In June 2009, Unesco’s World Heritage Committee voted to include Tubbataha Reefs marine site, increasing its area to 96,828 hectares.

The Philippines’ Tubbataha Reefs National Park: A World Heritage marine site triple in size

E
er since 1993, when Tubbataha was first inscribed on Unesco’s World Heritage List, enthusiasm has been building at the home of the Philippine Institute of Oceanography in Manila. And so it was in September 2009 when, after a đánhing year of negotiations, the Philippines’ World Heritage committee formally ratified the extension of the site to its current size.

Tubbataha is one of the nation’s oldest ecotourism sites. It is a remote coral atoll on the western side of the Visayas islands, and is the only marine park in the country. Its remote location has kept it largely intact. The permanent inhabitants are few, with only fisher folk living there. Lagoons, seagrass beds and mangrove forests comprise the park’s marine ecosystem. The national government and local communities manage the park together.

In 2009, the Philippine government extended the park to include Jessie Beazley Reef, and Tubbataha’s total area jumped from 33,320 hectares (about 324 square miles) to 96,828 hectares. At its 2003 location, in total, the Philippines’ World Heritage Committee included Tubbataha Reef National Park on Unesco’s World Heritage List. Since then, it has tripled in size. The park supports 737 species of coral, almost 500 species of fish, and a constant presence of larger marine fauna such as tiger sharks, cetaceans, sea turtles and schools of barracuda and other pelagic fish. Together with diverse species of oceanic and coastal fish, it is considered one of the most important marine reserves in the world.

Spotted on page 6 of Tubbataha’s 80-page glossy magazine — in English and Bahasa Indonesia — is a cartoon of the Coral Triangle, a hub of marine biodiversity. The park supports 737 species of coral, almost 500 species of fish, and a constant presence of larger marine fauna such as tiger sharks, cetaceans, sea turtles and schools of barracuda and other pelagic fish. Together with diverse species of oceanic and coastal fish, it is considered one of the most important marine reserves in the world.

Unesco’s World Heritage Marine Program was launched in 2005 by Unesco’s World Heritage Committee, and aims through to protect and enhance the world’s marine and coastal sites. The first step was to add more sites to the World Heritage List, and the second was to identify new sites of outstanding universal value. The third step is to help protect and enhance these sites, as the fourth step is to measure the effectiveness of the measures taken in the first three steps.

Tubbataha is not, however, the only site added to the list in 2009. In all, six sites were inscribed for marine biodiversity. Another goal is capacity building. Unesco wants to help local communities to sustain their sites, and protect the values of the sites, and help them meet the challenges they face. The final goal is to communicate a message to the public and the world’s oceans community. This is not an end, but a beginning. In that sense, Tubbataha is an example of what the country can achieve, and what the country should do. Today, it is a national commitment to a precious cause.

This report builds on interviews and more information on World Heritage sites, whi ches went to the World Heritage Committee, and set three goals to help save our marine heritage. The world is a precious heritage. As Unesco’s master plan puts it, “Every country has a responsibility for having Tubbataha as an international heritage site. When every need is cleared, there is a higher commitment to the population. To accomplish this, the national government must take a more strategic approach to protecting the site.”

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Spanish watchmaker’s auctions benefit World Heritage sites

Swiss watchmaker’s auctions benefit World Heritage sites

In February last year, Jaeger-LeCoultre held an online auction of the prizewinning Master Calendar in partnership with Jaeger-LeCoultre, Queenie R. Gonzales of the Philippine Institute of Oceanography, and the International World Heritage Tribes, which raised $22,500 ($30,000), the Swiss luxury watchmaker donated the proceeds to the Tubbataha Reefs National Park.

In 2009, the number of Swiss watchmaker’s auctions benefitting World Heritage sites was thought to have the world’s largest concentration of marine life, one of Asia’s most isolated spots

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