

Tides of time



In partnership with



World Heritage Centre

In Brazil's Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves, the partnership helped implement a regular monitoring program.

STEFAN CLEVER

Over the past six years, the "Tides of Time" partnership has worked to help conserve World Heritage protected marine sites

UNESCO | World Heritage Marine Program

An effective partnership to protect the ocean's crown jewels

Six years are a drop in the bucket compared to the 3.8-billion-year history of life on earth. But the past six years have made a real difference in the future of the oceans and marine life, thanks to a partnership among Unesco's World Heritage Centre, the Swiss maker of fine watches Jaeger-LeCoultre and the International New York Times.

The "Tides of Time" partnership was set up with the goals of providing support to countries in their efforts to identify and protect outstanding marine areas and monitor and ensure the conservation of marine sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, as well as providing assistance to Unesco's World Heritage Centre in coordinating the marine program, which had been established in 2005.

All World Heritage marine sites are marine protected areas, but they stand out among the 6,000 MPAs worldwide in a number of ways. For one, the 46 World

Heritage marine sites collectively account for a quarter of all MPAs by surface. Another characteristic is their exceptionalism: these crown jewels of the ocean — like all natural World Heritage sites — are recognized for their Outstanding Universal Value in terms of biodiversity, beauty, geology, ecosystem processes and/or habitat.

Starting in 2008, the "Tides of Time" partnership focused attention on these 46 sites through a multichannel media campaign — including a series of 48 pages in the International New York Times and videos on its website — and promotional activities, along with financial support.

"Unesco's mission is important, and we can't do it alone," says Kishore Rao, director of the World Heritage Centre. "Conservation of our common heritage requires a global partnership with public and private entities, and the resources required for this purpose are huge. We need to engage with all actors of society and invite

them to be part of this ambitious mission. Partnerships with the private sector such as 'Tides of Time' are one of the ways of building such strategic alliances to preserve the world's marine heritage."

Rao points out that World Heritage marine sites share similar conservation challenges, no matter where they are located or what their socioeconomic context is. Climate change, illegal fishing, maritime pollution, coastal development and increasing seawater acidity are ongoing threats worldwide.

"While some sites are well managed and deal with such threats adequately," says Rao, "others lack the capacity to do so. By bringing their success stories together, we can translate them in ways that make them suitable for replication in other marine protected areas."

Among the achievements of the "Tides of Time" partnership noted by Rao are:

- A doubling of the marine protected area under the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Today's listed marine sites include some of the largest marine

protected areas in the world, such as Phoenix Islands Protected Area in Kiribati, which covers 408,250 square kilometers (157,626 square miles) and Papanauumokuakea in Hawaii, which covers 362,074 square kilometers.

- The development of an effective community of marine site managers. A first meeting of World Heritage marine site managers from around the world was held in Hawaii in December 2010. At their latest meeting, in Ajaccio, Corsica, in October 2013, were 43 managers from 33 sites located in 35 countries. During these events, attendees shared best management practices and participated in working sessions to improve skills useful in their day-to-day work. The community that has thus been created has begun to share systematically its wealth of expertise through a web-based forum, bimonthly newsletters, face-to-face meetings, training and capacity-building working groups.

- Tailored twinning arrangements between sites with similar conservation challenges and solutions

such as, for example, the Banc d'Arguin National Park, off the coast of Mauritania in West Africa, and the Wadden Sea, which stretches along the North Sea coasts of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark — two key points on the East Atlantic Flyway, a major migration route for many bird species.

- Identification of major marine regions and ecosystem types currently missing from the World Heritage List. In coming years, the list is expected to encompass a representative selection of all major marine ecosystems in the world.

- Enhanced visibility for the work of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, with particular emphasis on its ocean-conservation initiatives.

- The launch of a 10-year strategy to increase management capacity. Says Rao: "This framework will help enable World Heritage marine sites to cope with increasingly challenging ocean environments and will prepare the network as a whole to assume the role of models for others in ocean conservation globally." ■



Unesco's World Heritage Marine Program helps conserve the rich marine life of sites like Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves.

JAEGER-LECOULTRE | Commitment to conservation

Financial support and a media campaign to raise awareness

Over the course of the past six years, Jaeger-LeCoultre, a Swiss maker of fine watches, has taken a leading role in supporting ocean conservation as a member of the "Tides of Time" partnership with the Unesco World Heritage Centre and the International New York Times. Yet, at first glance, the Swiss-based company may seem an unlikely champion for marine preservation. It is located in Le Sentier, a Swiss mountain village in the Joux Valley, far from any ocean and more than 180 miles, or 290 kilometers, from the Mediterranean.

Jaeger-LeCoultre, however, has been concerned about the environment for all of its 180 years. "We are engaged in an authentic policy of sustainable development," says Isabelle Gervais, the manufacture's international public relations director. "We seek to achieve this by becoming involved in a number of local and international activities in three main areas — environmental protection, a commitment to humanity, and preservation of knowledge and skills."

The change in focus from the environment in general to the marine world in particular came when Jaeger-LeCoultre — long recognized for its innovations in the development of diving watches — was launching a new diving collection. It discovered some exceptional and unspoiled undersea locations and became aware of the vulnerability of these ecosystems.

"We recognized the need to preserve marine biodiversity and the urgency of doing so," recalls Gervais. "International focus up till 2008 had been to speak about the protection of the ice pack and about deforestation in the Amazon and elsewhere, while preservation of the ocean depths had usually

been pushed into the background. We concluded that communication was a crucial factor in this issue." With the International New York Times, Jaeger-LeCoultre created the "Tides of Time" partnership, dedicated to the 46 marine sites listed by Unesco as World Heritage.

Since then, the "Tides of Time" partnership has worked to sensitize public opinion to the significance of these 46 sites of exceptional value for humanity. To ensure the broadest possible audience, a series of 48 pages about marine World Heritage have been published in the International New York Times, along with videos on its website. (Unesco hosts an archive of the pages and videos on its website at whc.unesco.org/en/marine-programme.)

One of the main accomplishments of the initiative, as Gervais notes, has been "a better and increasing public awareness of this environmental cause, thanks to the global media campaign."

A second major accomplishment has been the establishment of a substantial community of World Heritage marine site managers. "Today," says Gervais, "they are pooling their wealth of expertise and management successes through a web-based forum and bi- or triannual meetings, where concrete results are shared and communicated."

In addition, Jaeger-LeCoultre has made an additional contribution to marine World Heritage through its annual auctions. Each year, starting in 2009, the manufacture has organized an auction of a unique watch model, from which the entire proceeds are donated to a marine World Heritage site. Proceeds from the online watch auctions

have enabled Jaeger-LeCoultre to contribute to the protection of Cocos Island National Park in Costa Rica, the Brazilian Atlantic Islands, Tubbatana Reefs National Park and Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park in the Philippines, the Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary in Colombia and Sundarbans National Park in India. An additional contribution went to the Everglades National Park in Florida in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and to Cocos Island National Park.

By way of illustration, Gervais describes the Brazilian example of the Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves: "The site manager of Fernando de Noronha purchased a fully equipped inflatable rubber boat to enable the implementation of a regular monitoring program aimed at evaluating the state of conservation of its exceptionally rich marine life and of countering illegal fishing activities by facilitating swift interception of nonauthorized boats."

Jaeger-LeCoultre remains committed to marine conservation. "The 'Tides of Time' partnership has reinforced our belief that we are all responsible for the safeguarding of our environment, both businesses and individuals alike," observes Gervais. "We intend to strengthen our involvement in this cause."

"Our principal objective remains unchanged: working for awareness and creating a strong community to share best practices. This is a long process, and international coordination is crucial." ■

A partnership for ocean conservation is the 48th and final installment in the Tides of Time series about Unesco's World Heritage marine sites. It was produced by the Creative Solutions department and did not involve the newspaper's reporting or editorial departments. Text by CLAUDIA FLISI.



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