

A GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF FOREST PROTECTED AREAS ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST



A Contribution to the Global Theme Study of World Heritage Natural Sites

Prepared by Jim Thorsell and Todd Sigaty


Natural Heritage Programme

IUCN

Gland, Switzerland

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Working Paper 1: Earth's Geological History - A Contextual Framework
Assessment of World Heritage Fossil Site Nominations

Working Paper 2: A Global Overview of Wetland and Marine Protected Areas
on the World Heritage List

Working Paper 3: A Global Overview of Forest Protected Areas
on the World Heritage List

Further volumes (in preparation) on biodiversity, mountains, deserts and
grasslands, and geological features.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper provides a global overview of the current coverage of forest protected areas on the World Heritage List and suggests potential forest areas which may merit future nomination to this prestigious List. Despite the essential role that forests play in climate control, flora and fauna habitat, and in the lives of the human population, they continue to be one of the most threatened biomes. Recent estimates indicate that nearly 50% of the world's original forest cover has been lost and over 4,000 tree species have been listed by IUCN as globally threatened.

In 1996, IUCN's Natural Heritage Program began a project to prepare a global strategy for natural World Heritage sites. As part of this project, this working paper on forests is the third in a series of global overviews of the various biomes of the world (e.g. wetlands, forests, mountains, deserts, grasslands, etc.). These theme studies involve close co-operation with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and have benefitted from the support of Australia's Department of Environment.

This working paper identifies the 61 forest protected areas currently on the World Heritage List, representing 39 countries and over 50 million ha of protected area. It further locates 25 potential forest protected areas from various global regions which may merit future World Heritage nomination. The 61 sites are categorised by forest type (tropical moist, tropical dry, sub-tropical, temperate and boreal) and biogeographical realm and numbered to provide the reader easy reference to the tables, figures and maps.

The annex includes a summary description of all 61 forested protected sites on the World Heritage List cross referenced with their relations with other international programs and conventions (e.g. Biosphere Reserves and WWF Global 200 Ecoregions). Although Ramsar is not mentioned, 37 of the 61 sites in this overview were categorised in working paper 2 as World Heritage sites with wetland and marine values. A gap analysis of the sites listed in this overview indicates that a limited number of forest protected areas presently exist on the World Heritage List within Amazonia (Neotropical Realm), portions of the Indomalayan Realm, the boreal regions of the Palearctic realm, and no sites exist in the Oceanian Realm (Papua New Guinea and the North and South Pacific).

It is hoped that this overview will assist IUCN in making comparative evaluations and provide the World Heritage Committee with a firmer scientific basis for making decisions on new World Heritage nominations. It will also provide State Parties with a global perspective which is useful when identifying potential World Heritage properties in their territories.



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