
WORLD HERITAGE CULTURAL NOMINATION - IUCN COMMENTS

AREA ARQUEOLOGICA Y NATURAL ALTO RIO PINTURAS (ARGENTINA)

To Note: This site was included in the initial list prepared by the World Heritage Centre as a Mixed Property. The nomination received from the State Party placed attention on both the natural and cultural values of this site, reinforcing the arguments for a mixed site. Accordingly a joint mission by IUCN and ICOMOS experts was organised and implemented with support from the State Party. It was only after the mission that IUCN and ICOMOS received clarification from the Centre noting that this nomination should be considered only as a Cultural Site. However IUCN considered that comments on the natural values present in this area would help ICOMOS in preparing its report and recommendation on this nomination.

Field Mission:

January 1999. Pedro Rosabal (IUCN), Francisco Erize (Argentinean Administration of National Parks), and Roy Querejazu Lewis (ICOMOS).

Consultations:

In addition to the field mission during which national and provincial officials, landowners, and rangers working in the area were consulted, IUCN has also consulted with three reviewers.

IUCN assessment:

While the nomination does not properly address the natural values existing in the area IUCN considers that is important to note the following:

- ◆ The nominated site is representative of the Udvardy's Patagonian Desert Biogeographic Province, which is also considered by WWF as an area of outstanding biological diversity. There are two other protected areas within this biogeographic province (Talpaya National Park and Laguna de los Pozuelos). However more additional information is required to assess how the natural values present in the nominated site compares with these other protected areas;
- ◆ The nominated site offers protection to 103 species of flora representing 37 families. From the total number of species, 63% are endemic of Patagonia, 8% are strictly endemic of the Southern Patagonia and 5% are local endemic of Santa Cruz province. This is an important value considering that the nominated site is located within an important Global Centre of Plant Diversity (WWF & IUCN, 1997);
- ◆ An important element to consider is the strong relationship between the wildlife and the cultural values occurring in the nominated site. Almost all species represented in the paintings of Cueva de las Manos can be observed in the surrounding natural areas. Large herds of guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*), a prominent species reflected in the paintings, due to its important for the sustainable livelihood of the first hunter-gatherer groups who inhabited this area, can still be seen in the area. Also a good population of choiques (*Pterocnemia pennata*), another emblematic specie in the paintings, is also present in the area. This represents a strong on-going relation between culture and nature in this site;

- ◆ In addition to the above species, there has been reported 3 species of amphibians, 18 reptiles, 45 birds and 18 mammals, including species of high priority for conservation such as puma (*Felis concolor*), condor (*Vultur gryphus*) and chinchillón (*Lagidium sp*);
- ◆ The most relevant natural value of the nominated site is its scenery related to the Pinturas River canyon. While this canyon does not rank high in comparison with other natural sites included in the World Heritage List, it is certainly an unusual geomorphologic feature in the monotonous landscape that characterises Patagonia. The canyon, of about 200m depth, with its vertical walls offers remarkable scenery to visitors. The canyon, and its past role in the hunting strategies of the hunter-gatherer groups, has also been immortalised in the paintings of Cueva de las Manos. Thus the protection of this natural environment should be seen as an integral element of the protection and management of this nominated site.

Management issues:

IUCN would like to note that, while the existing legal and management framework seem to be sufficient for the protection of the nominated site, during the field mission it was noted that it was not adequate to effectively protect the natural environment and its associated values. The overall landscape and its associated flora and fauna should be considered as an integral element to understand the environmental context which supported an important population of hunter-gatherer groups that inhabited this area for thousand of years. During the field mission the desirability of expanding the boundaries of the nominated site was discussed so as to include its broader natural environment to offer additional protection to important species of flora and fauna, as well as to the Pinturas River Canyon. The need to prepare a comprehensive management plan was also discussed, not only to protect cultural values but the natural values as well. This is an important issue considering that there are only two other protected areas offering protection to the huge Biogeographic Region of Patagonia.

Recently IUCN has received information noting that the Provincial Government of Santa Cruz has reinforced the legal status of a broader area, by declaring it as a Provincial Priority Area of Cultural and **Natural** Heritage (emphasis added) in March 1999. This new declaration includes the nominated site (declared as a National Historic Monument in 1993) plus expands the boundaries to offer better protection to the surrounding landscape and its associated flora and fauna. The Provincial Government is in the process to declare this bigger area as a Provincial Reserve. This would allow the preparation of a comprehensive management plan that would aim to enhance the protection of the natural and cultural values existing in this area.

IUCN summary:

At present (April 19, 1999) IUCN does not know the ICOMOS recommendation in relation to this site. As indicated, this is an important site for its scenery and biodiversity values. IUCN consider that the natural values present in the nominated site should be seen as an integral element for the protection and understanding of the cultural values, for which the site has been nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List. If the site is considered by ICOMOS to have the requisite qualities of a cultural site for inclusion in the World Heritage List, IUCN considers that there is a need to significantly strengthen management aspects to ensure the effective protection of the site. Future management should also encourage effective input from natural resource specialists to ensure that protection of values are maintained or enhanced. IUCN would also like to recognise the interest and commitment of the Provincial Government of Santa Cruz for its actions which oriented to enhance the protected status of this area by broadening its objectives and boundaries, to include the protection of the broader landscape and associated natural values.

Recommendation from the twenty-third ordinary session of the Bureau: July, 1999.

The Bureau recommended that the Committee inscribe this site on the World Heritage List on the basis of cultural *criterion (iii)*.