

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

IUCN TECHNICAL REVIEW

1. IDENTIFICATION NUMBER AND NAME 145 The Glaciers National Park
2. LOCATION: Between 49° 15'S and 50° 40'S and 72° 45'W and 73° 30'W  
Argentina, Province of Santa Cruz
3. NOMINATED BY: Government of Argentina
4. DOCUMENTATION:
  - (i) Nomination form
  - (ii) Map "Los Glaciares" 1:300,000 1977
  - (iii) Book - La Conservacion de la Naturaleza: Parques Nacionales Argentinos, 1977
  - (iv) World Directory of National Parks and Protected Areas
  - (v) Oryx, Vol, XII, No. 2

5. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The nomination was submitted in Spanish and was reviewed by Dr. Marc Dourojeanni, Vice Chairman, Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas.

The nomination was also reviewed by Dr. Felipe Matos, previously the Latin American Desk Officer, IUCN.

Established as a national park in 1937, this vast alpine area includes 600,000 ha. of glaciated mountainous terrain situated on the Argentine-Chilean border. As an example of significant geological process "glaciation" the area fulfils criteria C 10(ii) (a).

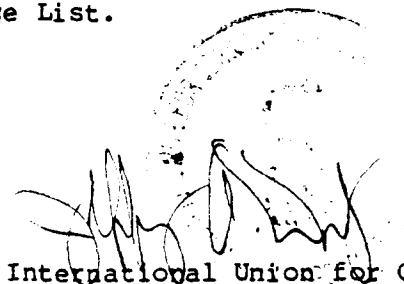
The park also meets criteria C 10(iii) as an area of exceptional natural beauty. Finally, rare species such as the huemul (Hippocamelus bisulcus), and the condor (Vultur gryphus) qualify the area under criteria C 10(iv).

6. INTEGRITY

The presence of a series of buffer zones on the east side of the park and its high alpine nature provide considerable assurance that its natural values will be protected.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Glaciers National Park meets natural criteria (ii) and (iii) and should be added to the World Heritage List.



International Union for Conservation of Nature and  
Natural Resources

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## THE GLACIERS NATIONAL PARK (Argentina)

During the past 100,000 years, as Homo sapiens was evolving into his fully modern form, glaciers periodically advanced to cover much of Eurasia and North America, as well as the southern temperate regions. The so-called "periglacial" environment is widely thought to have provided one of the environmental challenges which led to advances in tools, social behavior, language, and the other qualities which make a modern human. Glaciation is therefore important to man not only for its geological effects, but also for its social effects.

The best place in South America to see glaciers in action is the Glaciers National Park in southern Argentina, a vast, 600,000 hectare alpine area which contains some of the few glaciers in the world which are actually advancing, reversing the worldwide trend of retreating glaciers. The site offers a fertile ground for comparing the effects of retreating and advancing glaciers, a dramatic comparison indeed. For the advancing Mereno glacier in the park often advances so far that its snout cuts off the normal escape stream of Lake Rico, forming a natural dam which inundates vast areas before melting in the heat of summer and sending a roaring wall of water on its destructive course down the valley.

The Glaciers National Park is an area of exceptional natural beauty, with rugged, towering mountains and numerous glacial lakes, including the great Lake Argentina, a hundred miles long; at its further end three glaciers meet to dump their effluvia into the milky gray glacial water and massive blue icebergs are launched into the lake with a thunderous splash.

The most impressive wildlife in the park is undoubtedly the birds. The many lakes offer ideal habitat to black-necked swans and a variety of ducks and geese, and Chilean flamingos wade along the shore sifting small organisms from the water. Overhead glides the Andean condor, the largest bird in the world in terms of sail area, and the high grasslands are dotted with Darwin's rhea, South America's version of the ostrich.

The site suffers from introduced species, notably the European hare, whose voracious vegetarian appetite is having a major impact on the natural ecosystems, and two species of trout, which have found an excellent habitat in the rushing streams of the park. Sheep are also grazed within the park, and tourism is a major objective of park management.

But it is fascinating to see that all of these human impacts on the environment pale into insignificance next to the inexorable geological impact of the mighty glaciers.