

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

IUCN TECHNICAL REVIEW

1. IDENTIFICATION NUMBER AND NAME 186 LORD HOWE ISLAND GROUP
2. LOCATION: Located in the South Pacific Ocean, 700 kilometres north-east of Sydney, between latitudes 31° 30'S and 31° 50'S and longitudes 159° 00'E and 159° 17'E.
3. NOMINATED BY: The Government of the State of New South Wales
4. DOCUMENTATION:
 - (1) Nomination form, maps and photographs
 - (ii) Supplementary documentation (IUCN)
 - a) Consultations: J.G. Mosley, Director, Australian Conservation Foundation; Rex Buckingham, Chairman Australian National Section International Council for Bird Preservation; IUCN/Threatened Plants Committee Secretariat; Graeme Kelleher, Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority, Australia; Don Johnstone, Director, National Parks and Wildlife Service, New South Wales.

5. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The Lord Howe Islands are the eroded remnants of a volcano rising from the seafloor 2000m below, representing the nearly complete stage in the destruction of a large volcanic island. Lord Howe Island supports the southern-most true coral reef in the world, but in colder periods the reef is dominated by calcareous algae instead of coral -- a rare example of a zone of transition between algal and coral reefs. The area is of universal significance as an example of a high island resulting from volcanic activity, and for a fauna and flora which has adapted to the island environment through speciation; some 75 of the plants are endemic (found nowhere else) and 73 of these are considered rare or endangered by IUCN, including the herb Chinocochloa conspiciua, a recently-discovered species known from only a single clump high on Mt. Lidgbird. Several species of animals of universal importance which live on the islands are rare and endangered, particularly the Lord Howe Island Woodhen, a flightless bird that is one of the world's rarest animals (population: c. 30).

6. INTEGRITY

The boundaries of the site are explicit, though they could be improved if they were to be extended to include the marine portions of the site (these portions are protected by de facto regulations of the local people). The managing agency is the Lord Howe Island Board, composed of five members of which three are elected island residents, one is the department head of the New South Wales Department of Lands and one is the Director of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. On 1 January 1982, the natural areas at the northern and southern ends of Lord Howe Island, as well as the offshore islands, were established as a permanent park reserve, which can be revoked only by an act of Parliament; this provides the same status of protection as a national park in New South Wales. The Plan of Management under preparation for the island must be approved by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the plan will have the same force as a plan of management for a national park in New South Wales. One matter of concern is a proposal to construct four 25-metre telecommunications masts, covering an area of 2 hectares; this proposal has not been assessed by an Environmental Impact Statement.

7. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

There are several islands which are broadly comparable to the Lord Howe group, including Norfolk, Macquarie, the Cocos, the Heard and McDonald Islands, and the Ashmore and Cartier Islands; however, Lord Howe has more attractive scenery, more endemic species, and a more interesting marine environment. Other comparable warm-temperate islands include Juan Fernandez off the coast of Chile and the Canary Islands off West Africa; both are in quite distinct biogeographic realms from the Lord Howe Island Group.

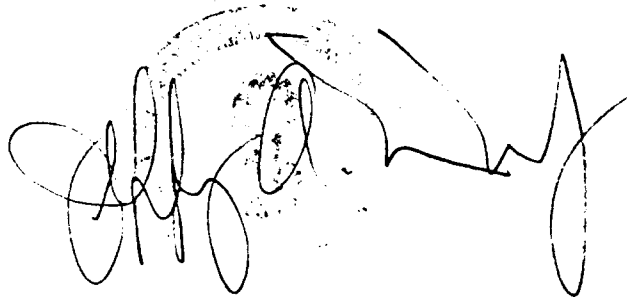
8. EVALUATION

The Lord Howe Island Group meets the criteria of the Convention in being an outstanding example of an oceanic island of volcanic origin, having a unique biota of plants and animals, providing unique breeding grounds for colonies of seabirds, containing features, formations and areas of exceptional natural beauty, and providing the habitat for rare and endangered species.

9. RECOMMENDATION

The Lord Howe Island Group should be added to the World Heritage List. The Committee may wish to urge the Australian authorities to consider the following:

- a) adding the lagoon and coral reefs to the Site; and
- b) requesting that an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared by the Department of Telecommunications, under the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act, for the proposed telecommunications towers.



International Union for Conservation of
Nature and Natural Resources

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