004

SEYCHELLES

[Aldabra Atoll](#), 1982

SOLOMON ISLANDS

[East Rennell](#), 1998

SOUTH AFRICA

[iSimangaliso Wetland Park](#), 1999

SPAIN

[Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture](#), 1999

SUDAN

[Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dugongab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park](#), 2016

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

[Gough and Inaccessible Islands](#), 1995
[St Kilda](#), 1986

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

[Everglades National Park](#), 1979
[Papahānaumokuākea](#), 2010

VIET NAM

[Ha Long Bay](#), 1994

YEMEN

[Socotra Archipelago](#), 2008