FOREWORD

As President of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), it gives me immense pride to address the global conservation community through this foreword for the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) impact report 2023. The WCPA stands at the forefront of our collective efforts to counter the accelerating loss of nature and biodiversity, and to confront the challenges posed by climate change.

Through its rigorous scientific approach and unwavering commitment, WCPA has been instrumental in guiding the establishment and effective management of protected and conserved areas across the globe. These areas are not just havens of biodiversity; they are the cornerstones upon which we build our strategies to mitigate climate impacts, protect endangered species, and preserve the ecosystems that sustain life on Earth.

As we navigate the decisive decade for our planet’s future, the work of WCPA is more critical than ever. It embodies the essence of IUCN’s mission—uniting the world’s best scientific knowledge with the dedicated efforts of our members and partners. Together, we are making strides towards achieving the global biodiversity targets, including the ambitious ‘30x30’ goal to conserve at least 30 percent of the Earth’s land and sea by 2030.

This report not only highlights the achievements and the impact of the WCPA’s work over the past year but also serves as a clarion call to strengthen our resolve and enhance our actions. Let us draw inspiration from the successes detailed in this report and recommit ourselves to the urgent and vital work of preserving our natural world for present and future generations.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The past year has been an incredibly busy yet productive year for the Commission. With less than six years remaining to reach the ambitious biodiversity targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), a deep sense of urgency has triggered visible momentum and significant financial investment toward implementation. The Commission has been a part of this global effort, supporting implementation by delivering on its core mandate to provide technical guidance and policy advice.

It has been a year of learning for the Commission. We have been reminded of the importance of recognizing and using all the tools in the area-based conservation toolbox—including different forms of governance and management regimes and innovative financing mechanisms—and of building new tools when necessary. The past year reinforced the need to develop new guidance for protected area planning and management that reflects the most recent science and experience, but also increasing accessibility and use of existing technical guidance, knowledge, and tools.

Forging partnerships and alliances is essential to achieving ambitious goals. Catalysing aligned, collective action through building a community of practice for Target 5, working alongside the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the High-Ambition Coalition, is critical for impact at the scale necessary to bend the curve toward effective and lasting conservation.

We must be strategic in our efforts. This means meeting countries where they are and building a bottom-up approach toward advancing not just the 30x30 target, but also other related GBF targets.

A strategic approach also means investing resources where there are critical gaps, such as freshwater ecosystems, while thinking across entire river basins and mosaics of large landscapes and seascapes. Bringing conservation to scale in this way demands integrated spatial planning for well-connected ecological networks of protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures (OECSMs) and ecological corridors, habitat and restoration, and food production.

This past year also saw progress toward new ways of thinking about the broad role of protected and conserved areas (PCAs) beyond the conservation of biological diversity. We took important steps that will begin to place PCAs on the climate and human health agendas.

As we forge ahead, we are grateful to the extraordinary network of volunteers and members. The influence and impact of the Commission is largely due to their tireless energy and commitment. We hope you will enjoy reading this report about Commission’s extensive scope of work.
OUR VISION

Systems of protected and conserved areas are effective in conserving nature, and as such, are recognised and valued both as cornerstones for conserving biodiversity and as natural solutions to global challenges, providing benefits to human health, livelihoods, and well-being.

OUR MISSION

To develop and provide scientific and technical advice and policy that promotes a representative, effectively managed, and equitably governed global system of marine and terrestrial protected and conserved areas, with a focus on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
2023 BY THE NUMBERS

Thanks to the vital efforts of our Commission’s expert members and partners, WCPA contributed to significant gains in high quality protected and conserved areas in 2023. As our membership continues to grow and diversify, WCPA’s network is becoming even better equipped to provide strategic advice to policymakers and to strengthen capacity and investment for protected and conserved areas establishment and effective management. By developing and disseminating conservation standards, science, and policy guidance, we are actively providing direction on a full suite of issues surrounding protected and conserved landscapes and seascapes with the highest conservation value and the greatest potential for impact.

Members by WCPA region (Updated 01.01.2024)

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Membership demographics

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2,916 WCPA Members

352 new members in 2023

2 issues of the PARKS Journal

19 papers from a total of 70 authors from 26 countries

115 workshops and webinars organized

10 New Task Forces addressing recommendations in 11 IUCN resolutions

7 WCPA supported the execution of major global events and hosted

15 side events at policy events around the world

WCPA publications were downloaded over 100,000 times in 2023
WCPA ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

WCPA is divided into 12 operational regions. WCPA members are linked to a Commission region according to their registered country of residence.

WCPA currently has nine Themes, each with a Thematic Vice Chair who sits on the WCPA Steering Committee. Themes work on broad areas of enquiry and key strategic directions towards meeting the WCPA mandate.

WCPA Specialist Groups work on long term thematic activities relating to specific topics of study addressed by the Commission mandate.

WCPA Task Forces work on a specific issue, within a determined time period.

Special projects are crafted around cross-cutting priority topics within the Commission and can be either short-term or long-term in nature.
In December 2022, more than 190 countries sealed a landmark environmental agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which calls upon governments to take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. WCPA is committed to supporting governments, NGOs, Indigenous peoples, local communities, and other stakeholders in achieving the ambitious and crucial goals of the agreement.

Protected and conserved areas (PCAs) will play a key role in the GBF. Currently, only 17 percent of terrestrial areas and 8 percent of marine areas are protected, and many of these areas are managed ineffectively or in ways that do not embody equity and human rights, or are not situated well enough to achieve lasting and effective biodiversity conservation. As a global leader on protected and conserved areas, WCPA is working closely with parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, of which the GBF is a key part.

**Target 3: Bending the curve**

Nature is in a steep decline, both in species and plenitude. WCPA recognizes the significance of all 23 of the GBF’s ambitious targets, as each is important if we are to reverse this trend and restore nature to abundance. Global attention and resources, however, are particularly focused on Target 3, the best-known of the targets, often called the push for “30x30.” Target 3 aims for effective and equitable protection and conservation of at least 30 percent of the planet by 2030. Its success or failure will be a barometer of whether multilateralism can be effective in addressing the decline of species and the wealth of nature.

Over the past years, WCPA and its partners have developed detailed technical guidance on many aspects relevant to the target, including rights-based approaches, inland water protection, privately protected areas, connectivity, and areas of particular importance to biodiversity. Notably, WCPA, World Wildlife Fund US (WWF-US) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) produced a comprehensive Target 3 Guide that explains how to plan and implement the target, delves into each of the target’s elements, and explores overarching concepts that should guide implementation. The Guide also provides links to resources for multi-stakeholder/multi-rightsholder approaches, and discusses options for developing and implementing effective monitoring plans.

WCPA, along with The Nature Conservancy and the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, developed a detailed, online 30x30 Solutions toolkit, a curated web-resource providing guidance and information to support implementation of Target 3. Connectivity is an essential element of Target 3. WCPA’s Connectivity Specialist Group (SG) has developed an overview of opportunities for connectivity conservation in the GBF and aligned with financial as well as guidance for addressing connectivity in revised National Biodiversity and Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs) and implementation of the GBF. SG members are also holding workshops to refine application of the IUCN Guidelines for conserving connectivity through ecological networks and corridors, addressing ecological connectivity in the development of roads, railways, and canals, and co-created the animated short film “Animals move to survive: Wildlife Connect Initiative.”

Many governments, organisations, and donors are mobilising to support implementation of 30x30. WCPA has sought to share knowledge and learning among these actors, and to bring rigour to the pursuit of the Target 3 ambition, so that by 2030 all stakeholders can be confident that the spirit and not just the letter of the agreement has been fulfilled. An important part of that process is helping governments build better understanding of how to protect their areas and how to honour their commitments to equitable, rights-based approaches to humanity’s shared goals to protect the nature that sustains us. WCPA has been active in facilitating discussion on these essential topics over the past year.

The conservation community needs to know whether all its efforts and investments are truly reversing the curve. A key aspect of WCPA’s work in 2023 was forging alliances and partnerships that position the Commission to provide technical support and guidance to the T3 Partnership, the Secretariat of the CBD, and the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

While concentrating on Target 3, WCPA has also been building capacity regarding the other two area-based conservation targets of the GBF: spatial planning (Target 1); and restoration (Target 2). The new Task Force on Restoration aims to strengthen knowledge and develop guidance to improve restoration implementation in the framework of the GBF targets and will carry out research, provide evidence-based technical tools, and policy documents to support improved integration of restoration in the context of protected and conserved areas.

WCPA’s Spatial Planning Task Force is working to ensure that biodiversity considerations are considered through a typical process of analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives. Such biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning is not well defined by the GBF, and the Task Force is helping to address this gap and provide guidance on how Parties to the CBD can meet their commitments toward biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning in ways that lead to real benefits for biodiversity are equitable, inclusive, representative, realistic, and feasible with limited time and resources.

**Target 3 and the GBF**

Adopted in December 2022 at the 15th meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is an urgent seven-year plan to reverse alarming declines of nature by 2030, as a step toward living in harmony by 2050.

Target 3 calls for terrestrial, inland water, and marine areas to be “effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected, and sustainably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable.” Target 3 thus falls squarely within WCPA’s mandate and work programme.
RECOGNIZING DIVERSE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT REGIMES ACHIEVING CONSERVATION OUTCOMES

Protected areas that fall under the six management categories of the IUCN classification system are fundamental to global biodiversity conservation. The vast majority of these protected areas are government-designated and managed; other forms of governance, such as governance shared by diverse rights holders and stakeholders together, by private entities, or by indigenous peoples and/or local communities remain uncommon.

Government-owned and managed protected areas will not by themselves enable countries to reach the Target 3 goals under the Global Biodiversity Framework. That will require diversifying governance and management and bringing into the fold areas that could or do achieve biodiversity outcomes but are beyond government-designated parks and reserves.

Important examples of the kinds of diverse governance and management that will be needed to achieve global ambitions include privately protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), and recognition of indigenous and traditional territories. WCPA has been engaged heavily in advancing the first two over the past year and remains committed to supporting the third.

Privately protected areas

While the 30x30 target features the quantity of land, waters, and sea protected, the location and effectiveness of PCAs are among vital quantitative requirements in judging how much the target contributes to stemming the biodiversity crisis. Some areas that are crucial to halting or reversing biodiversity loss are privately owned by non-profit organisations, for-profit organisations, or individual landowners. These landowners can play a key role in not only achieving the 30x30 target but ensuring its long-term success by choosing to manage their lands and waters to deliver conservation outcomes. WCPA provides the expertise needed to seize this opportunity.

Few governments recognize privately protected and conserved areas when reporting their progress on the 30x30 target. WCPA’s Privately Protected Areas & Nature Stewardship Specialist Group improves understanding and recognition of the role of private approaches to nature conservation, and helps enhance the effectiveness of privately protected and conserved areas by gathering information and sharing it at the global level.

Governance, equity, and rights

Governance of protected and conserved areas is now clearly understood as a main element in the legal, policy, institutional, and practical framework of conservation around the world. Governance that advances equity, human rights, and approaches that elevate shared governance practices are needed to navigate the growing complexities of PCA management. The GBF has begun to move the needle in terms of recognizing the critical importance of rights-based approaches to PCA governance across all governance types, yet these concepts and their application remain a challenge for many countries and agencies.

WCPA has a unique leadership role in providing guidance related to the governance of protected and conserved areas. WCPA fosters, coordinates, and actively engages in a set of initiatives to bring governance practices that reflect equity and human rights to the centre of protected and conserved area management discourse, and develops concrete recommendations for practice. Working closely with key allies, including the Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP), the WCPA Theme and Specialist Group on Governance, Equity, and Rights, promotes these dialogues and provides practical tools that enable countries, agencies, and their counterparts to integrate such practices into protected and conserved area management. In 2023, under the WCPA Theme, a joint working group was established between CEESP and WCPA to explore and reduce barriers to expanding governance by Indigenous peoples and local communities in PCAs to further diversity governance regimes, and to develop guidance and tools to support improved recognition of their roles and contributions.

Defining OECMs

The Convention on Biological Diversity defines ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ as:

A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values. (CBD Decision 14/8)

In November 2018, Parties to the Convention adopted this definition of OECMs, as well as guiding principles, common characteristics, and criteria for their identification.

While protected areas must have a primary conservation objective, this is not necessary for OECMs. OECMs may be managed for many different objectives but they must deliver effective conservation. They may be managed with conservation as a primary or secondary objective or long-term conservation may simply be the ancillary result of management activities.

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

The commitment to the 30x30 objective of Target 3 has sparked significant interest in OECMs. As implementation unfolds, there has been huge demand for conceptual clarity and knowledge regarding how to recognize and report on OECMs.

WCPA has also been deeply involved in exploring the role of OECMs through the OECMs Specialist Group. OECMs will figure prominently in the expansion of protected and conserved areas under Target 3, and the WCPA OECMs Specialist Group has developed a detailed online toolkit for identifying them.

The Specialist Group, published a clear, criteria-based tool that governments, private entities, NGOs, and Indigenous and community groups can use to identify site-level OECMs.

WCPA, through the OECMs Specialist Group, also aimed to broaden the effective global expertise on OECMs to promote IUCN guidance. To that end it established regional expert groups for Latin America, Europe, and Africa and thematic groups for marine and freshwater ecosystems. The Specialist Group has engaged in extensive outreach to support the interpretation of the OECMs criteria, recognition of potential OECMs, and advancing knowledge sharing and exchange of experiences on OECMs globally.

New Best Practice Guidelines Forthcoming

The forthcoming WCPA Protected Areas Best Practice Guidelines, Recognising and Respecting the Territories and Areas Conserved by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (ICCAs) Overlapped by Protected Areas, identifies six key approaches and 20 good practices to support the recognition of ICCAs overlapped by OECMs governed by governments and private entities that do not represent or include Indigenous peoples and local communities.

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**GUIDING THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHT PLACES FOR BIODIVERSITY**

The bold ambition of Target 3 has been widely celebrated and its implementation seen as pivotal for the overall success of the CBD. The expansion agenda that CBD signatory nations have committed to is a challenge but also a unique opportunity to rapidly extend conservation(6,21),(991,997)

While expanding the quantity (e.g., area) of PCAs will be important, it will also be critical to focus on the quality of those areas: are signatory nations protecting those terrestrial, inland waters, and marine areas that have the best chance of halting and reversing biodiversity loss? WCPA has been working on tools and data to help countries focus on the areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services. Effectively conserving and managing these areas through ecologically representative, well-connected, and equitably governed systems will help meet the broad intention of Target 3.1

To ensure PCAs are placed in areas of importance for biodiversity, WCPA has broken down the components of Target 3 into 12 related biodiversity elements, such as rare or threatened species and habitats, and threatened and/or collapsing ecosystems. These elements can be made into clear objectives for spatial planning, targets can be set against these objectives, and the targets can be incorporated into conservation plans.

One of the critical datasets available to support this process is the World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), developed by IUCN, Birdlife International, and the 11 other members of the KBA Partnership. KBAs are among the most diverse places on Earth, contribute significantly to the planet’s biodiversity and overall health, and have proven to be a key tool for guiding decisions on conservation and sustainable management. WCPA supports the KBA Partnership, which seeks to enhance global conservation efforts by systematically mapping internationally important sites and ensuring that scarce resources are directed to the most important places for nature.

WCPA also recognises the need to pay attention to realms and ecosystems that are under-represented in the current protected area estate such as freshwater and mountain ecosystems.

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**Freshwater**

The WCPA Freshwater Specialist Group addresses urgent issues related to conservation of freshwater/inland water habitats within protected areas. Group members conduct research, conservation activities, and outreach to help ensure that the complete diversity of the world’s freshwater ecosystems are adequately represented in the global network of protected areas and OECMs. Working closely with the Ramsar Secretariat, the Freshwater Specialist Group is focused on the development of guidance that supports Target 3 in freshwater settings, particularly working to better define OECMs in freshwater environments.

Group members participated in development and implementation of the Freshwater Challenge. This country-led initiative aims to substantiate, integrate, and accelerate targeted interventions for rivers and wetlands, connecting these with national plans and strategies. It will increase the overall investment into the restoration and conservation of freshwater ecosystems and substantially increase the social and economic returns on those investments, including the goal of restoring 300,000 km of rivers and 350 million hectares of wetlands by 2030.

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**Mountains**

Members of WCPA’s Mountains Specialist Group have developed a strategic decision-support tool for identifying and prioritising which candidate mountain areas most urgently require protection.1 The six-step algorithm harnesses multiple datasets including mountain Key Biodiversity Areas, World Terrestrial Ecosystems, Biodiversity Hotspots, and Red List species and ecosystems. The algorithm makes use of other key attributes including opportunities for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, developing mountain tourism, maintaining hydrological gradients and natural ecological corridors, and conserving flagship species. This rapid-assessment tool enables regional teams with sufficient local knowledge and country-specific values to finalise lists of priority mountain areas for protection and ensures a repeatable, unbiased, and scientifically credible method for allocating resources and priorities to safeguard the world’s most biodiverse mountain areas facing myriad threats.

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Important shark and ray areas

Current measures for protection and improvement to shark habitats have been ineffective. In response, IUCN helped develop Important Shark and Ray Areas. This innovative approach is designed to ensure that discrete portions of habitats critical to shark species are delineated and used in place-based conservation and management initiatives across the world's oceans.

As with IMMAs, there is no legal or regulatory mandate associated with ISRAs. One of main goals of ISRAs is to attract the attention of policy- and decision-makers who design and develop MPAs to the need of maintaining the favourable conservation status of sharks in those specific areas. WCPA members have helped design criteria to capture important aspects of shark biology and ecology and to encompass multiple aspects of species vulnerability, distribution, abundance, and key life cycle activities, as well as areas of high diversity and endemicity. With the finalisation of the ISRA Criteria, IUCN is moving forward to assess a region against these criteria and identify the first ISRAs in the world.

Over 1/3 of all shark species and 3/4 of oceanic shark species are threatened with extinction.

Important marine mammal areas

WCPA has long recognized the need for a simple but authoritative conservation tool that marine spatial planners, marine protected area practitioners, government, industry, conservation groups, and scientists could use to protect habitat for whales, dolphins, and other marine mammals. Ten years ago, the Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force began to develop a scientific process toward that end, drawing on published and unpublished data to bring together disparate groups of whale and other marine mammal scientists to identify the most important habitats of these wide-ranging species.

Important Marine Mammal Areas, or IMMAs, defined as discrete portions of habitat, important to marine mammal species, that have the potential to be delineated and managed for conservation.
WORKING TOWARDS A GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

Target 3 of the GBF calls for 30 percent of the world to be effectively conserved and managed in protected and conserved areas (PCAs). Monitoring progress towards this target thus requires a robust methodology for assessing both the quantity and quality of lands and waters under conservation management. Unfortunately, effectiveness is one of those concepts that is easy to understand intuitively, but difficult to define and measure in a standard manner, especially in the complex ecological and social systems in which protected and conserved areas are implemented. In practice, an effective area or network needs to demonstrate three things:

1. Location in areas that are important for biodiversity and sound design.
2. Good governance processes and management strategy implementation.
3. Evidence that these processes and strategies are leading to the achievement of credible short-term objectives on the pathway to long-term threat reduction, conservation, and human wellbeing outcomes.

The key to showing effectiveness is thus to establish a theory of change pathway that links management processes and strategies to a series of desired outcomes (see diagram). The challenge becomes operationalising these principles in a credible, feasible, and useful assessment system.

To help meet this challenge, the Defining and Measuring Conservation Effectiveness and Outcomes Task Force, working in conjunction with UNEP WCMC Protected Planet, has systematically compared over 20 existing protected area effectiveness frameworks and tools that have been developed over the past decades. These included both global efforts such as the IUCN Green List Standard, METT, and Blue Park Criteria, as well as various national frameworks. The analysis reveals that these approaches are for the most part able to assess governance and management processes, but are still figuring out how to link actions to credible outcomes in a theory of change. It is critically important to connect the dots, and link existing methodologies that assess governance and management processes to approaches that generate the evidence to measure outcomes such as threat reduction, the retention of biodiversity values and the enhancement of human well-being.

The Task Force is now working with PCA managers in a number of countries and the proponents of these frameworks and tools to develop and test protocols that could help fill this gap. For example, the photo shows one of our tests of our approach with PCA managers from a half-dozen Latin American countries in the RedFluores Network. And as described in Box 4, WCPA is actively working with the IUCN Secretariat to improve the Green List Standard. It is our hope that this work will result in a global framework for effectiveness assessments that could both help PCA managers improve their work over time and give broader society the confidence that we are collectively moving towards the ambitious 30x30 targets.
ADVANCING MARINE CONSERVATION: COASTS TO THE HIGH SEAS

WCPA seeks to inspire, inform, and enable people to protect Planet Ocean by promoting the establishment of a global, representative system of effectively managed and lasting networks of marine protected areas (MPAs) and OECMs within National Economic Exclusion Zones areas as well as in the High Seas and Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions. The Marine Thematic Group, which includes the Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, the High Seas Specialist Group, as well as working groups dedicated to other marine issues such as connectivity, management effectiveness, spatial planning, and climate change, is providing guidance on key elements relevant to the global MPA agenda through assuring quality information, celebrating achievements, identifying priorities, and spurring action in order to help governments, agencies, organisations, and individuals plan, develop, and implement MPAs.

Antarctic and Southern Oceans

WCPA reviewed and updated the strategy for IUCN’s Programme and Policy on Antarctic issues (especially taking into consideration relevant IUCN resolutions, recent policy developments including the GBF and IUCN’s Programme of Work) for action now and that can act as an input to the 2025-2029 conservation strategy. WCPA also developed a plan that outlines a sustainable means on implementation including options for fundraising and capacity development, aiming to elevate IUCN’s engagement with and influence of relevant policy fora.

Antarctic tourism

Tourism in Antarctica has grown enormously, ten-fold between 1992 and 2020. While Antarctic tourism can foster public support and investment for the continent’s protection, tourist activities can also cause damage at visitor sites and along travel routes and disturb wildlife. Antarctic travel also has a high carbon footprint. All activities in Antarctica are regulated through the Antarctic Treaty System. WCPA members have been active participants in the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings, which constitute the most important decision-making forum for Antarctica. WCPA also supported the revision of the IUCN strategy for Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. IUCN WCPA Antarctic tourism experts recommend more research to inform the policies and implementation of a science-based tourism management approach, along with improved safeguards and monitoring to help enhance the positive impacts of tourism as a conservation tool.

IUCN Resolution 107 reducing the impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity

Working together with the IUCN Secretariat, Ocean team, and the Programme and Policy Committee, WCPA actively supported the creation of the task force for Resolution 107 which aims to advance the reconciliation of fisheries and conservation, and reduce the impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity.

High seas

In September 2023, the United Nations officially adopted a new international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (called the BBNJ Agreement). Within just a few months, 86 countries signed the treaty and one has become a formal Party. WCPA members have been deeply engaged in the decades-long process to conclude this agreement, which marks a watershed moment in the global commitment to safeguarding the health and vitality of the world’s oceans. Members of the High Seas Specialist Group are now working on how to quickly implement the agreement, to foster high seas MPAs, and to help envision sustainable futures for the High seas.

Marine Protected Area Effectiveness

WCPA members are helping develop the tools necessary to assess the effectiveness of MPAs and marine OECMs and organized sessions at the International Marine Protected Areas Congress on this topic. WCPA Marine experts also launched two climate change resilience assessment tools for MPAs – one with the WCPA Climate Change Specialist group, one with the EU Ocean Governance project – as part of more general WCPA marine protected area management effectiveness activities.

WCPA and the UN Ocean Decade white papers

2024 is the fourth year of implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). The Vision 2030 process of the UN Ocean Decade aims to identify common measures of success for each of the 10 Ocean Decade Challenges on the road to 2030. A key outcome of this strategic ambition setting process is a set of White Papers that will outline a comprehensive approach to user needs, priority datasets, and gaps in science, and outline the strategic measures required to fulfill the objectives of each Challenge by the end of the Ocean Decade. WCPA is working to influence the White Paper on Challenge 2: Protect and Restore Ecosystems and Biodiversity.
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR CONSERVATION

The term capacity building is often equated with training, but it has a much broader meaning; a simple definition is “the means to plan and achieve.” This includes not just the skills and knowledge provided by training, but also the ability of an organisation to meet its targets. Central to organisational capacity is the workforce, which has recently been the focus of the WCPA Capacity Thematic Group.

While identifying where new PCAs need to be is critical to reaching the 30x30 target, it will also be vital to ensure that these areas have the workforce necessary to manage them effectively and fairly. Focusing on the area and not the workforce is like building a new hospital without considering the need for doctors, nurses, ancillary workers, and administrators to staff it. Indeed, an article published in 2023 by WCPA members refers to rangers as “essential planetary health workers” who are responsible for managing large tracts of the planet’s lands and waters yet are often underrecognised, underappreciated, and underequipped.

A recent study by WCPA members, drawing on data from 176 countries and territories, showed that the PCA workforce is a third of what it needs to be; doubling the area under conservation will require a workforce six times bigger than it is today, around 3 million people, including 1.5 million rangers. These staff also need to be equipped, trained, deployed, and supported to ensure that they do their work effectively, ethically, and equitably.

As a founding member of the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA), WCPA is highlighting the workforce challenges associated with 30x30. The ‘Rangers for 30x30 Framework’ (Figure 4) defines four essential elements of capacity for managing 30 percent of the planet.

Publications based on this framework include a global code of conduct, an international labour standard for working conditions, and a set of competencies required of all rangers. WCPA and its partners are asking all those engaged in supporting PCAs to place a far greater emphasis on workforce issues. A landmark meeting in Brussels in September 2023, attended by WCPA members, orientated the European Commission and major conservation donors about the new framework.

WCPA and the other URSA partners are making good progress in operationalising the 30x30 Framework around the world. For example, the International Ranger Federation Range Code of Conduct is being widely adopted, including in South Sudan, Bhutan (where 1,400 rangers have been trained to use it), and India, where it has been integrated into the curricula of 28 ranger training colleges. There is a plan to incorporate the Ranger Competencies into national training curricula in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The competencies are also being used to train new indigenous-led ranger teams in Sulawesi, Indonesia. URSA members are discussing with international insurance companies a global scheme to provide life insurance for all rangers. WCPA is also preparing a new Best Practice Guide on Ranger Community Relations.

In December, 2023, 168 participants from 21 countries attended the first Asian Ranger Forum. More than 61 percent of participants were active rangers, 23 percent of participants were women—including one of the first women from Saudi Arabia to work as a ranger—and 31 percent identified as Indigenous people. The forum addressed different aspects of ranger work ranging from marine rangers, indigenous rangers, community trust, human rights, and many more. The outputs from this event will feed into the World Ranger Congress Declaration in 2024, and in turn to a major programme of activities on PCA workforce issues planned for the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress.

The forum also hosted elections for the Ranger Federation of Asia with its newly elected president, Mr. Buththy Tao, an indigenous representative from one of India’s largest indigenous tribes.

Sustainable tourism in protected areas

Another important element of effective protected area management is building the capacity to regulate travel and tourism in ways that contribute significantly to local economies and local conservation efforts while ensuring positive outcomes for nature. WCPA’s Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group supports the oversight of sustainable tourism in protected area systems and helps develop innovative approaches that recognize the fundamental role of nature in the travel and tourism industry.
IUCN Commissions have issued such a joint call to action. The biodiversity and climate crises, the first time that all Commissions on the importance of integrating solutions to development of a statement by the chairs of all seven IUCN and guidance. As part of this effort, WCPA led the Commissions, and highlighting existing knowledge products biodiversity-climate space, building on the ongoing work of the promote greater and more visible positioning of IUCN in the urgency and WCPA is working on a number of fronts to target. PCAs are the most effective tools to address climate-resilient development. That in turn depends on Safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystems is fundamental to climate-resilient development. In that turn depends on the effective and equitable conservation embodied in the 30x30 target. PCAs are the most effective tools to address biodiversity loss and climate change with the required urgency and WCPA is working on a number of fronts to highlight the role of PCAs.

WCPA supported the development of the IUCN Inter-Commission Task Force on Biodiversity and Climate to promote greater and more visible positioning of IUCN in the biodiversity-climate space, building on the ongoing work of the Commissions, and highlighting existing knowledge products and guidance. As part of this effort, WCPA led the development of a statement by the chairs of all seven IUCN Commissions on the importance of integrating solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises, the first time that all IUCN Commissions have issued such a joint call to action.

WCPA collaborated with the IUCN Climate Crisis Commission on the production of a technical brief, Connecting the Dots: Achieving synergistic action for global biodiversity and climate goals utilising the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, to support COP28 decisions on protected areas and climate change. WCPA prepared two other briefs - Role of PAs in climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation, and Primary Forests, Ecosystem Integrity and Climate Change - to focus attention at COP28 on the importance of PCAs in the climate-biodiversity nexus. WCPA, along with the Climate Action Network’s Ecosystems Working Group, and World Wildlife Fund, achieved important firsts for nature in the COP28 decision on the Global Stocktake. These include recognition of the importance of:

- Protecting and restoring nature for achieving the Goals of the Paris Agreement;
- Increasing efforts to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation in all countries by 2030;
- Protecting and restoring carbon reservoirs (stocks) as well as sinks and the role of biodiversity;
- Aligning climate action in forests and ecosystems with the GBF;
- Preserving and restoring oceans and coastal ecosystems and scaling up ocean-based climate action; and
- Supporting ecosystem-based approaches to enhance adaptation including in oceans and mountain regions.

WCPA is also developing Best Practices Guidelines for Climate Change Mitigation in Protected Areas. In 2023, as part of that process, 125 participants in two workshops analysed case studies from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, North America, and Australia in which climate change mitigation had been incorporated into management of protected areas. The workshops explored topics such as improving ecosystems services in the context of climate change mitigation, and technologies to overlay carbon maps with other map layers such as biodiversity and connectivity to determine priority areas for protection.

WCPA continues to lobby for the integration of primary forests, ecosystem integrity, and the climate biodiversity nexus into both CBD and UNFCCC. At CBD COP15, WCPA sought to incorporate these issues into Target 8 of the GBF and while that effort is ongoing WCPA remains committed to highlighting their importance in multilateral environmental agreements. WCPA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s MPA Center co-published a new Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation Planning Tool (CC-RAPT) for MPAs and Marine OECMs. CC-RAPT helps MPA programmes improve their management and governance in relation to climate change impacts on marine biodiversity and the cultural, social, and economic benefits that marine biodiversity provides. Many of the existing management effectiveness tools and assessments that MPAs currently use address climate change directly or indirectly by fostering management best practices that can support protected areas under a range of changing circumstances, including a changing climate. However, there has been a lack of tools to help MPAs consider in-depth how climate change relates to their management and the importance of intentionally strengthening management practices in the face of the existential threat of climate change. CC-RAPT is meant to fill this gap.
EXPANDING AND SUPPORTING CONSTITUENCIES FOR NATURE

#NatureForAll

The long-term success of WCPA’s mission will require expanding global constituencies for conservation. Yet, the connection to nature is fraying or has been lost across many diverse cultures. Rebuilding that connection and encouraging more people in all regions and contexts to support conservation is a vital but under-appreciated aspect of a comprehensive response to the biodiversity and climate crises.

Recognising the urgency of this task, WCPA, IUCN’s Commission on Education and Communication, Parks Canada, and several other international partners (many of them park agencies) founded #NatureForAll in 2016. Today, with core support from the two Commissions, the Alana Foundation, the Children and Nature Network, Parks Canada, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, #NatureForAll is a thriving community of over 650 partner organisations sharing knowledge, strategies, and actions to connect people with nature and build constituency for conservation.

2023 was a busy and impactful year. In February 2023, #NatureForAll hosted its first ever Love Fest, a two-weeklong celebration of love and action for nature. This online global event shared inspiring stories, featured 50 live interviews with WCPA leaders and other conservationists, and showcased 16 partner events. The #NatureForAll Love Fest is now an annual event for sharing our conservation stories with a broad and diverse audience.

Youth engagement was again an important area of focus in 2023. During the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPACS), #NatureForAll partners hosted a youth pavilion (#NatureForAll Youth Archipelago), offering youth attendees a place to gather, have their voices heard, and highlight youth efforts in ocean conservation. Lessons from this and previous #NatureForAll youth pavilions were consolidated in a guide to creating youth dialogue spaces at major events that will be published in 2024.

Through webinars, blogs, short videos, and social media content, #NatureForAll continued to highlight the vital importance of protected and conserved areas as places to experience, learn about, and conserve nature. It expanded its website and brought focus to the important work done by staff of protected area agencies. In addition, the Sounds of Your Park initiative, which offers an immersive experience of sounds from protected areas, continued to grow; it now hosts 168 recordings from 21 countries.

**Health Box 5**

Ecosystem health, human health and well-being, and climate change are inextricably interconnected. Target 12 of the Global Biodiversity Framework calls on Parties to the CBD to “increase the area of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces, for human health and well-being in urban areas and other densely populated areas.”

#NatureForAll’s Health and Well-being Specialist Group facilitates partnerships to influence policies and plans across sectors, builds and communicates the evidence on benefits of nature for human health and well-being, and encourages the development of standard metrics to measure the co-benefits.

Connecting with nature is a potential public health strategy that is accessible and affordable for many populations, with research demonstrating not only protective values but restorative benefits as well. Personal experiences and connections with nature provide powerful benefits for individual and societal health, well-being, and resilience.

**Wilderness and The World At Night Box 6**

Wilderness has its own protected area category under IUCN’s classification system, Categoby. The primary goal of wilderness areas is to protect the long-term ecological integrity of natural areas that are undisturbed by significant human activity, free of modern infrastructure and where natural forces and processes predominate, so that current and future generations have the opportunity to experience such areas.”

Many people value wilderness for its associations with wild nature and physical space, because of its aesthetic and spiritual values, because of its cultural significance, and because they increasingly understand that wilderness areas provide vital ecosystem services. Yet not even these remote areas are immune to the effects of technology, among the most pervasive and widespread of which is light.

Light pollution not only mars the wilderness experience and landscape beauty, it disturbs ecological and commemorative integrity, interferes with astronomy, degrades the appreciation of mythologies and cultural practices related to the night sky, carries risks to human health, and wastes energy. IUCN, WCPA’s Urban Conservation Strategies Specialist Group, the United States Park Service, and other partners analysed the impacts of light pollution, the resources available to help combat it, and the best practices for reducing it and compiled The world at night, a guide to light pollution solutions, public engagement, and community outreach. The report is intended to bring night sky values and protection methods to protected areas and nature conservation throughout the world.

**WCPA Young Professionals Network Box 7**

The IUCN WCPA Young Professionals (YP) Network brings together WCPA members under the age of 35. The YP Network supports YP engagement within broader Commission activities and encourages their integration into WCPA’s Specialist Groups, Task Forces, Themes, and Regions. The network also works to facilitate and promote intergenerational collaboration and knowledge exchange between established and emerging protected area leaders and professionals.

One of the YP Network’s most exciting activities in 2023 was the execution of another successful #NatureForAll Youth Oasis, this time with a marine focus twist as the Youth Archipelago at IMPACS. The YP Network also worked alongside IUCN CEC to develop a best practice guide for facilitating youth spaces and making space for young voices at international events.

The YP Network has made targeted efforts to expand its membership in countries and regions with less representation of young people within the Commission. It also continues to support the professional development of young people passionate about protected and conserved areas, including facilitating placements within Specialist Groups and Task Forces across the Commission. The Network is currently rethinking its governance, structure, and strategy, and looks forward to continuing to build on an even stronger foundation in 2024.

**Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas**

WCPA’s Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas has developed Best Practice Guidelines on the Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Nature in the Management and Governance of Protected and Conserved Areas. In 2023 the group focused on spreading the word about and implementing those guidelines. Specialist Group members conducted training workshops in Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and India, as well as global webinars. The guidelines were translated into Spanish and workshops will be held in Peru in 2024.
Influencing Conservation Efforts Around the World

Working across its 12 geographic regions and associated Regional Vice chairs, WCPA engaged in extensive policy advocacy, outreach, and capacity development that reached all seven continents. Our regional and thematic leaders, and members played pivotal roles in advancing the Global Biodiversity Framework, advocated for effective protected and conserved areas in local, national, and international forums, and provided science-based expertise and guidance on nature conservation.

Through strategic and targeted events, WCPA contributed to shaping the policies and commitments of governments and key decision-makers across the globe.
DELIVERING ON IUCN WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS (WCC) RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions represent the main body of IUCN’s general policy and are derived from the motions process, the mechanism by which IUCN members, influence third parties and guide the policy and programme of IUCN.

Recommendations from over 66 resolutions from the 2021 IUCN Congress in Marseille and 2016 IUCN Congress in Jeju are relevant to the mandate and vast Programme of Work of the WCPA.

Recommendations from resolutions are relevant to the mandate and vast Programme of Work of the WCPA. The Commission engaged in the development and dissemination of technical guidance and in policy advocacy that related to 19 Resolutions (as listed below).

Resolutions calling for specific action from WCPA are prioritised throughout the work of the Commission’s Themes, Specialist Groups, and Task Forces. In 2023, WCPA made good progress on a number of resolutions (as seen in the table/infographic).

The development of technical guidance and engagement in policy advocacy is a core mandate of the WCPA. The Commission engaged in the development and dissemination of technical guidance in policy advocacy that related to 19 Resolutions (as listed below).

The WCPA supported the planning and/or creation of 10 new Task Forces whose Terms of Reference address specific recommendations within 11 resolutions.

WCPA continues to support the work of the KBA Partnership (WCC-2019-Res-011), remains engaged with the strategic review of the regional parks congresses in preparation for the World Parks Congress (WCC-2020-Res-154) and continues its engagement in the Nature for All Initiative (WCC-2020-Res-064, with the Commission on Education and Communication).

WCPA and WCC Resolutions

New Task Forces
Joint task forces with other Commissions (3):
WCC-2020-Res-034 Ecological Integrity in the GBF
WCC-2020-Res-034 Ecological Integrity in the GBF (with CEM)
WCC-2020-114 Integrated solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises (IUCN-wide)
WCC-2020-Res-107 Reducing the impact of fisheries on biodiversity (IUCN-wide)
WCPA Task Forces (7)
Restoration (WCC-2020-Res-009, Res-009)
Spatial Planning (WCC-2020-Res-005)
Harmonization (WCC-2020-Res-011)
Protected Area downgrading, downsizing and degazettement (PADDD) (WCC-2020-Res-084)
Human wildlife conflict (WCC-2020-Res-101)
One health (WCC-2020-Res-109)
Conservation effectiveness (WCC-2020-Res-125)

WCPA Publications

Box 8

WCPA Publications

Good Practice Series for Protected and Conserved Areas: Since 1998, 33 Good Practices have been published and widely downloaded focusing on topics relevant to WCPA’s mandate. Typically taking several years to produce, they draw on global experience and provide state-of-the-art guidance to practitioners.

Technical Report Series: Launched in 2014, this series focuses more on specific methodologies or provides an overview of key issues relating to conservation and management.

Issues paper series: Currently under development, this new series will address topical issues related to protected areas and OECMs, to spark debate and provide up-to-the-minute perspectives from the Commission.

WCPA’s Technical Note Series: Short publications that are quick and easy to produce and do not go through the IUCN peer review process but provide clarity on a technical issue or dialogue on a particular topic of concern.

PARKS: A biannual peer reviewed, online, open access journal published in English with French and Spanish summaries. There are no publication fees. It has an impact score of 3.05 and is ranked 70th of 192 journals in the nature and landscape conservation category of Scopus, the citation database. Whilst maintaining high academic credibility, PARKS is primarily for people involved practically in protected areas and OECMs. Editors encourage authors who do not otherwise find time to report their findings or who do not speak English as a first language.
## WCPA PUBLICATION STATISTICS

### Good practices

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Guidelines for applying the IUCN protected area management categories to marine protected areas</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>Governance of protected areas: from understanding to action</td>
<td>4 languages, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese</td>
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<td>Guidelines for applying protected area management categories</td>
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<td>Urban protected areas: profiles and best practice guidelines</td>
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<td>4,153 downloads</td>
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<td>Wilderness protected areas</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>Large-scale marine protected areas</td>
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### Technical series

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<td>A global register of competences for protected area practitioners</td>
<td>5 languages, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean</td>
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<td>Recognising and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures</td>
<td>6 languages, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean</td>
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<td>Site-level tool for identifying other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs): first edition</td>
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<td>Protected Areas Benefits Assessment Tool (PA-BAT+)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1,132 downloads</td>
<td>1,526 downloads</td>
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<tr>
<td>20% is in the top 20% of journals in the Environmental Science: Nature and Landscape Conservation subject area.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Coming Soon

In 2024-25, several important new publications* are under development, including:

- Recognising and respecting ICCAs overlapped by protected areas (Governance, Equity and Rights Specialist Group) – early 2024.
- A framework for monitoring biodiversity in protected areas and OECMs – concepts, methods, and technologies (OECM Specialist Group) – mid 2024.
- Protected and conserved area finance: good practices (Sustainable Finance Specialist Group) – mid 2024.
- Protected and conserved areas for inland waters (Freshwater Specialist Group) – late 2024.
- Building Trust with Rangers and Communities (Capacity Development Thematic Group) – October 2024.
- Guidance to enhance climate change mitigation in protected areas (Climate Change Specialist Group) – 2025.

*some titles are provisional

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The WCPA Publications Group

**Box 9**

WCPA publication editors: Sue Stolton and Nigel Dudley

PARKS editor: Marc Hockings

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Environmental Science: Nature and Landscape Conservation subject area.

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20%
RECOGNISING CONSERVATION HEROES

As the leading global network of Protected and Conserved Areas professionals in the world, WCPA recognises individuals and organisations for their dedication and achievements to conservation. In 2023, WCPA recognized conservation heroes through the Fred Packard Awards, the Kenton Miller Award, and the Ranger Awards.

Fred Packard Awards

The Fred Packard Award is named for the individual who served as Secretary to the IUCN WCPA in the 1970s and is presented by the Commission in recognition of “outstanding service to protected areas.”

Dr. Eleanor Sterling was a biologist and social scientist serving as Director of the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology after more than two decades leading the American Museum of Natural History’s Center for Biodiversity and Conservation. She received the Fred Packard Award in recognition of more than 30 years’ work advancing just and effective conservation. With experience in North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, Dr. Sterling’s research has built the tools to place Indigenous knowledge at the heart of conservation practice. Her work pioneered new approaches to biodiversity monitoring, resulting in over 120 publications, stronger protected area management, and the establishment of locally-managed conservation areas in biodiverse and unique ecosystems. In particular, she was key to shaping the IUCN-WCPA Strategic Framework for Capacity Development at the 2014 World Parks Congress in Sydney and guided the implementation of elements supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Dr. Kristina Gjerde is a lawyer and Senior High Seas Advisor to the IUCN Secretariat, who received the Fred Packard Award for her efforts over the course of three decades to secure protections in international law for the ocean beyond national jurisdiction. A global advocate for marine protected areas, she has authored over 150 publications and since 2002 has been instrumental in leading the WCPA High Seas Specialist Group to advance a global strategy for high seas marine protected areas. Alongside her work with IUCN, she co-founded the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, the Sargasso Sea Commission, the High Seas Alliance, and the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative. Dr. Gjerde has also served as an advisor on many international science and policy boards, including the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and Schmidt Ocean Institute.

Kenton Miller Award

Named for Dr. Kenton R. Miller, a leading figure in conservation, the Kenton R. Miller Award for Innovation in Protected Areas Management celebrates individuals who are taking bold steps to safeguard protected and conserved areas. In 2023, the Kenton R. Miller Award is focused specifically on the stewardship of marine protected areas.

Dr. María del Carmen García Rivas is a researcher and ranger with 25 years’ experience working with communities to protect wildlife and restore ecosystems. Dr. Garcia Rivas received the Kenton R. Miller Award for her leadership of the Hurricane Insurance Project in Puerto Morelos National Park and her role as a role model for other women rangers and conservation professionals. She was one of Mexico’s first female diving instructors, and amongst the first women to work with the country’s fishermen and navy. A documentary about her work won high praise at the 2022 NGO International Film Festival.

Ranger Awards

The IUCN WCPA International Ranger Awards recognize one of our most important assets: rangers working in protected and conserved areas who are responsible for managing large tracts of the planet’s lands and waters. These women and men are fundamental to environmental security and human well-being, yet remain insufficiently recognized for their contributions. They are protectors, educators, community facilitators and wildlife monitors, working in protected areas, private reserves, Indigenous territories and community conservancies. Most importantly, the world’s rangers are fundamental to the recovery of nature and the successful implementation of global biodiversity targets such as Target 3.

The IUCN WCPA International Ranger Awards are supported by the generosity of donors and partner organisations such as the International Ranger Federation, Universal Ranger Support Alliance and the Thir Green Line Foundation that work tirelessly to advance and progress the conditions for rangers around the world.

2023 IUCN WCPA Ranger Award Winners

Ismael Gálvez Gálvez
El Tuito Biosphere Reserve, Mexico

Biological Corridor 3 Ranger Team
Phub Dhendup, Jigme Dorji, Jigmy Zangmo, Lhachhu Tshering, Natsen Tshering, Pema Rinchen, Tandin Wangchuk, Tenzin Dema, Tshering, Yadi Kumar Kami
Bhutan

Anton Mzimba
Tinambavi Private Nature Reserve, South Africa

Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park Ranger Team
Segundo Conales Jr., Noel Bundal, Jeffrey David, Crescencio Caranay
Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and World Heritage Site, Philippines

Royal Belum State Park ‘Menraq’ Team
Ardi Bin Kembong, Taib Anak Lelaki Mat Razi, Fahmi Bin Jal, Sufian Bin Raman, Saffan Anak Lelaki Latif
Royal Belum State Park, Malaysia

Desiansko-Starohutskyi National Nature Park Ranger Team
Mykhallo Hrybachov, Iryna Pavlichenko, Svitlana Novik, Demys Artemenko, Kateryna Hainkina, Mykola Chernigov, Vasyl Vasenko, Tetyana Marukha, Serhii Sugakov
Desiansko-Starohutskyi National Nature Park, Ukraine

Cristián Andrés Vásquez Bermúdez
Reserva Proaves El Donato, Colombia

Maria Bernadete Silva Barbosa
Marinho dos Abrolhos National Park, Brazil

Fetiya Ousman
Babile Elephant Sanctuary, Ethiopia
2023 was an extraordinary year for WCPA. It began with the celebration of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted at the end of 2022. WCPA and its members contributed to that landmark achievement, which marks both the culmination of years of effort and the beginning of new challenges that are promising and daunting in equal measure.

WCPA has much to look forward to in the coming year. The COP 16 of the CBD in Cali, Colombia will be an important opportunity to gauge progress, identify gaps, and help WCPA focus its efforts to support implementation of the Convention. At COP 29 of the UNFCCC, WCPA will be working to place protected areas at the centre of biodiversity and climate actions.

Deepening the links between those two policy fora will be a key goal for WCPA in 2024, as will strengthening partnerships with the CBD Secretariat and the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People. Other key gatherings in 2024 include the World Protected Areas Leaders Forum in Finland in July and the 12th World Wilderness Congress in the US in August.

The new Protected Planet Specialist Group will be coming online in 2024. The goal of the group is to leverage the WCPA network in supporting the recognition and reporting of PCAs and OECMs to the World Database on PAs and OECMs. The Specialist Group will contribute to the next edition in the Protected Planet Report series, an authoritative assessment of the status of protected and conserved areas around the globe. WCPA will continue to advance and learn from OECMs experience and to gauge how those areas contribute to international progress towards achieving biodiversity targets.

Recognising the importance of One Health, an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals, and ecosystems, the WCPA Task Force on Protected Areas and One Health, launched in 2023, will improve PCA management and policy by incorporating One Health themes. The Task Force will elaborate a role for WCPA in research, policy, and practice.

The coming year will see important steps in our new marine strategy. We will be advancing our work in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean, as well as supporting MPAs in the High seas.

The next World Conservation Congress will take place in Abu Dhabi in 2025, so WCPA will be busy in 2024 preparing for that key event. WCPA members will participate in IUCN Regional Conservation Forums to ensure that protected and conserved areas remain central to the global conservation agenda.

WCPA’s scope and influence continues to grow. As this report shows, our members have made enormous contributions to global conservation over the past year. While much remains to be done, we are confident that 2024 will mark continued progress and achievement.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND AFFILIATIONS

WCPA is a voluntary network of individuals contributing in their independent capacities to the mandate of the Commission. WCPA gratefully acknowledges all its members for their generous commitment to the advancement of nature conservation.

WCPA recognizes the many partner organisations who have supported or partnered with the Commission’s programme of activities over 2023 in different ways. A non-exhaustive list of these organisations includes the following: Bezos Earth Fund, BRF (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation), Center for Large Landscape Conservation, Global Environment Facility, Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation, High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, International Ranger Federation, Parks Canada, Parks Victoria, RedPlanetes, Rewild, Secretariat of the CBD, The Nature Conservancy, Universal Ranger Support Alliance, UNEP-WCMC, World Wildlife Fund US, Wildlife Conservation Society.

WCPA is especially grateful for the generous support of Rewild as its fiscal sponsor. Any omissions from this list are inadvertent.

The Commission is also immensely grateful for the support of the Membership and Commission Support Unit in the IUCN Secretariat for the invaluable support it provided to our operations in 2023. We are grateful to editorial assistance from Sara van der Ploeg (IUCN Publications Unit) with all WCPA publications. A complete list of organisational affiliations of WCPA leaders and members who have contributed to WCPA’s Programme of Work are listed below:

Chair and Deputy Chair
Madhu Rao (Wildlife Conservation Society) and
Andrew Rhodes Espinosa (Alumbría)

Thematic Vice Chairs
- Parks and People Karen Keenleyside (Retired, Parks Canada)
- Scaling Natural Solutions Brent Mitchell (QLF International)
- Capacity Development Mike Appleton (Rewild)
- Governance, Equity and Rights Helen Tugendhat (Forest Peoples’ Programme)
- Marine Felipe Paredes (Oceans), Fabrice Stephenson (Newcastle University)
- Science and Biodiversity Policy Stephen Woodley (Retired, Parks Canada)
- World Heritage Cyril Kormos (Wild Heritage)
- Conservation Outcomes Paola Mejia Cortez (Foundations of Success), Nick Salafsky (Foundations of Success)
- Young Professionals Network Erinn Drage (IUCN WCPA)

Regional Vice Chairs
- South America Paula Bueno (Conservation International, Colombia)
- Caribbean and Central America Allan Valverde Blanco (Escuela Latino americana de Áreas Protegidas and Decano de la Facultad de Ambiente y Desarrollo de la Universidad para la Cooperación Internacional)
- North America Mariana Belfot Rojas (United Nations Development Programme)
- South Asia Sonali Ghosh (CCF Assam Forest Department, India)
- Southeast Asia Amriam Harzah (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia)
- East Asia Yoshitaka Kumaagi (Akita International University, Japan)
- Oceania Lou Sanson (Retired, Dept of Environment, New Zealand)
- West and Central Africa Florence Palla (Central African Forest Observatory, Cameroon)
- North Eurasia Tanya Rosen (UNEP Vanishing Treasures, International Institute for Sustainable Development)
- Europe Erika Vida Géta (Papark Foundation for Protected Areas)
- East and Southern Africa Harriet Davies-Mostert (Conserve Global)
- North Africa, West Asia, Middle East Nizar Han (Shoufi Biosphere Reserve, Lebanon)

Specialist Group Leads
- Protected Areas Climate Change Rise Smith (Retired, Environment and Climate Change Canada)
- Connectivity Conservation Lauren Wenzel (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, USA)
- Cultural and Spiritual Value of Protected Areas Bao Vershuren (Wageningen University, Netherlands)
- Freshwater Harmony Patrichio (Rewild, USA)
- Geoheritage Kyeong Sik Wu (Emeritus, Kangwons National University, Korea)
- Caves & Karst Working Group Babbel Vogel (German Speleological Federation, Germany)
- Wilderness Vance G. Martin (Wilderness Foundation Global)

Governance, Equity and Rights
- Terence Hay Edie (United Nations Development Programme)
- Heidi Kreutzer (Wildlife Conservation Society, USA)
- Phil Franke (International Institute for Environment and Development, UK)
- Green List & Management Effectiveness Marc Hookings (Emeritus, University of Queensland, Australia)
- Sandra Valenzuela (WWF Colombia)
- High Seas Nicholas Walker (The Pew Environment Trust)
- Emily Stokes (Waitford Foundation, Australia)
- Health & Well-being Jo Hopkins (Parks Victoria, Australia)
- Mountains Peter Jacobs (Independent, Australia)
- Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) Harry Jonas (WWF US)
- Privately Protected Areas & Nature Stewardship Miquel Rafa (Foundation Catalunya-La Pedrera, Spain)
- Sustainable Finance Candice Stevens (Wilderness Foundation Australia, South Africa)
- Tourism and Protected Areas Thago Souza Beraldo (Independent Consultant, Brazil)
- Transboundary Conservation Stefania Petrosolino (Eucarcop Federation) Piet Trenor (Independent Consultant, South Africa)
- Urban Conservation Strategies Thaddéus Trymna (Inter Environment Institute)
- WCPA Advisors

Task Forces
- Marine Mammal Protected Areas (jointly with SSC) Erich Hoyt (Whale and Dolphin Conservation)
- Ecological Integrity (Jointly with Commission on Ecosystem Management) John Robinson (Wildlife Conservation Society)
- Protected Areas Downgrading, Downzoning, and Degazettement Rachel Golden Kroner (WWF US)
- Harmonizing Classifications & Nomenclatures Sherrit Mitchell (IUCN International)
- Spatial Planning Hedley Grantham (Bush Heritage Australia)
- Integrating Human Wildlife Co-existence into Standards for PCAs Duan Biggs (Resilient Conservation, Northern Arizona University)
- Defining and Measuring Conservation Effectiveness or Outcomes Task Force Nick Salafsky (Foundations of Success)
- WCPA Publications Group

WCPA Core Support
- Erinn Drage (IUCN WCPA)
- August Almeda Fern (Independent)
- Mital Sharma (Independent)
- Alyfne Johnson (Independent)
- Pablo Arturo Lopez Guzman (IUCN WCPA)

WCPA Advisors
- Marc Hookings (University of Queensland)
- Kent Redford (Archipelago Consulting)
- Penny Figgins (Independent)
- Dan Laflaton (Independent)
- Kathleen Fitzgerald (Enduring Earth)
**APPENDIX II: SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolutions with continuing WCPA engagement</th>
<th>New task forces</th>
<th>Technical guidance/policy advocacy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WCC-2016-Res-041 Key Biodiversity Areas</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-034 Ecological Integrity in the Global Biodiversity Framework</td>
<td>WCC-2016-Res-030 Recognising and respecting the territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICGAs) overlapped by protected areas</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-064 Promoting conservation through behaviour-centred solutions</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-036 Promoting IUCN leadership in the implementation of the UN Decade on Restoration 2021–2030</td>
<td>WCC-2016-Res-032 Achieving representative systems of protected areas in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-104 Next IUCN World Parks Congress</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-009 Protecting and restoring endangered grassland and savannah ecosystems</td>
<td>WCC-2016-Res-039 Protected areas as natural solutions to climate change</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-081 Strengthening national spatial planning to ensure the global persistence of biodiversity</td>
<td>WCC-2016-Res-050 Increasing marine protected area coverage for effective marine biodiversity conservation</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-083 Ensuring the compatibility of human activities with conservation objectives in protected areas</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-002 Strengthened institutional inclusion concerning indigenous peoples</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-084 Global response to protected area downgrading, downsizing and degazettement (PADDD)</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-018 Valuing and protecting inland fisheries</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-107 Reducing the impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-067 Call for Nature in Cities agendas and Strengthening the IUCN Urban Alliance</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-135 Promoting human, animal and environmental health, and preventing pandemics through the One Health approach and by addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-073 Ecological connectivity conservation in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework: from local to international levels</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-123 Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-074 Geoheritage and protected areas</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-125 Setting area-based conservation targets based on evidence of what nature and people need to thrive</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-080 Recognising, reporting and supporting other effective area-based conservation measures</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-127 Strengthening the protection of primary and old-growth forests in Europe and facilitating their restoration where possible</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-114 Integrated solutions to the climate change and biodiversity crises*</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-129 Acting for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in the ocean beyond national jurisdiction</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-116 Develop and implement a transformational and effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework</td>
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<td>WCC-2020-Res-130 Strengthening sustainable tourism’s role in biodiversity conservation and community resilience</td>
<td>WCC-2020-Res-122 Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WCPA’s scope and influence continues to grow. As this report shows, our members have made enormous contributions to global conservation over the past year. While much remains to be done, we are confident that 2024 will mark continued progress and achievement.