

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

***IUCN Evaluation of Nominations of
Natural and Mixed Properties to the
World Heritage List***



Report to the World Heritage Committee
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Prepared by IUCN – The World Conservation Union
10 May 2002

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THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION REPORTS

10 May 2002

1. INTRODUCTION

This technical evaluation report of natural sites nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List has been conducted by the Programme on Protected Areas (PPA) of IUCN – The World Conservation Union. PPA co-ordinates IUCN's input to the World Heritage Convention. It also co-ordinates activities of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) which is the world's leading expert network of protected area managers and specialists.

In carrying out its function under the World Heritage Convention IUCN has been guided by four principles:

- (i) the need to ensure the highest standards of quality control and institutional memory in relation to technical evaluation, monitoring and other associated activities;
- (ii) the need to increase the use of specialist networks of IUCN, especially WCPA, but also other relevant IUCN Commissions and specialist networks;
- (iii) the need to work in support of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and States Parties to examine how IUCN can creatively and effectively support the World Heritage Convention and individual sites as “flagships” for biodiversity conservation; and
- (iv) the need to increase the level of effective partnership between IUCN and the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM.

Members of the expert network of WCPA carry out the majority of technical evaluation missions. This allows for the involvement of regional natural heritage experts and broadens the capacity of IUCN with regard to its work under the World Heritage Convention. Reports from field missions are comprehensively reviewed by the IUCN World Heritage Panel. PPA then prepares the final technical evaluation reports which are outlined in this document.

IUCN has also placed emphasis on providing input and support to ICOMOS in relation to cultural landscapes and other cultural nominations which have important natural values. IUCN recognises that nature and culture are strongly linked and that many natural World Heritage sites have important cultural values.

The WCPA membership network now totals over 1300 protected area managers and specialists from 120 countries. This network has provided much of the basis for conducting the IUCN technical evaluations. In addition, the Protected Areas Programme has been able to call on experts from IUCN's other five Commissions (Environmental Law, Education and Communication, Ecosystem Management, and Environmental, Economic and Social Policy), from other specialist officers in the IUCN Secretariat, and from scientific contacts in universities and other international agencies. This

highlights the considerable “added value” from investing in the use of the extensive networks of IUCN and partner institutions.

2. FORMAT

Each technical evaluation report presents a concise summary of the nomination, a comparison with other similar sites, a review of management and integrity issues and concludes with the assessment of the applicability of the criteria, and a clear recommendation to the World Heritage Bureau. Standardised data sheets, prepared for each nomination by UNEP - the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), are available in a separate document.

3. SITES REVIEWED

IUCN received six files for review in 2002. Two evaluation missions were carried out by IUCN experts including Pendjari and W National Parks (Benin) and the Archipel de La Maddalena (Italy). Due to security reasons associated with the events of 11 September 2001, the evaluation of Saint Catherine Protectorate in Egypt was postponed and will be carried out later in 2002 for examination at the 27th session of the World Heritage Bureau in 2003. Additional information was presented on Uvs Nuur Hollow (Mongolia / Russian Federation), a deferred site, and this was examined thoroughly without the need to carry out a further field mission.

In total IUCN prepared three full evaluation reports in 2002. This report includes only two of these evaluations, as the Italian nomination has since been withdrawn, as well as one short progress report on the referred Rift Valley Lake Reserves of Kenya.

As requested by the State Party and following the recommendation of the Bureau in April 2002 there has been a recent request for the extension of one natural site, Cocos Island National Park (Costa Rica), and IUCN has included its evaluation of this extension in this report

The files received by IUCN are as follows (* denotes technical evaluation reports which do not appear in this document):

Identification Number	Nominated Property	State Party	Recommendation of the April Bureau
A.	Nominations of natural properties to the World Heritage List		
N 1062	Pendjari and W National Parks	Benin	Referred
N 1060 Rev	Rift Valley Lake Reserves	Kenya	Referred
N 769 Rev	Uvs Nuur Hollow	Russian Federation / Mongolia	Referred
B.	Nominations of mixed properties to the World Heritage List		
N/C 954	Saint Catherine Protectorate*	Egypt	Mission postponed
N/C 1064	Archipel de La Maddalena*	Italy	Withdrawn
C.	Extensions of natural properties on the World Heritage List		
	Cocos Island National Park	Costa Rica	To nominate an extension

4. REVIEW PROCESS

In carrying out the Technical Review, IUCN is guided by the Operational Guidelines, which requests IUCN "to be as strict as possible" in evaluating new nominations. The evaluation process (shown in Figure 1) involves five steps:

1. **Data Assembly.** A standardised data sheet is compiled on the site, using the protected area database at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre;
2. **External Review.** The nomination is sent to experts knowledgeable about the site, primarily consisting of members of IUCN specialist commissions and networks and contacts from the region (approx. 25 outside reviewers provided input in relation to the sites reviewed in 2002);
3. **Field Inspection.** Missions are sent to evaluate the site on the ground and to discuss the nomination with relevant authorities;
4. **IUCN World Heritage Operational Panel Review.** The IUCN World Heritage Operational Panel intensively reviews all field inspection reports and associated background material and agrees a final text and recommendation for each nomination; and
5. **Final Recommendations.** After the World Heritage Bureau has reviewed the evaluations, clarifications are often sought. Changes based on the Bureau's recommendations and on any further information from State Parties will be incorporated into the final IUCN evaluation report which is sent to the World Heritage Centre eight weeks prior to the Committee meeting.

In the evaluations, the Biogeographic Province concept is used for comparison of nominations with other similar sites. This method makes comparisons of natural sites more objective and provides a practical means of assessing similarity. At the same time, World Heritage sites are expected to contain special features, habitats and faunistic or floristic peculiarities that can also be compared on a broader biome basis.

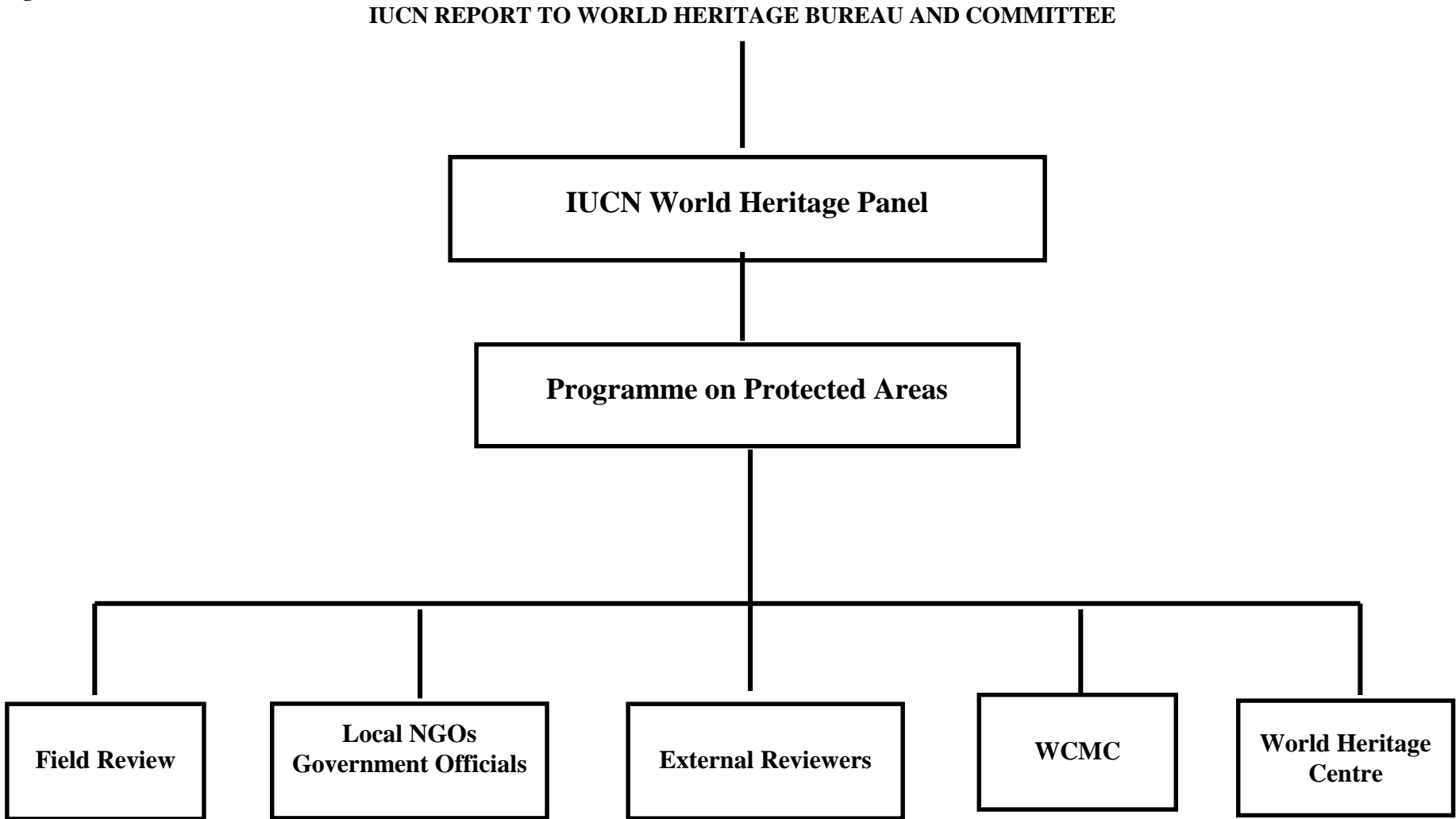
It is stressed that the Biogeographical Province concept is used as a basis for comparison only and does not imply that World Heritage sites are to be selected solely on this criteria. The guiding principle is that World Heritage sites are only those areas of outstanding universal value.

Finally, it is noted that the evaluation process is aided by the publication of some 20 reference volumes on the world's protected areas published by IUCN, UNEP, WCMC and several other publishers. These include (1) Reviews of Protected Area Systems in Oceania, Africa, and Asia; (2) the four volume directory of Protected Areas of the World; (3) the three volume directory of Coral Reefs of the World; (4) the six volume Conservation Atlas series; (5) The four volume "A Global Representative System of Marine Protected Areas; and (6) Centres of Plant Diversity. These documents together provide system-wide overviews which allow comparison of the conservation importance of protected areas throughout the world.

As in previous years, this report is a group product to which a vast number of people have contributed. Acknowledgements for advice received are due to the external evaluators and reviewers and numerous IUCN staff at Headquarters and in the field. Many others contributed inputs during site inspections. This support is acknowledged with deep gratitude.

This report presents the official position of IUCN.

Figure 1



2. IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION REPORTS

NOMINATIONS OF NATURAL PROPERTIES TO THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

PENDJARI & W NATIONAL PARKS

BENIN



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

PENDJARI AND W NATIONAL PARKS (BENIN)

Background note: The Niger part of the 'W' National Park was nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List in 1996. In its report to the World Heritage Committee, IUCN noted that 'W' National Park did not have "outstanding universal value" as required under the World Heritage Convention as its characteristics are commonly found throughout the region and surpassed in importance in the three existing nearby World Heritage sites. However, following an extensive debate, the 1996 Committee voted to inscribe the site on the World Heritage List under natural criteria (ii) and (iv).

1. DOCUMENTATION

- i) **IUCN/UNEP-WCMC Data Sheet:** (13 references)
- ii) **Additional Literature Consulted:** IUCN/UNEP. 1986. Review of the Protected Areas System of the Afrotropical Realm. 259p.
- iii) **Consultations:** 8 external reviewers contacted; Park Director and park staff; officials from the Department of Water and Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, and the National Center for Management of Wildlife Reserves (CENEGREF – Centre National de Gestion des Reserves de Faune); and technical staff from GTZ, European Union project "ECOPAS", the World Bank and UNDP.
- iv) **Field Visit:** Jeffrey Sayer, Jean-Marc Garreau: January-February 2002.

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

Pendjari and W National Parks (PWNP) are located in the north of Benin on the border with Burkina Faso and Niger. PWNP is a serial site composed of two discrete areas connected by buffer zones: "W" National Park is located in the north-east corner of Benin contiguous with Burkina Faso and the World Heritage site in Niger; Pendjari National Park is located in the north west of the country close to the border with Burkina Faso. The nominated area covers 860,506ha¹. The area lies at the heart of the most extensive protected area block in the West African Woodlands / Savanna Biogeographical Province and covers a range of ecological conditions found in the Sudan and Sudano-Guinean zone of West Africa². Different types of savannah vegetation exist, including open grasslands with populations of large mammals and riverine lake systems with associated populations of water birds.

¹ There are minor discrepancies in the nomination document between the different areas quoted for the protected areas. Those used in this evaluation are taken from the map provided with the nomination and appear to be the most credible.

² West Africa is taken here to mean the area West of Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic.

Protected Areas	Nominated Area
Pendjari National Park	281 359ha
“W” National Park	579 147ha
Total Area:	860,506ha

PWNP have an important assemblage of Sahel zone large mammals. The populations of Roan Antelope, Western Hartebeest, Western Kob, Buffalo (both the small red forest buffalo and the larger black savannah form are found), lion and possibly other species, appear to be larger and better protected than anywhere else in West Africa. The elephant population appears to be the largest and most secure in West Africa – it is estimated to number between 1000 and 2000 and it has increased considerably through in-migration over the past three decades. The only population of the western form of the Topi and possibly the only population of the Cheetah remaining in this region are found in the nominated area.

3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

Three existing World Heritage sites are located in the Udvardy West African Woodlands/Savanna Biogeographical Province: the Niokolo-Koba National Park in Senegal, the Comoé National Park in Côte d’Ivoire and “W” National Park in Niger.

The first two sites have many similarities with PWNP. Both are located in slightly higher rainfall areas and this is reflected in the presence of more extensive gallery forests along the rivers which provide habitat for a number of forest species that do not occur in the nominated area. This is offset by the presence of species such as the Cheetah, Topi and, possibly, Wild Dog and Red-fronted Gazelle in PWNP. Niokolo-Koba has a relict population of Giant Eland – a species which is almost extinct in West Africa and which could possibly have occurred in the distant past in the PWNP. The population of elephants in the nominated area is larger and better protected than in the other two areas. Niokolo-Koba has a relict population of less than 10 individuals, while Comoé has about 200 Elephants, most living outside the Park. The elephant population of the large area of Eastern Burkina Faso, Western Niger and Northern Benin is by far the most important and the best protected in West and Central West Africa. It is a common population to the three countries.

The Niger part of the ‘W’ National Park is smaller than the contiguous Benin part of the Park. It has enjoyed a somewhat better level of protection in recent years but it does not contain the same diversity of habitats or of wildlife species as PWNP. The nominated area is somewhat smaller than Comoé and Niokola-Koba, as can be seen in Table 1 below, but the reserves surrounding the Benin sites constitute a protected area block that greatly exceeds the other sites and the conservation status of the entire block is better than other protected areas in this region.

Although in a different Udvardy province, the Manovo – Gounda – St Floris area in the Central African Republic shares many of the features of PWNP. This area has in the recent past supported far larger populations of globally threatened wildlife species than those found in the nominated area, at least in recent historical times. Manovo – Gounda – St Floris has populations of the Black Rhinoceros, Giant Eland and some primate species not found in West Africa. However, the park has suffered heavy poaching pressure in recent years and the population of Black Rhinoceros is close to extinction. The Selous National Park in Tanzania is also in a wooded savannah zone but most of the plant and animals species are different to those found in West Africa.

To obtain an objective evaluation of the contribution to conservation of all protected areas in sub-saharan Africa, IUCN and UNEP conducted an extensive analysis of their comparative conservation value (see bibliographic reference above). The results of the "scoring" of relevant conservation importance of each site are contained in the table below. It is clear from this table that even when PWNP is added to the Niger part of 'W' National Park, this site is significantly less important than the other three existing World Heritage sites.

It should though be noted that a site containing PWNP, the contiguous "W" site in Niger and several as yet un-nominated adjacent sites in Burkina Faso (Arli National Park and the Singou Wildlife Reserve) would lead to a tri-national World Heritage site exceeding 2 million hectares. As such, it would be the largest protected area in any biome in this part of West Africa.

TABLE 1

Comparison of PWNP with other Natural World Heritage Sites in the West African Woodlands / Savanna Biogeographic Province.

Site	Country	Size (ha)	Conservation Contribution Score*
'W'	Benin	568,000 (site has since been enlarged)	2840
Pendjari	Benin	200,000 (site has since been enlarged)	400
'W'	Niger	220,000	660
Comoé	Côte d'Ivoire	1,150,000	6650
Niokola-Koba	Senegal	913,000	5250
Manovo-Gounda	C.A.R	1,740,000	5220

* This score was derived from a comparative assessment of all protected areas in Africa as published by IUCN/UNEP entitled: Review of the Protected Areas System in the Afrotropical Realm (259p.) 1986

4. INTEGRITY

4.1. Legal Protection and Transboundary Co-operation

The legislative basis for the area is adequate and up-to-date management plans exist. The boundaries are adequate to ensure the conservation of the site's values. The value of the site is greatly enhanced by the existence of the adjacent areas in Niger and Burkina Faso. The Niger section of the "W" National Park is already inscribed on the World Heritage list and is a Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar site. The authorities in Burkina Faso are in the process of preparing a World Heritage nomination for the Arli National Park and Singou Wildlife Reserve, together with adjacent hunting reserves, which will be nominated as an extension to Niger's "W" National Park.

4.2 Management

The area (in common with virtually all other African savannah systems) has suffered from a long history of uncontrolled fire. This and poaching of larger mammals continue to constitute major management challenges. The illegal presence of large herds of domestic livestock in the "W" National Park also constitutes a serious threat. However, the authorities have partially succeeded in keeping all of these problems within reasonable bounds over the past

several decades and the long-term tendency is towards an improvement of the resource management situation.

These problems have been the object of management attention for the past 50 years – ever since the areas were first given legal protection. The IUCN mission found that the nominated area is now being managed to a higher standard than in the recent past. The staff is better equipped, the park infrastructures are in better condition and, most importantly, a significant effort has been invested in improving relations with the inhabitants of surrounding villages.

Most of the villages adjacent to the park have now formed “Associations Villageoises de Gestion des Réserves de Faune” (AVIGREFs). These associations are modelled on similar community wildlife management initiatives in other parts of Africa and have received considerable international financial support (GEF, GTZ and Dutch bilateral assistance). They enable villagers to share in decision-making relating to the national parks and to share in the benefits from entry fees, hunting licences and fines imposed for illegal activities. As elsewhere in Africa, it will be a long and difficult process to get these local associations to function well. It is certainly too early to claim that they are already successful. However, they are certainly making progress and are receiving the technical advice and material support that they require.

The authorities in Benin and their main bilateral and multi-lateral aid donors have consistently given high priority to the conservation of these areas over the past 30 years. Successive projects have been supported by FAO/UNDP, the European Union, the Agence Française de Développement, the GTZ, the GEF and the Dutch bilateral assistance programme. IUCN has been involved in a number of these initiatives.

4.3 Human Use

The people surrounding the parks and hunting zones still retain much of their traditional lifestyles and have extensive knowledge of the wildlife resources of the area. The current management regime attempts to give local populations more control of the management of the peripheral areas. This management approach provides a good example for the region.

4.4 Threats

The human population of Benin is growing and demand for agricultural land will certainly increase in the future. A particular issue is the expansion of cotton cultivation, especially around the “W” National Park. This has apparently led to small-scale encroachment on the park in one location; this has been addressed by the management authority. In the Pendjari sector, the surrounding hunting reserve contains some villages. Cultivation of subsistence crops and livestock raising occur in a narrow band along the edge of the hunting reserve. This is being addressed by the establishment of “Zones d’occupation contrôlée” (ZOCs). The CENEGREF (Centre National de Gestion des Réserves de Faune) staff has negotiated limits to any further expansion of agriculture in the direction of the hunting reserves. No people live in either park.

In general the present integrity of the nominated area is adequate and the status of animal populations and the ecological conditions of the area seem to be improving. This is at least in part attributable to the generous international assistance that the area is now receiving. Most of these projects are of long duration and will continue to support national efforts into the next decade.

4.5 Adjacent Protected Areas

The Pendjari National Park and its surroundings were added to the MAB Biosphere Reserve network in 1986. The area listed comprises the Pendjari National Park (281,359ha), two hunting reserves totalling 301,474ha and a transition zone of 177,000 ha – a total of 759,833 ha. The transition zone is not clearly delimited and not under the management authority of the CENEGREF. It does, however, contain the villages that are mentioned in the nomination as having special cultural features, including the fortified villages of the Soumba people. A Biosphere Reserve nomination is being prepared for the “W” complex and transition zones will be established. However, the Operation Guidelines recommend that only core areas be considered for World Heritage status.

A significant proportion of surrounding protected areas (ca 30%) is allocated for controlled sport hunting. In other respects these areas benefit from the same level of protection as the national parks. They are subject to strict quotas limiting the hunting off-take to a few trophy specimens. The presence of the hunting camps, and of the hunters themselves, adds an additional level of protection above that attained in the parks. The areas are of significance because they provide the link between the different components of the complex and because they generate significant local benefits thus adding to the overall sustainability of the area. These areas also add to the habitat available for wide-ranging species and are therefore, good buffer zones which help to maintain the integrity of the nominated site.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The area around Pendjari National Park is well known for the fortified villages of the Soumba people, the Tata Soumba. The Soumba people and a number of similar groups with traditional lifestyles and architecture live in the area south and west of the National Park and the surrounding Hunting Reserves. The villages bordering the “W” sector would appear to have less anthropological significance.

The value of the nominated site is enhanced by the existence of the adjacent protected areas in Niger and Burkina Faso. Since the authorities in Burkina Faso are in the process of preparing a World Heritage nomination for the Arli National Park and Singou Wildlife Reserve together with adjacent hunting reserves, it may be appropriate that a transfrontier site be jointly nominated at one time by the relevant State Parties.

6. APPLICATION OF CRITERIA

Pendjari and ‘W’ National Parks were nominated under criteria (iii) and (iv).

Criterion (iii): Superlative natural phenomena or natural beauty and aesthetic importance

The landscape of the site is interesting in that there are some attractive waterfalls and the riverine lakes and quartzite cliffs of the site are striking features. The mammal populations of the site are also an interesting natural feature. However, the landscape is similar to other savannah areas across Africa and individual geomorphologic features such as lakes and waterfalls are far more impressive in other sites such as Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls and Lake Malawi. Large mammal populations are common in most savannah protected areas in Africa. IUCN concludes that the site does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (iv): Biodiversity and threatened species

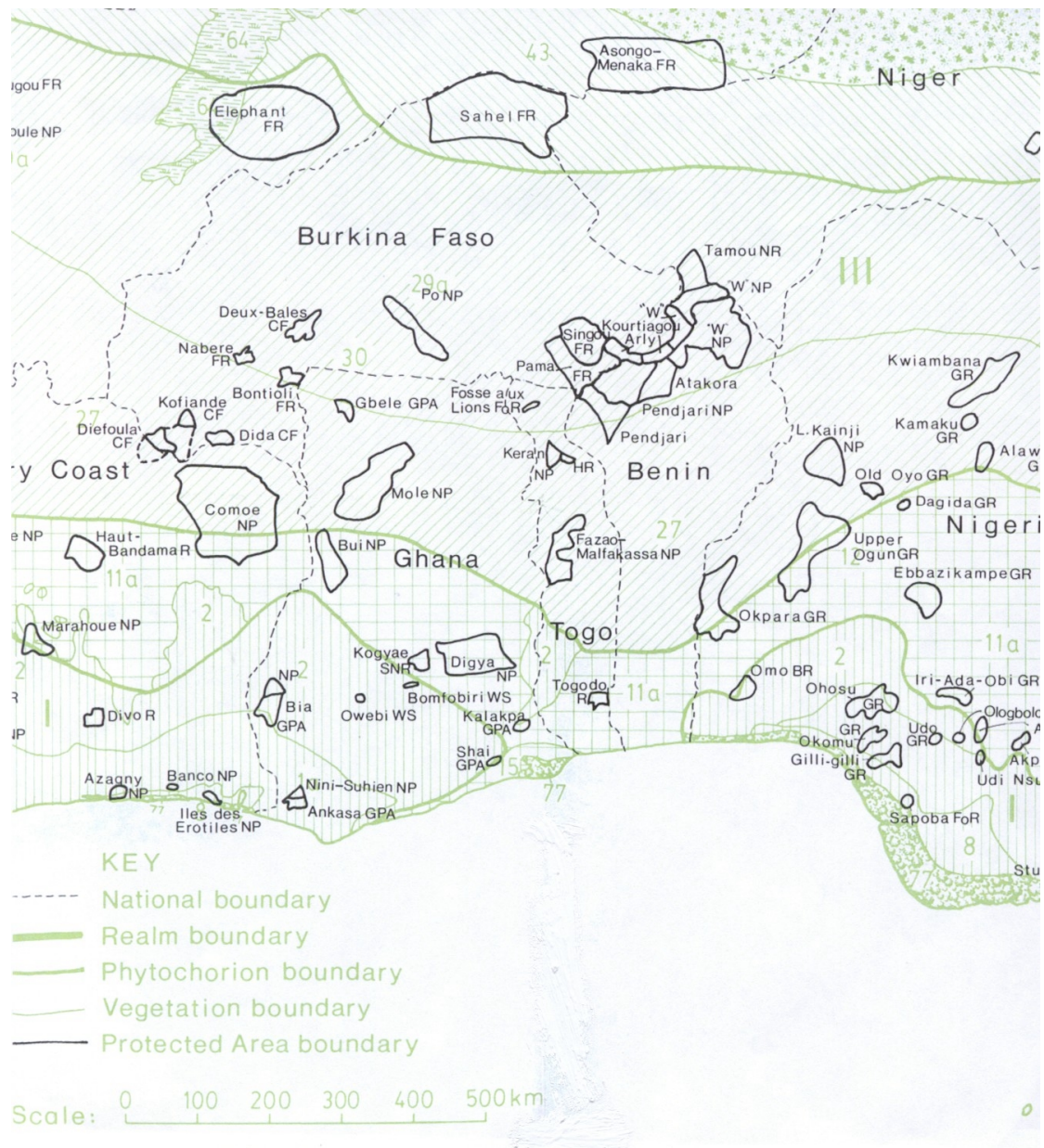
The species diversity of the nominated area is relatively high at a regional level and, with the surrounding protected areas, PWNP is part of a large protected complex which contains relatively large populations of mammals. The level of species diversity or population size is important in a West African context rather than at a global level and therefore IUCN does not consider the site to meet this criterion. However, the site has a similar level of biodiversity to 'W' National Park in Niger and the Committee considered that the Niger site met criterion (iv).

7. RECOMMENDATION

Although IUCN's evaluation suggests that the site does not meet natural criteria, there would be rationale for inscribing the nominated area on the World Heritage List as an extension to the 'W' National Park in Niger. The Bureau **referred** the site back to the State Party to confirm that it considers this nomination as an **extension** of the existing 'W' World Heritage site in Niger and to seek the approval of the Niger authorities for this extension.

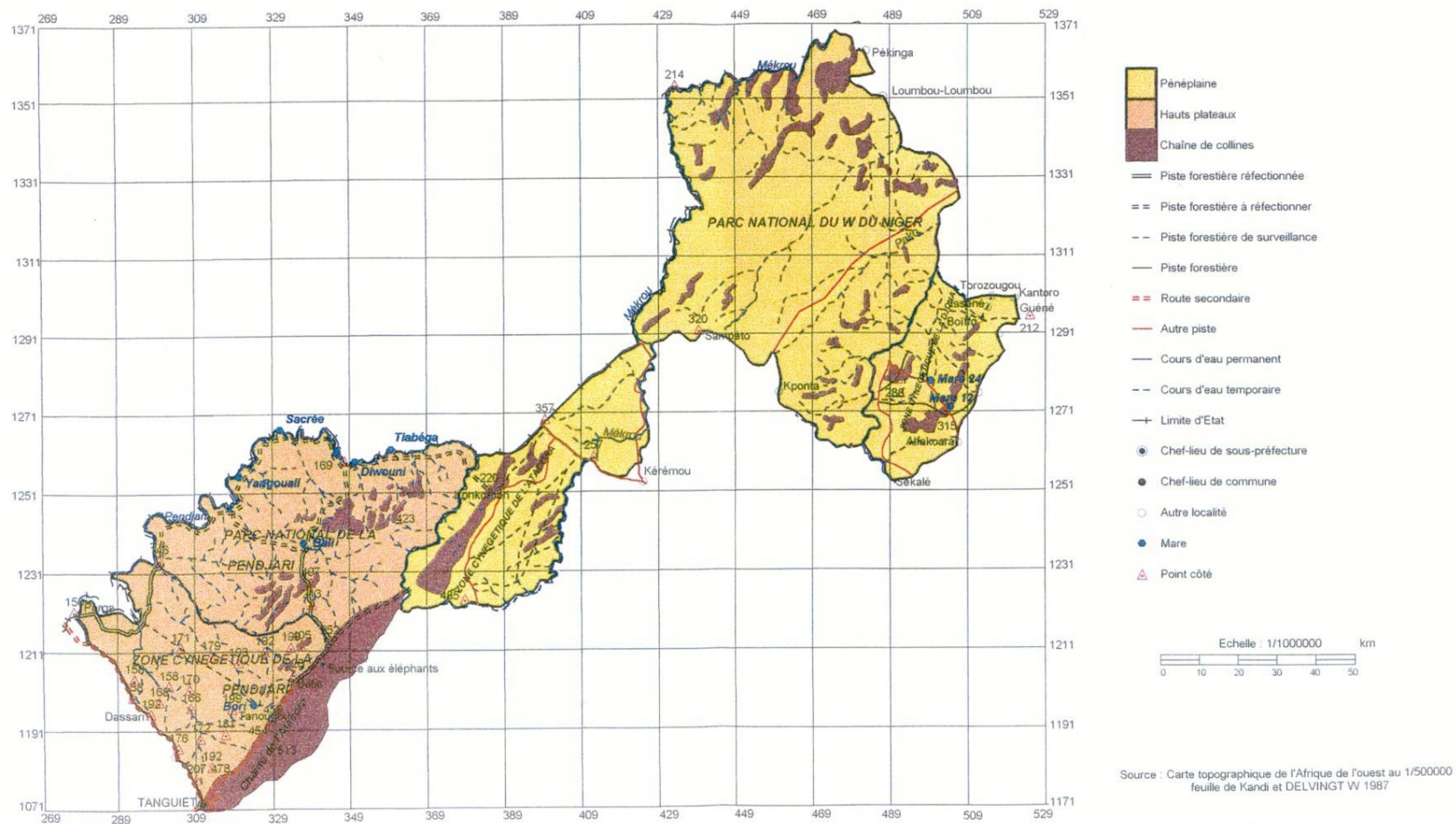
The Bureau noted that the authorities in Burkina Faso intend to nominate Arli National Park and other areas as a third extension to the World Heritage site and it would be useful to consider both extension proposals at one time. This is a second reason for the referral of this nomination. The Bureau encouraged the three States Parties to coordinate the entire tri-national complex as one natural World Heritage property, as encouraged in the Operation Guidelines: "In cases where a cultural and /or natural property which fulfils the criteria adopted by the Committee extends beyond national borders the State Parties concerned are encouraged to submit a joint nomination."

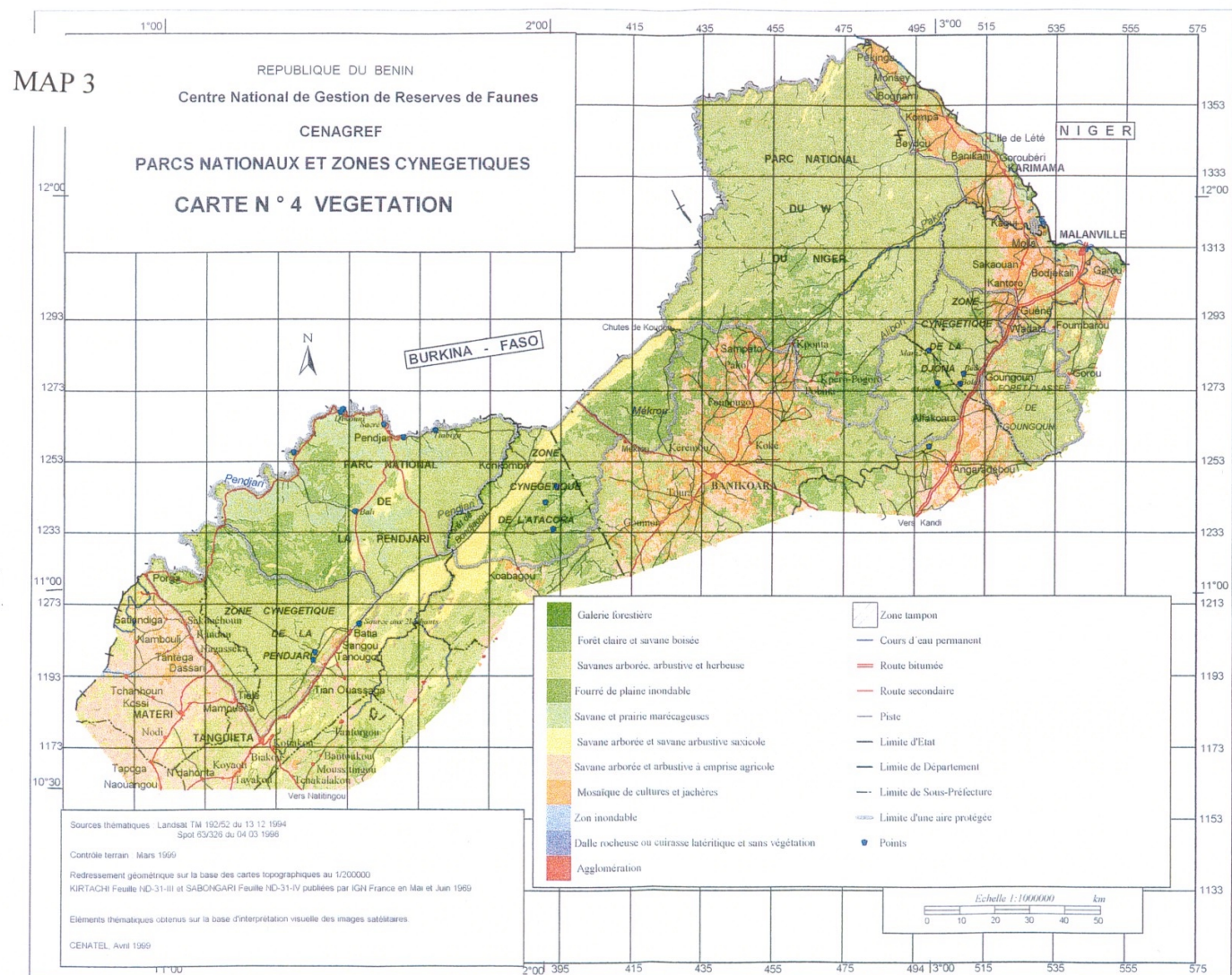
Map 1: Location of Site in West Africa



MAP 2

REPUBLIQUE DU BENIN
CENTRE NATIONAL DE GESTION DE RESERVES DE FAUNE
CENAGREF
PARCS NATIONAUX ET ZONES CYNEGETIQUES
CARTE N°1: LES GRANDS ENSEMBLES DE RELIEF





RIFT VALLEY LAKES RESERVE

KENYA



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

RIFT VALLEY LAKES RESERVE (KENYA)

The 2001 World Heritage Bureau referred this nomination back to the State Party as the gazetting process of one of the reserves, Lake Elmenteita, was not complete. The Bureau requested confirmation from the State Party on the timing and effectiveness of the Wildlife Sanctuary status of Lake Elmenteita.

The World Heritage Centre recently forwarded information to IUCN from the State Party noting that the administrative process is proceeding but not complete and that the area is currently being mapped in order to outline the boundaries.

IUCN notes that the gazetting process of Lake Elmenteita is not yet complete and, therefore, the decision of the 2001 World Heritage Bureau to refer the site remains valid.

UVS NUUR BASIN

MONGOLIA RUSSIAN FEDERATION



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

UVS NUUR BASIN (MONGOLIA / RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

Background note: The IUCN technical evaluation of the Uvs Nuur Basin, nominated jointly by Mongolia and the Russian Federation in 1999, was presented to the twenty-third extraordinary session of the Bureau in November 1999. IUCN's evaluation noted that the site had the potential to meet natural criteria (ii) and (iv) but that the authorities should be requested to revise the boundaries from the 7.5 million hectares so as to exclude the 90% of the basin which currently has no protective status. IUCN also noted that "the existing 9 strictly protected areas (SPAs) do not adequately cover the wide range of ecosystems within this large site. In particular, the wetlands in the lower 60km of the Tes-Khem need to be part of a protected area which can extend northwards across the border to Tuva, incorporating semi-desert, steppe and the slopes of the Vostochnyi Tannu Ola range (mixed forest/steppe, taiga and tundra)." The Bureau decided to defer the nomination back to the States Parties to revise the boundaries and to prepare a joint management plan in a framework of transboundary cooperation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 13 November 2001, the Mongolian and Russian Federation State Parties submitted the additional information to the World Heritage Centre. This information included a map of the revised boundary (see Map 1). The site now encompasses 971,165ha and is a serial nomination with 11 clusters. All the nominated area now has protected status and is made up of two protected area groupings:

1. The Ubsunur Hollow State Biosphere Nature Preserve (Russian Federation) which is comprised of seven core areas totalling 258,620ha; and
2. The Uvs Nuur State Nature Preserve (Mongolia) made up of four discrete sites covering 712,545ha.

The State Parties also submitted:

- Two management plans -- one for the Mongolian side and one for the Russian part;
- A Protocol of Co-operation between the Russian State Biosphere Nature Preserve and the Mongolian State Nature Preserve;
- A Treaty of scientific cooperation between the Republic of Tuva, of the Russian Federation and the Uvs Aimag of Mongolia; and
- Resolution on the expansion of the Russian Ubsunur Hollow State Biosphere Nature Preserve.

EVALUATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Management

Separate management plans for the Russian and Mongolian parts of the nominated area have been prepared and these are considered to be adequate, along with the transboundary agreements, for the future management of the site.

Transboundary Cooperation

The protocol of co-operation between the reserves on both sides of the border, as well as the treaty of scientific cooperation between the Republic of Tuva, of the Russian Federation and the Uvs Aimag of Mongolia, provides a solid foundation for trans-boundary cooperation on the management and protection of the site.

Boundaries

The current nomination contains 11 separate protected areas - seven on the Russian side and four in Mongolia.

On the Russian side, the resolution on the expansion of the Russian Ubsnuur Hollow State Biosphere Nature Preserve signed on 21 April 2000 expands the Nature Preserves in Tuva by 283,558 ha with the establishment of five new special protected areas. However, only two of these new protected areas are included within the nomination. IUCN has asked the State Party for clarification on why three of the new protected areas have not been included in the nomination. It appears that the other three protected areas only have protection at the Tuvan (not federal) government level as yet. The two new nominated protected areas ('Ubsu-Nur' and 'Oroku-Shinaa') are located on the northern side of the Tes delta/floodplain, along the border with Mongolia. The inclusion of these sites within the nomination partly responds to IUCN's 1999 request to include the wetlands in the lower 60km of the Tes-Khem and the semi-desert, steppe and the slopes of the Vostochnyi Tannu Ola range within the nominated area (see Background Note above). Coupled with the existing nominated 'Aryskannyg' cluster, the three protected areas also appear to satisfy IUCN's 1999 request to see a representative sequence of ecosystems, from the floodplain of the Tes to the crest of the Tannu-Ola Range, included in the nomination. The core area of one of the Russian SPAs -- 'Mongun Taiga' - has also been expanded from 940ha to 15,890ha (by decreasing the buffer zone). This is a satisfactory response to a recommendation made by IUCN during the 1999 field mission. Consequently, IUCN accepts that the Russian Federation State Party has adequately responded to the Bureau's request in the 1999 deferment.

On the Mongolian side, however, the four sites proposed as part of the nomination are still the same sites which were nominated in 1999. There has been no expansion of the 1999 nominated 'Uvs Lake' protected area cluster to include more of the wetlands on the Mongolian side of the Tes-Khem delta as recommended. The new nomination makes no mention of why the Mongolian partner has not responded – whether they consider that the narrow protected zone around Uvs Lake near the Tes-Khem delta is adequate, or whether the Mongolian State party is still working on a proposal to match the Russian response.

Buffer Zones

The buffer zones of the eleven clusters of the nominated site have been included in the nominated area. IUCN considers that these buffer areas are not adequately protected to merit inclusion in the nominated area. This would reduce the nominated 11 areas to a 'pristine zone' core of 483,530 ha (395,750ha in Mongolia, and 87,830ha in the Tuvan Republic of the Russian Federation).

Serial Site

When IUCN evaluates a serial nomination it asks the following questions:

- a) **What is the justification for the serial approach?** The Uvs Nuur Basin is a naturally enclosed basin and the 11 clusters are representative of the main ecosystem types of the basin. Most of them are also large enough if their buffer zones are well

managed. IUCN, however, remains concerned that there has been no response to its request, accepted by the Bureau in 1999, to include the wetlands in the lower 60km of the Tes-Khem and the semi-desert, steppe and the slopes of the Vostochnyi Tannu Ola range on the Mongolian side.

- b) **Are the separate elements of the site functionally linked?** IUCN notes that the sites are partially linked on functional terms.
- c) **Is there an overall management framework for all the units?** As noted above, IUCN considers the management plans and transboundary agreements to be adequate for the management of the site.

RECOMMENDATION

The Bureau **referred** the nomination back to the Mongolian state parties with the request that:

- 1) The nominated 'Uvs Lake' protected area cluster be enlarged to include more of the wetlands on the Mongolian side of the Tes-Khem delta (in the vicinity of the new 'Ubsu-Nur' and 'Oroku-Shinaa' clusters added by the Russian state party ;
- 2) The buffer zones be excluded from the nominated area; and

The Bureau commended the State Parties for the development of the two management plans, the signing of transboundary cooperation agreements on science and management, and the steps taken by the Russian authorities to expand the nominated area.

ANNEX 1

The IUCN Technical Evaluation of the Uvs Nuur Basin, October 1999

1. DOCUMENTATION

i) IUCN/WCMC Data Sheet:

- ii) **Additional literature consulted:** Dompke, S. & Succow, M. 1998. **Cultural Landscapes and Nature Conservation in northern Eurasia**, NABU/AID Environment/Nature Conservation Bureau, Bonn. 330pp.; Henwood, W.D., 1998. An overview of Protected Areas in the Temperate Grassland Biome, **PARKS Vol. 8, No. 3.** 3-8; IUCN, 1994. **Protecting Nature: regional reviews of protected areas**, Ed. McNeely, J.A., Harrison, J., Dingwall, P., p.13; Ministry for Nature and the Environment of Mongolia, 1998; Biological Diversity in Mongolia. MNEM/UNDP/Regional Bureau for Asia & Pacific, Ulaanbaator. 106pp. Ministry for Nature and the Environment of Mongolia, 1996. **Mongolia's Wild Heritage**. MNEM/UNDP-GEF/WWF, Ulaanbaator, 42pp. UNESCO/Mongolian Ministry of Enlightenment, 1997. Mongolian Tentative List: Cultural & Natural Heritage. World Heritage Centre, 53pp. USSR Academy of Sciences, 1991. **Uvs Nuur Hollow: an unique test region for Biospherical Research**. Pushchino, 47pp. Russian Academy of Sciences (Siberian Division), 1993. Experiment Uvs Nuur. Pushchino, 432pp. Russian Academy of Sciences (Siberian Branch), 1994. **Uvs Nuur Hollow World**. 156pp.
- iii) **Consultations:** 2 external reviewers; relevant officials from government and non-government organisations in Mongolia and Republic of Tuva (Russian Federation).
- iv) **Field Visits:** J. Thorsell & Y. Badenkov, June 1996 (Tuva section only); L.F. Molloy, August 1999 (Tuva and Mongolia).

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

The nominated site is the northern-most of the enclosed basins of Central Asia, lying between latitudes 49-51 degrees N and longitudes 91-99 E. The basin is enclosed on the north (Tuva) by the Tannu Ola Range and the Sangilen Mountains in the north-east (2,600-3,200m); the Tannu Ola Range marks the northern limits of Central Asia, for its northern slopes drain to one of the major rivers of Siberia, the Yenisey, which runs directly north for 3,000km from Tuva to empty into the Arctic Ocean. In the west, the basin is bounded by outliers from the Mongolian Altai – the glaciated Tsagan Shuvuut - Turgen Uul ranges, extending from Mongun Taiga (3,976m) in Tuva south to Turgen (3,955m) and Harkhiraa (4,057m) in western Mongolia. In the south, the Khan Khohiy Range (2,300-2,900m) extends along the full length of the main drainage system, the Tes-Khem River. Estimates of the size of the basin vary (because of the complex topography) but is considered to be in the range of 7.5 million hectares (5,400,000ha in Mongolia; 2,160,000ha in Tuva).

At the bottom of the basin lies Uvs Nuur (759m a.s.l), the large, roughly-circular lake (60-70km in diameter) from which the site takes its name. The main feeder to Uvs Nuur is the Tes-Khem River, which has its source in a fresh-water lake, Sangyn Dalai Nuur, in the alpine meadows and larch forests of the Sangilen uplands at the eastern extremity of the basin (in Mongolia). The Tes-Khem then flows 500km westwards, through steppe and desert, into southern Tuva, and then back into Mongolia, before emptying into Uvs Nuur. For its last

100km, the river meanders through an extensive wetland complex, a green swathe in an otherwise semi-desert landscape; its delta is nearly 40km wide and is an important wildlife habitat. Uvs Nuur itself is by far the largest (335,000ha) of 7 lakes larger than 5,000ha within the basin. Uvs is relatively shallow (10-20m depth) and very saline (18g salts/l) and alkaline (pH 9.0). In all, the lakes display a range of hydrological character, water quality and biomass productivity; like Uvs Nuur, some of them have no surface outlet and those with the lowest level of dissolved minerals (such as Tere-Khol) are fed by springs from the surrounding dunelands. Uvs is the 'sea' of western Mongolia; it is so wide that the other side is often not visible, and it is frequented by a range of seabirds, even though the nearest ocean is 3,000km away.

The climate of the basin is sharply continental. The basin is in the rain-shadow of the Tannu Ola Range, which shelters it from the prevailing moisture-bearing north-westerly winds from Siberia. This is a significant bioclimatic transition, where the south Siberian taiga gives way to the deserts and steppes of Central Asia. The Uvs Nuur basin has an extraordinary temperature range; the lowest winter temperature in western Mongolia (-58° C) has been recorded here but summer temperatures can rise to 40° C. Because of the sharp topographic and climatic gradients, the basin contains representative samples of seven continental ecosystems.

Within the site there are 9 strictly protected areas (5 in Tuva; 4 in Mongolia) with a total area of 805,400ha, representing the main ecosystems. The 5 Tuvan 'cluster reserves' constitute the 'Uvs Nuur zapovednik; four of them are clustered around the protected area administrative centre of Erzin and cover the taiga/steppe/desert (and 'desert lake') systems. The fifth Tuvan strictly protected area, Mongun Taiga (core 940ha, buffer 99,460ha), is in the extreme west and protects the Mongun Taiga massif, with its glaciers and tundra/alpine meadow landscapes.

Two of the Mongolian protected areas, Turgen Uul and Tsagaan Shuvuut, also lie in the western mountains. Together with Mongun Taiga, they effectively encircle the second-largest lake in the site, Ureg Nuur, which nestles in a mountain steppe basin at 1450m (and also has no surface outlet). Studies in the two Mongolian protected areas have shown the presence of 173 bird and 41 mammal species within their boundaries. Both are important habitats for the endangered Snow Leopard and there is active research into the conservation of this species. Other important mammals are large herbivores such as the Asiatic ibex, argali mountain sheep, wild boar, red deer and musk deer and the Mongolian and black-tailed gazelle; predators include: wolf, red fox, lynx, polecats and weasels, and many different kites, falcons, eagles and vultures. Monitoring of large mammals in the two protected areas indicated that Turgen Uul contains around 7,000 ibex and 200 argali, while Tsagaan Shuvuut probably holds 2,000 ibex and 800 argali.

Within the ecologically-diverse Uvs Nuur site, some 359 bird species have been recorded. Many of these are of international importance, including: Dalmatian pelican, red-crowned crane, Siberian crane, Houbara bustard, Asian dowitcher, relict gull, white-tailed sea eagle, and black griffon. Some of the migrating birds that use Uvs Nuur as a temporary habitat are rare: Bewick's swan, lesser white-fronted goose, red-breasted goose, and the Baikal teal. There are 81 resident rare and endangered bird species found within the wider Uvs Nuur basin, including the Eurasian spoonbill (more than 100 pairs breed around the lake), black stork, relict gull, Altai ular, swan goose, bar-headed goose, shelduck, osprey and white-tailed sea eagle. Many of these are entered in the Red Book(s) of Tuva and Mongolia. The vegetation also reflects the conjunction of the Siberian and Central Asian floras, with 19 species endemic to Tuva and Mongolia, 51 relict species and 94 plant species classified as rare.

3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

Biogeographically, Uvs Nuur is a very diverse site but one which has a high degree of ecological integrity because it all lies within one closed catchment. Consequently, it is not valid to compare individual ecosystem components of Uvs Nuur with other similar ecosystems; instead, the whole basin needs to be compared with other closed Central Asian lake systems.

The only other listed natural World Heritage site with some of Uvs Nuur's features is the Golden Mountains of Altai (GMA) lying 400km to the WNW in the Altai Republic of the Russian Federation. The western high mountain sector of Uvs Nuur is indeed an outlier of the Altai Mountains and shares with the GMA similar glacial landforms, tundra and boreal forest vegetation, and habitats for endangered large alpine mammals, especially the Snow Leopard. However, Uvs Nuur contains much more climatic and landscape diversity than GMA; it includes this Siberian mountain element (the Altai Highlands biogeographic province) but extends right into the Central Asian steppe and desert environment.

Most of the Uvs Nuur site lies within the Mongolia-Manchurian Steppe biogeographic province which currently has less than 1% of its large area (2.6 million sq km) in protected areas (McNeely et al, 1994) – and no World Heritage sites. The steppe grasslands are one of the major biomes of Eurasia, extending from Manchuria to Hungary, but they generally have a low level of protection – a conservation problem of world-wide concern. IUCN estimate that less than 1% of the world's natural grasslands are protected (IUCN, 1994; Henwood, 1998) and the Mongolian-Manchurian Steppe province is no exception.

The most famous of Central Asia's 'inland seas' is Lop Nur and the Tarim River system within the Taklamakan Desert basin of Xinjiang (Uygur Autonomous Region) in western China. The environment of this vast basin is severely modified through human use. There are other salt lake systems in western Mongolia (in both Uvs and Hovd aimags) but they do not have the diversity of the Uvs Nuur system. Within the Arjin Mountains Nature Reserve (nestled between the Altun Shan and Kun Lun Shan of southern Xinjiang) there are two salt lake systems – Ayakkum Hu and Aqqikkol Hu – but these are at a much higher altitude and have a very different alpine desert climate. There are a number of salt lakes (such as Ebinur Hu and Manas Hu) in the Dzungarian basin of northern Xinjiang (between the Tian Shan and Altai Mountains) but neither has protected area status. Further west, in Kyrgyzstan, Lake Issyk Kul is one of the largest (slightly saline) intermontane lakes in Central Asia but it is affected by urbanisation, industrialisation and intensive agriculture in its large catchment.

It is difficult to find data on the waterfowl populations of the other lakes of Central Asia for comparison purposes. The importance of Uvs Nuur for waterfowl migrating through Central Asia is well known.

Because of its high salinity, Uvs Nuur does not carry any fish which are edible for human populations, so it has never been subject to commercial exploitation. It does, however, contain two small fish which are endemic to the salt lakes of western Mongolia. Each is considered to be a relict species from the fish that populated the lakes of large extent in western Mongolia at the close of the last glaciation of the ice age.

It is difficult to assess whether Uvs Nuur contains the best of the world's steppe landscapes without a detailed knowledge of a biome that extends across 8,000km of Eurasia. However, virtually all the steppe landscapes of eastern Europe, the Ukraine, the central Russia uplands of the Don and Volga, Kazakstan, the western Siberian plain and Manchuria have been significantly modified – by arable agriculture and industrial development.

In conclusion, Uvs Nuur basin contains an outstanding diversity of ecosystems and spans one of the major geoclimatic boundaries of Asia, that between Central Asia and Siberia. No existing World Heritage sites within this bio-geographic region contain this diversity. In addition, Uvs Nuur contains one of the best remaining natural steppe landscapes of Eurasia.

4. INTEGRITY

4.1. Legal Status and Scientific Research

The 5 Tuvan ‘cluster areas’ making up the Uvs Nuur zapovednik were given protected area status by both the governments of the Republic of Tuva and the Russian Federation in 1993. The 4 cluster areas in Mongolia were listed under the “Mongolian Law on Protected Areas” in 1994 and their buffer zones by law in 1997.

However, the 85% of Uvs Nuur basin that lies outside the 9 protected areas seems to have no specific protective legal status, other than the protection afforded to State-owned land. This issue is of concern (see ‘Management’ below) because of the threat of over-grazing, particularly in the desert steppe landscape around Uvs Nuur in the vicinity of the capital of Ulaangom.

The existing 9 strictly protected areas (SPAs) do not adequately cover the wide range of ecosystems within this large site. In particular, the wetlands in the lower 60km of the Tes-Khem need to be part of a protected area which can extend northwards across the border into Tuva, incorporating semi-desert, steppe, and the slopes of the Vostochnyi Tannu Ola range (mixed forest/steppe, taiga and tundra). This proposal was discussed with senior officials in Ulaan Baator who stated that it had merit and that both countries were on the point of signing a protocol to establish better trans-border conservation management. Also the nomination document admits that the additions of other SPAs are desirable.

4.2. Management

Management of the Tuvan Uvs Nuur zapovednik is vested in the State Committee for the Protection of the Environment, and exercised through the Tuvan Minister for the Environment and an administration centre in the village of Erzin at the junction of the Erzin and Tes-Khol rivers. The Mongolian Administration of the Uvs Nuur Basin Strictly Protected Area is based in Ulaangom.

However, the crucial integrity issue for the site is how the rest of the basin – nearly 7 million hectares – can be managed in a way which will sustain the natural values currently exhibited within the site. There is no comprehensive management plan for the basin, although this is stated to be “under preparation” by the Mongolian Ministry for Nature and the Environment in Ulaan Baator.

Although most Mongolian land is still the property of the State, Mongolia privatised grazing herds in 1992; since that date there has been a spectacular increase in the domesticated grazing animal population of Mongolia – from an estimated 20 million in 1992 to 30 million in 1999. Mongolia’s most important sustainable natural resource is its fertile soils and grasslands, so the threat of continually increasing stock numbers leading to over-grazing (and rural conflicts over traditional family pasturage rights) is a very serious issue facing the country. It is certainly a key issue in maintaining the integrity of the natural and cultural values of the steppe and desert steppe ecosystems of Uvs Nuur.

4.3. Other Human Uses

There is a small open-cast coal mine near Ureg Nuur but at present it only has a very local impact. The lack of any controls over rural road development within the basin is another

localised detrimental human impact that can probably only be improved through environmental education. The opportunities for large-scale tourism in the basin are very limited compared with more popular natural attractions like Khovsgol National Park. Small-scale cultural/eco-tourism will develop naturally but any tourism strategy is a very low priority at this stage ofUvs Nuur's development.

4.4. Other Threats

Notwithstanding the above concern about the potential for over-grazing, there are currently few other serious threats to the natural environment ofUvs Nuur. The low level of urban population and complete lack of industry in both the Tuvan and Mongolian sectors affords protection; its geographic isolation, climatic extremes, and lack of surface water flow make it an unattractive locality for agricultural industries. There has been talk of pressures for mining within Tuva but the Tuvan government has blocked this industry initiative pending a decision on World Heritage. If rural populations continue to increase at their current rate, however, the impact of hunting and forest clearance could become a threat to the taiga and forest steppe ecosystems. Indeed, as per Operational Guidelines 44(vi), only the core zone would be appropriate for World Heritage nomination with the buffer and occupied zones excluded.

In conclusion, theUvs Nuur basin has important integrity issues which need to be solved. The 1999 nomination differs significantly from the 1996 proposal, in that the original nomination of 12 'cluster reserves' (covering 838,000ha) has now been expanded to encompass the entire basin (of more than 7.5 million ha). Whilst the present nomination is much stronger because it is now a continuum of all the ecological diversity in the basin; on the other hand, it now includes all the villages, some agricultural areas, and vast areas of grazed mountain, steppe and desert lands, which are not subject to any form of explicit management controls over grazing levels, buildings, roading, discharges to waterways, etc. Economic and social/demographic pressures are steadily building on Mongolia's grazing lands and no assurances have been given by the State parties that this large site can be maintained in its current state through management planning and strict land-use regulations. Thus there are major questions of integrity relating to the nominated site.

5. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE VALUES

TheUvs Nuur basin has a rich historical and cultural heritage. The site has also been nominated for cultural heritage status, largely on the basis of 2900 sites containing burial mounds ('kurgans') and stone tablets ('steles'), many of late Palaeolithic age. These will be reported on separately by ICOMOS. However, IUCN would like to note the following:

- ♦ Historically, a large proportion of the Eurasian steppe would have undergone a vegetation succession to forest as the post-glacial climate became warmer – had wild herbivores and humans (as they domesticated wild grazing animals) not worked to maintain the grassland environment.
- ♦ There is a close relationship between the domesticated grazing animals (traditionally sheep, cattle, goats and horses) and the grassland plants of the steppes, a relationship which has moulded this landscape over thousands of years. To an extent the increasing domestication of livestock supplemented (and supplanted) the wild grazing animals of the steppe – such as Przewalski's horse, the Saiga Antelope and the wild Bactrian camel. Over the millennia, the nomadic seasonal herding patterns transferred plants and nutrients spatially within the steppe ecosystems. Some grasses and herbs will have been eliminated; others will have thrived. Soil organic matter (humus) gradually accumulated as plant leaf litter, dead roots and animal excreta were decomposed and their constituent nutrients recycled back into new plant growth. To a large extent, it can be argued that

the great soils of the steppes – the chernozems and chestnut soils – are partly cultural by-products. They are indeed zonal soils but the domesticated herbivores (as well as wild ones) of the steppes have contributed to their development. In fact, some soil ecologists would argue that domesticated herbivores have been essential to the development of the steppe soil landscape.

- ♦ The nomadic herders of the steppes of Tuva and Mongolia have traditionally relied upon their grazing animals for most of their domestic needs. Animal protein and fat provides most of their diet; bone has a myriad uses as a raw material; felted wool is used to provide shelter (yurts/gers) and clothing. Sustainable hunting of marmots and other wild animals has traditionally supplemented food and skins from domesticated animals. The culture of the Tuvan and Mongolian herding society is inextricably linked to their land-use – nomadic pastoralism and a relationship to wild Nature. This is particularly reflected in their stories, songs, arts and crafts, and religious beliefs.

The only remaining question, then, is whether the Uvs Nuur basin is the best ‘universal’ example of a steppe cultural landscape. It could be that there are better steppe cultural landscapes in eastern Mongolia. Nevertheless, all the major varieties of steppe landscapes are well represented within the Uvs Nuur basin and the site would appear to have high value as a cultural landscape.

6. APPLICATION OF WORLD HERITAGE CRITERIA

The Uvs Nuur basin has been nominated under all four natural criteria, as well as criterion (v) for cultural properties:

Criterion (i): Earth's history and geological features

The nomination document does not present any compelling evidence in support of this criterion. The western Mongolia mountains sector of the site contains a good range of glaciers and landforms of glacial origin but these are only of regional significance and probably better represented in the Golden Mountains of Altai site. IUCN consider that this site does not meet criterion (i).

Criterion (ii): Ecological processes

The closed salt lake system of Uvs Nuur is of international scientific importance because of its climatic and hydrological regimes. Because of the unchanging nature of the nomadic pastoral use of the grasslands within the basin over thousands of years, current research programmes should be able to unravel the rate at which Uvs Nuur (and other smaller lakes within the basin) have become saline (and eutrophic). These processes are on-going and because of its unique geophysical and biological characteristics, the basin has been chosen as an IGBP site for monitoring global warming. IUCN considers that this site has the potential to meet criterion (ii).

Criterion (iii): Superlative natural phenomena, scenic beauty

The diversity of landscapes within Uvs Nuur basin, and especially the uncluttered horizons of the steppes broken only by colourful ribs of weathered rocks ('skerries'), have their own subtle aesthetic appeal. Overall, however, they are not superlative in character and the site is not considered to meet criterion (iii).

Criterion (iv): Biodiversity and threatened species

The Uvs Nuur site has a large range of ecosystems, representing the major biomes of eastern Eurasia, with a number of endemic plants. Although the basin is inhabited and has been used for nomadic pastoralism for thousands of years, the mountains, forests, steppes and deserts are extremely important habitats for a wide range of wild animals, many of them threatened or endangered. The steppe ecosystem supports a rich diversity of birds and the deserts a number of rare gerbil, jerboas and the marbled polecat. The mountains at the western end of the basin are important refuges for the globally threatened snow leopard, mountain sheep (argali) and the Asiatic ibex. Uvs Nuur itself is an important habitat for waterfowl as well as for birds migrating south from Siberia. IUCN considers that this site has the potential to meet criterion (iv).

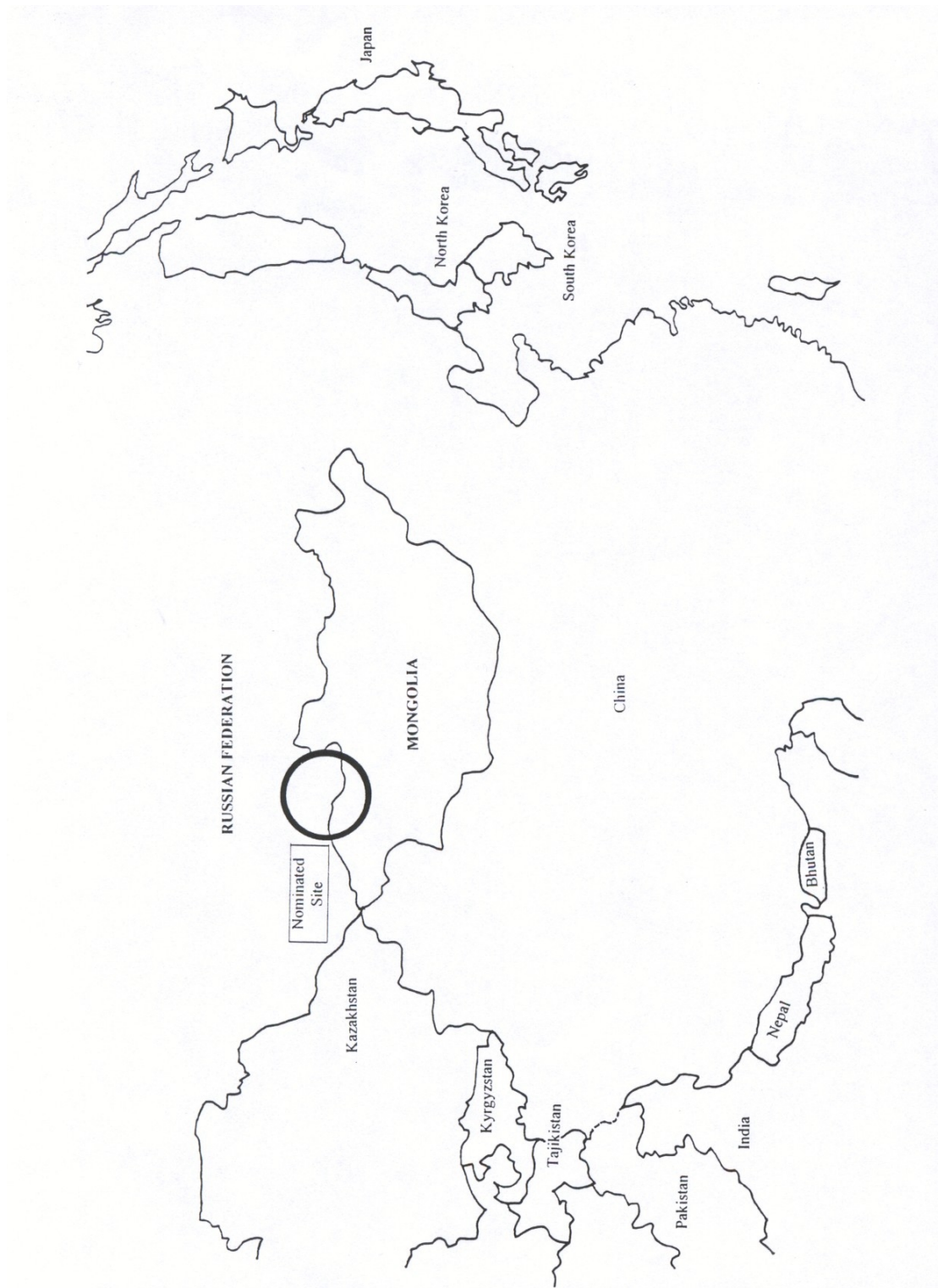
7. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Bureau recommend to the Committee that noting that Uvs Nuur Basin has the potential to meet natural criteria (ii) and (iv), **defer** the nomination back to the State Parties involved (Mongolia and the Russian Federation) until the management plan for the site is prepared, including the feasibility analysis of its implementation. Further, the authorities should be requested to revise the boundaries from the 7.5 million hectares to exclude the 90% of the basin which currently has no protective status.

The Bureau may wish to recommend to the two State Parties involved to continue their efforts to enhance transboundary cooperation to ensure the conservation of this site. The preparation and implementation of a joint management plan for this site might be a good framework for transboundary cooperation.

Noting the economic difficulties facing the State Parties involved, the Bureau may wish to encourage them to submit a request to the World Heritage Fund for technical assistance for the preparation and implementation of a management plan for theUvs Nuur Basin.

Map 1 : Location of nominated site



Map 2: Physical – Geography map of the Uvs Nuur Basin with marked boundary of the nomination



The « Ubsunuur Hollow » nature preserve (Russia)

1. “Mongun Raiga” cluster
2. “Ubsu –Nur” cluster
3. “Oruku-Shinaa” cluster
4. “Aryskannyg” cluster
5. “Jamaalyg” cluster
6. “Tsugeer els” cluster
7. “Ular” cluster

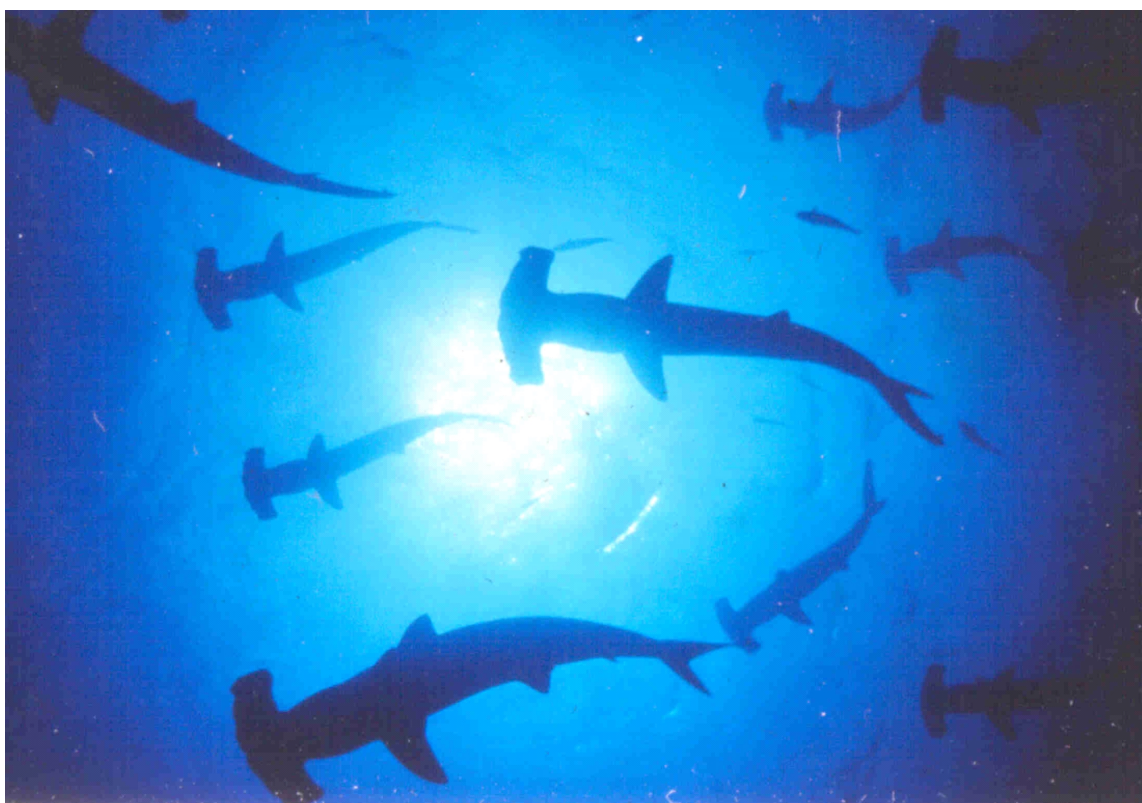
The « UVS Nuur » nature preserve (Mongolia)

8. “Tsagan shuvuut” cluster
9. “Turgen” cluster
10. “UVS lake” cluster
11. “Altan Els” cluster

**NOMINATIONS OF EXTENSIONS TO NATURAL PROPERTIES TO
THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST**

COCOS ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

COSTA RICA



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

COCOS ISLAND NATIONAL PARK (COSTA RICA)

Background note: The IUCN technical evaluation of Cocos Island National Park (Costa Rica) was presented to the twenty-first session of the World Heritage Committee (Naples, 1997). Based on IUCN's advice the Committee adopted the following recommendation:

"The Committee inscribed Cocos Island National Park under natural criteria (ii) and (iv) because of the critical habitats the site provides for marine wildlife including large pelagic species, especially sharks. The Committee commended the Government of Costa Rica for its initiative to incorporate the marine environment into the Park and encouraged it to extend management from 8km to the 15km legal limit around the island."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On the 10 October 2001 the marine protected area surrounding Cocos Island was officially extended from 15km (8.33 nautical miles) to 22km (12 nautical miles) in order to increase the protection of the marine resources. This extension increases the total area of the marine protected area from 977km² to 1,997km² (199,700ha).

The twenty-sixth session of the Bureau (Paris, April 2002) was informed of the recent extension of the marine limits of the National Park. Based on IUCN's advice the Bureau made the following recommendation:

"The Bureau congratulated the State Party on the extension of the Marine Park boundaries to 12 nautical miles, and, in light of the desire of the State Party to extend the boundaries of the World Heritage site to be commensurate with these new boundaries, requested that the proposal be submitted in due course, including a map of the extension".

By letter to the World Heritage Centre dated 25 April 2002 the State Party officially requested that the boundaries of the World Heritage site be extended to equal the marine protected area. The map of this extension is included below.

APPLICATION OF CRITERIA / STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Cocos Island National Park is inscribed under natural criteria (ii) and (iv). The 1997 IUCN evaluation noted the following:

Criterion (ii)

Cocos Island National Park (CINP) is the only island in the tropical eastern Pacific that supports a humid tropical forest. Its position as the first point of contact with the northern equatorial counter current and the myriad of interactions between the island and the surrounding marine ecosystem make the area an ideal laboratory for the study of biological processes. These studies have only just begun and there is much research to do on the life cycles of marine species and the complex interaction of

climate/currents/birds/nutrients/etc. that make up the CINP. The site thus meets criterion (ii) and the related Conditions of Integrity.

Criterion (iv)

CINP also meets criterion (iv) for the critical habitat it provides for marine species and for the role it plays as the major site in the region in protection of large pelagic species especially sharks. The condition of integrity that requires protection of migratory species outside of CINP, however, is impossible to achieve as these species are heavily exploited outside the park.

The marine biodiversity was the key component of inscription in 1997 and it was noted then that those main values extend naturally beyond the boundaries of the World Heritage site. IUCN, therefore, fully supports the extension of the boundaries to 22km and congratulates the efforts by the State Party to protect the natural values of this site.

RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that Cocos Island National Park World Heritage site is extended to 22km (12 nautical miles) to be commensurate with the new boundaries of the marine protected area.

Map 1: Cocos Island, Extended Area

