

ASIA / PACIFIC

MOUNT HAMIGUITAN RANGE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

PHILIPPINES



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

MOUNT HAMIGUITAN RANGE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (PHILIPPINES) – ID No. 1403 Rev

IUCN RECOMMENDATION TO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE: To inscribe the property under natural criterion (x).

Key paragraphs of Operational Guidelines:

Paragraph 77: Nominated property meets natural criterion.

Paragraph 78: Nominated property meets conditions of integrity and protection and management requirements.

Background note: The Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary (MHRWS) was nominated in 2012 and considered by the World Heritage Committee at its 37th Session in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2013. IUCN recalls the Committee's decision at that time (Decision 37COM 8B.12) to refer the nomination back to the State Party of the Philippines to allow it to address a number of issues related to the need to resolve outstanding indigenous peoples' land claims; implement the envisaged expansion of the site and revise its buffer zone; to prepare a plan to manage anticipated tourism impact; and to develop and implement a monitoring and research programme on potential climate change impact.

The State Party submitted a response to Decision 37COM 8B.12 in January 2014 which provides updates on measures taken to address the issues raised above as well as revised maps showing the expanded nomination. The evaluation below draws upon the previous IUCN assessment taking into account re-submitted material. The Committee's attention is drawn to the previous evaluation (WHC-13/37.COM/INF.8B2) in order to avoid repeating information.

1. DOCUMENTATION

a) Date nomination received by IUCN: Original nomination received on 25 March 2012. Revised version after 37COM referral decision received on 13 January 2014.

b) Additional information officially requested from and provided by the State Party: Supplementary information on the original nomination was requested from the State Party on 20 December 2012 with information received on 28 February 2013 and considered in IUCN's 2013 evaluation report. No additional information has been requested over and above this.

c) Additional literature consulted: Various sources listed in the nomination, and in the earlier IUCN evaluation report.

d) Consultations: The IUCN representative from the 2012 field visit, in addition to earlier consultees.

e) Field visit: Original field mission undertaken by Naomi Doak, 06-15 October 2012.

f) Date of IUCN approval of this report: March 2014

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

IUCN notes that the resubmitted nomination for Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary (MHRWS) includes a significantly expanded nominated area of 16,923 hectares (ha) which now encompasses additional values, most particularly areas of significant

Philippine Eagle nesting habitat to the south of the originally nominated area. Recalling its 2013 evaluation of MHRWS (WHC-13/37.COM/INF.8B2), IUCN had concluded that *"the nominated property has the potential to meet this criterion [criterion (x)] subject to integrity issues being addressed"*. As such the issues requested to be addressed did not include the need to provide substantial additional justification or evidence to support the site's claim under criterion (x). IUCN nevertheless welcomes the significant expansion of the property's nominated area and the values which it has added to the property, in particular those additional areas of Philippine Eagle nesting habitat. The expanded area significantly improves integrity and strengthens the case for criterion (x). The State Party has also amended the buffer zone of the MHRWS significantly increasing its area from 784 ha to 9,730 ha.

IUCN would also like to recall the fact that the rainforests of southern Mindanao Island have long been noted as having potential World Heritage quality; however, given the fragmented nature and high local endemism levels of the remaining lowland and mountain forests on Mindanao, their full range of biodiversity values cannot be represented by a single site. It is therefore not surprising that the Philippine Tentative List includes several other forest sites on Mindanao: Mount Apo, Mount Malindang Range and Mount Matutum. These mountains/mountain ranges share many species but each also supports a number of unique site-endemic species. IUCN encourages the State Party of the Philippines to consider future nominations of suitable areas on Mindanao which fall within the biologically significant Philippines

Biodiversity Hotspot and the Mount Kitanglad Centre of Plant Diversity.

3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

As noted above the focus of issues raised by the Committee concerned matters of integrity, protection and management rather than values. The values of the nominated property have been strengthened through the expansion of the nominated area; however, no additional comparative analysis is warranted beyond that covered in the existing nomination, and IUCN's earlier evaluation.

4. INTEGRITY, PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 Protection

The State Party has provided documentary evidence of the formal and legal declaration of the enlarged MHRWS, extending the level of protection that was discussed in IUCN's earlier nomination. Additional areas to the south of the former MHRWS have been afforded protection as a Wildlife Sanctuary through a series of protective measures jointly implemented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Province of Davao Oriental as well as Mati City, San Isidro Municipality and Governor Generoso local governments.

IUCN maintains its previous conclusions that the protection status of the nominated property meets the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines.

4.2 Boundaries

The boundaries of the nominated property have significantly increased the areas of habitat for endangered species, including the addition of important nesting areas for the Philippine Eagle. The resubmitted nomination increases the area originally submitted in 2012 from 6,350 ha to 16,923 ha, a 2.5 times increase. The expanded MHRWS provides a contiguous extension of the original Wildlife Sanctuary to incorporate additional forested areas to the south. In so doing, it provides for a larger, better configured and more resilient system.

IUCN welcomes this formalisation of the proposals which were already well advanced at the time of the last Committee meeting, noting that the resubmitted nominated property has, in fact, further increased in size over and above the expansion proposed at the time of the 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee.

The resubmitted buffer zone represents a greatly improved design which will assist in buffering the nominated property from impacts.

IUCN considers that the boundaries of the nominated property meet the requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

4.3 Management

IUCN recalls its concerns related to the potential for visitor and tourism impact on this ecologically fragile site. Whilst visitation to the site is currently restricted to management, scientific research and monitoring purposes, it is planned to establish tourism access to the site in future. The State Party has reaffirmed that no broader public visitation will take place until a trail management plan is formulated. A very well-prepared Visitor and Tourism Development and Management Plan for MHRWS has been submitted. The plan is comprehensive and strategic, adopting a market based approach to understanding potential visitor demand. Measures are outlined to ensure the protection of the property's values within a five year timetable with budgets specified.

IUCN considers the management of nominated property meets the requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

4.4 Community

Serious concerns were raised in IUCN's previous evaluation concerning approximately 30,000 ha of unresolved land claims by indigenous people which partially overlapped the property as nominated at the time. These claims also overlapped with the areas of the proposed expansion to the south. The State Party has confirmed the resolution of all land claims and rights issues related to the nominated area. Written commitments of support have been provided together with the Memorandum of Agreement signed between the Davao Provincial Government and Indigenous representatives confirming that outstanding claim issues have been resolved, thus ensuring the long term protection of the property. Work is ongoing through the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to manage relationships with affected local communities and indigenous peoples. IUCN welcomes the commitment to follow establish rights negotiation procedures to sensitively ensure the protection of Outstanding Universal Value whilst accommodating the needs of local people.

4.5 Threats

Climate change impact was previously identified as a potentially significant threat to the elevation sensitive vegetation of the MHRWS. IUCN therefore welcomes the MHRWS Monitoring & Assessment Programme for Climate Change Adaptation, which the State Party has submitted. The programme aims to better understand the impacts of climate change on the property's ecological processes, species and abiotic elements. It also attempts to factor in anticipated impacts from visitation and represents a well-developed, science based strategy to combat the potentially unknown impacts of climate variability. The programme details realistic methodologies and a series of pilot projects to test the approaches. It also recognises the potential for climate change impact on the vertical zonation of the site's vegetation communities.

In summary, IUCN appreciates the rapid advances made by the State Party and considers that the nominated property meets the overall conditions of integrity and protection and management as outlined in the Operational Guidelines.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

None.

6. APPLICATION OF THE CRITERIA

The **Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary** (MHRWS) has been nominated under criterion (x).

Criterion (x): Biodiversity and threatened species

MHRWS represents a complete, substantially intact and highly diverse mountain ecosystem, in a significant biogeographic region of the Philippines. Its diversity of plants and animals include globally threatened species as well as a large number of endemic species including those species that exist only in the Philippines, only in Mindanao and only in the nominated property. The fragile tropical “bonsai” forest that crowns the MHRWS epitomizes nature’s bid to survive in adverse conditions. As a result of its semi-isolation and its varied habitat types growing in dissimilar soil and climate conditions, its biodiversity has shown a significantly high level of endemism that has led scientists to believe that there may be more globally unique species waiting to be discovered in the area.

The combination of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems within the boundaries of the property and the large number of species inhabiting each makes the MHRWS home to a total of 1,380 species with 341 Philippine endemics that include critically endangered species such as the iconic Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) and the Philippine Cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*), as well as the trees *Shorea polysperma*, *Shorea astylosa*, and the orchid *Paphiopedilum adductum*. Its high level of endemism is well exemplified by the proportion of its amphibian (75% endemic) and reptile (84% endemic) species.

MHRWS exhibits segmentation of terrestrial habitats according to elevation. In the lower elevations the agro-ecosystem and remnants of dipterocarp forests house some 246 plant species including significant numbers of endemics such as the globally threatened dipterocarps of the genus *Shorea*. The dipterocarp forest ecosystem at 420-920 m asl is characterized by the presence of large trees and is home to 418 plant and 146 animal species, which include threatened species such as the Mindanao Bleeding-heart dove (*Gallicolumba crinigera*) and Philippine warty pig (*Sus philippensis*). At higher elevations the montane forest ecosystem exhibits numerous species of mosses, lichens and epiphytes. This ecosystem type houses 105 animal species representing all the animal groups found in MHRWS as well as the relatively recently discovered rat species, Hamiguitan hairy-tailed rat (*Batomys hamiguitan*). The fourth ecosystem type is

the typical mossy forest ecosystem characterized by thick mosses covering roots and tree trunks it provides habitat for the Philippine pygmy fruit bat, (*Haplonycteris fischeri*) and the threatened Pointed-snouted tree frog (*Philautus acutirostris*). At the topmost (1160-1200 m asl) is the mossy-pygmy forest ecosystem, adding a unique natural tropical bonsai forest layer to the property. It is the only known habitat in the world of the pitcher plant (*Nepenthes hamiguitanensis*) and the Delias butterfly (*Delias magsadana*).

IUCN considers that the nominated property meets this criterion.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC-14/38.COM/8B and WHC-14/38.COM/INF.8B2;
2. Inscribes the **Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary (Philippines)** on the World Heritage List under natural criteria (x).
3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

Forming a north-south running mountain ridge along the Pujada Peninsula in the southeastern part of the Eastern Mindanao Biodiversity Corridor, the Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary (MHRWS) has an elevation range of 75-1,637 m above sea level, and provides critical habitat for a range of plant and animal species. The property showcases terrestrial and aquatic habitats and the species that they host at a series of different elevations are responding to highly dissimilar soil and climate conditions. MHRWS provides a sanctuary to a host of globally threatened and endemic flora and fauna species, eight of which are found nowhere else except Mount Hamiguitan. These include critically endangered trees, plants and the iconic Philippine Eagle and Philippine Cockatoo.

Criteria

Criterion (x)

MHRWS represents a complete, substantially intact and highly diverse mountain ecosystem, in a significant biogeographic region of the Philippines. Its diversity of plants and animals include globally threatened species as well as a large number of endemic species including those species that exist only in the Philippines, only in Mindanao and only in the nominated property. The fragile tropical “bonsai” forest that crowns the MHRWS epitomizes nature’s bid to survive in adverse conditions. As a result of its semi-isolation and its varied habitat types growing in dissimilar soil and climate conditions, its biodiversity has shown a significantly high level of endemism that has led scientists to believe that there may be more

globally unique species waiting to be discovered in the area.

The combination of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems within the boundaries of the property and the large number of species inhabiting each makes the MHRWS home to a total of 1,380 species with 341 Philippine endemics that include critically endangered species such as the iconic Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) and the Philippine Cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*), as well as the trees *Shorea polysperma*, *Shorea astylosa*, and the orchid *Paphiopedilum adductum*. Its high level of endemism is well exemplified by the proportion of its amphibian (75% endemic) and reptile (84% endemic) species.

MHRWS exhibits segmentation of terrestrial habitats according to elevation. In the lower elevations the agro-ecosystem and remnants of dipterocarp forests house some 246 plant species including significant numbers of endemics such as the globally threatened dipterocarps of the genus *Shorea*. The dipterocarp forest ecosystem at 420-920 m asl is characterized by the presence of large trees and is home to 418 plant and 146 animal species, which include threatened species such as the Mindanao Bleeding-heart dove (*Gallinolumba crinigera*) and Philippine warty pig (*Sus philippensis*). At higher elevations the montane forest ecosystem exhibits numerous species of mosses, lichens and epiphytes. This ecosystem type houses 105 animal species representing all the animal groups found in MHRWS as well as the relatively recently discovered rat species, Hamiguitan hairy-tailed rat (*Batomys hamiguitan*). The fourth ecosystem type is the typical mossy forest ecosystem characterized by thick mosses covering roots and tree trunks; it provides habitat for the Philippine pygmy fruit bat, (*Haplonycteris fischeri*) and the threatened Pointed-snouted tree frog (*Philautus acutirostris*). At the topmost (1160-1200 m asl) is the mossy-pygmy forest ecosystem, adding a unique natural tropical bonsai forest layer to the property. It is the only known habitat in the world of the pitcher plant (*Nepenthes hamiguitanensis*) and the Delias butterfly (*Delias magsadana*).

Integrity

The property is substantially intact and of adequate size to provide for the conservation of its biodiversity and other natural resources. It remains well preserved and intact as evidenced by the results of studies and ongoing monitoring. MHRWS protects typical mountain ecosystems of the biogeographic region and include the agro-ecosystem, dipterocarp, montane, mossy, and mossy-pygmy forests. These ecosystems harbour an assemblage of endemic, rare and economically important flora and fauna. The level of vegetative cover indicates that the property is in relatively pristine condition with its surface area covered by a mix of closed and open canopy forest and smaller areas of brush land. The terrestrial and aquatic habitats are well preserved and a number of globally threatened and endemic species rely on or occur within the MHRWS. MHRWS's marked vertical zonation of vegetation and associated habitats makes it particularly vulnerable to climate change impact.

Protection and management requirements

The property straddles two municipalities and one city: San Isidro Municipality, Governor Generoso Municipality and the City of Mati, in the Province of Davao Oriental, and totals an area of 16,923 ha with a buffer zone of 9,729 ha. The MHRWS is protected through several protected area regulations and is a component of the Philippines' National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS). Several layers of national and provincial legislation and policies serve to protect the property and guide management. Apart from delineating the boundaries of the property, these laws prohibit incompatible activities such as logging, mining, exploration or surveying for energy resources inside the property. Responsibility for enforcement is shared by both the national and local government agencies in partnership with other stakeholders.

The protection of MHRWS is further strengthened by the engagement with and involvement of local and indigenous communities living in its periphery in the management of the property. Their lifestyles and spiritual beliefs are based on respect for the environment and its biodiversity and they have, over time, subtly molded their way of life to ensure the sustainable use of their resources. At the same time, the harsh conditions of the mountain range serve as a deterrent for other human settlements that do not conform to a similarly symbiotic lifestyle. Threats in and around the property include illegal collection of wildlife, mining, development pressures, potential pressures and impacts from tourism and climate change. Management authorities have implemented a monitoring and research programme to anticipate climate change effects on the biota and try to mitigate consequent impacts. Ongoing monitoring will be needed to predict and respond to such impacts.

The Mount Hamiguitan Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) oversees protection and management of the property according to the approved MHRWS Management Plan of 2011. The Protected Area Superintendents Office (PASO) implements the activities set down in the plan as well as the policies and directives issued by the PAMB. Together with the "Bantay Gubat" personnel from the three municipalities with territorial jurisdiction over the nominated property, the PASO conducts regular monitoring and patrol activities over the core and buffer zones. A five year visitor and tourism management plan is in place to ensure the effective management of use, and should be kept updated. The municipalities overlapping the property have aligned their tourism and development plans to the Management Plan of MHRWS, helping to ensure that the importance of protection of the property will be given the necessary recognition and consideration and that development will not hamper or detract from the conservation and protection of the biodiversity of MHRWS.

4. Commends the State Party and the range of stakeholders in the nominated property for their efficient and effective action to address concerns related to the property's integrity, protection and management, as previously raised by the World Heritage Committee.

5. Encourages the State Party to continue efforts to work collaboratively with local communities and indigenous peoples on the management of the property and to ensure the equitable access and sharing of benefits, including those that may accrue from tourism.

6. Further encourages the State Party, in consultation with communities and other stakeholders, to consider the possible further nomination of serial extensions to the property to include other protected areas with highly significant biodiversity values on Mindanao, provided that these areas meet the integrity, protection and management requirements for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

Map 1: Nominated property and buffer zone

