Keeping the Outstanding Exceptional - the Future of World Heritage in Australia

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental network. IUCN members in Australia work through the National Committee of IUCN (ACIUCN).

In late 2012, ACIUCN published a book ‘Keeping the Outstanding Exceptional: The Future of World Heritage in Australia’. The book is based on a World Heritage symposium held in August 2012 in Cairns. This event was convened by ACIUCN in partnership with the Wet Tropics Management Authority and supported by the Australian Conservation Foundation. Over 100 experts from government, non-government, academia and Indigenous sectors attended. The Federal and State Ministers for Environment addressed the conference.

A World Heritage site is recognised for its “Outstanding Universal Value” accepted by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. With this acceptance and nomination comes an equally high obligation to apply the highest standards of protection – “to keep the outstanding exceptional.” This was the purpose of the symposium – to assess how Australia measures up against this goal and to look for better ways to fulfil the profound commitment embodied in the words ‘World Heritage’ and to protect and present these unique places for now and for future generations.

Australia’s World Heritage sites face challenges, some, which if not addressed, may constitute serious threats to their Outstanding Universal Values. The Symposium aimed to address this issue and respond to concerns that public understanding and overall commitment to World Heritage may have slipped.

The book, based on the August symposium, includes the ‘Cairns Communique’ – a statement outlining key steps to improve management of these iconic places within Australia for perpetuity. The book can be downloaded free in full or chapter by chapter at http://aciucn.org.au/index.php/publications-world-heritage/
There are plenty of opportunities for World Heritage managers to be involved in this year’s Congress. If you are interested, it is strongly recommended that you register at www.worldparkscongress.org for updates.

You can also register your interest to volunteer at the event. Please submit an expression of interest for a role in one of the program streams. Streams are looking for people to help as workshop facilitators and chair people, panel presenters, debate moderators or informal translators.

Have you an inspiring solution that shows how protected areas help your sector or business, or maybe how your sector helps protected areas? Then why not present your ideas or project solution as part of the World Parks Congress programme and share your learnings.

A call for programme content opened on the website on 16 December 2013. Applications close on 15 March 2014.

For those more artistically inclined, enter the WPC global photographic competition. The competition culminates in an exhibition of the best images as part of the Congress event in November 2014.

Formal registration is open at early bird rates and accommodation can now be booked until 30 June 2014.

Field trips are also now available for booking on the website www.worldparkscongress.org.

An information brochure is also available at: cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/13005_iucn_world_parks_congress_for_web.pdf

Penny Figgis
Director ACIUCN and Vice Chair, Oceania of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

Twelve new members elected to the World Heritage Committee

The 19th session of the World Heritage General Assembly took place recently at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Representatives of the 190 States Parties elected 12 new members to the 21-member intergovernmental Committee in charge of managing UNESCO’s World Heritage List and implementing the Convention.

The new members of the World Heritage Committee, elected for four years, are:

Croatia, Finland, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Turkey, Vietnam.

They join nine other countries whose term on the Committee expires in 2015:

Algeria, Colombia, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, Qatar, Senegal, Serbia.

Jon Day
Director of Planning, Heritage and Sustainable Funding within GBRMPA
Report from the 2nd Marine World Heritage Site Managers conference

Forty-three World Heritage Marine site managers from across the world attended the second Marine World Heritage Site Managers conference from 18–20 October 2013 in Corsica, France. Australia was represented by delegates from the Great Barrier Reef, Shark Bay, Ningaloo Coast and Macquarie Island World Heritage sites. The Commonwealth Department of Environment said the marine managers embodied the spirit of World Heritage and were an inspiration with their pride and commitment to safeguarding the crown jewels of the ocean. “It was a privilege to be part of this global World Heritage family”, the Aussie delegates said.

The World Heritage Marine Program was launched in 2005 to establish effective conservation of existing and potential marine areas of Outstanding Universal Value. To date, 46 marine sites in 37 countries are inscribed on the World Heritage list and cover a range of ecosystems in tropical and temperate oceans. These sites cover approximately a quarter of all global marine protected areas.

The conference provided a forum for managers to share their wealth of expertise regarding management solutions and to build management capacity in two workshop sessions. There was also a field trip to Corsica’s Scandola Reserve World Heritage site and as a bonus were treated to some Mexican/Brazilian/Argentinian singing at night!

The management issues experienced in marine World Heritage areas worldwide are familiar to us all - introduced species, resource utilisation, marine pollution, shipping, coastal and island development, increasing visitation, climate change and resources needed to respond to these threats. The solutions presented included:

- Alternative technologies such as hybrid boats, branded electric cars and electric scooters to address climate change (suggesting that marine WH areas should be the showrooms for green technology).
- Vessel management systems to target illegal fishing.
- Innovative education campaigns such as the Green Fjord 2020 and the Wadden Sea’s – Protect and Prosper.
- Co-operation on the protection of migratory species such as the Wadden Sea Flyway initiative.

The workshops provided training for managers to develop more effective communication highlighting the importance of developing an elevator style pitch that targets your audience’s values and using positive, emotive images. See www.resource-media.org Toolbox and Visual Story Lab pages for more information.

Jon Day from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority expanded upon the presentation he gave at the Canberra World Heritage Executive Officer’s meeting on March 2013 and led an exercise about how to translate your site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value into more measurable management actions.

The concluding remarks of the conference, in addition to a showcase and celebration of the 46 Marine World Heritage sites, were subsequently presented at the third International Marine Protected Area Conference which took place from 21–27 October 2013 in Marseille, France. Remarks included:

- The Marine World Heritage network, resources and conferences like these are essential to improve management of World Heritage sites.
- As the marine World Heritage Co-ordinator Fanny Douvere said, ‘If we can’t adequately protect the 46 marine sites classified as World Heritage – what hope is there for the rest of the ocean?’

For further information about marine World Heritage see: whc.unesco.org/en/marine-programme/


Chelsea Godson
Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area Program Manager
The Great Barrier Reef

Draft Strategic Assessment Report released

On 1 November 2013, the Federal Minister for Environment, Greg Hunt MP launched the draft Strategic Assessment for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone for public consultation.

The draft Strategic Assessment looks at the Reef’s values and how they are being protected now and for the future, whilst enabling the sustainable development of the coastal zone.

The draft report contains a significant amount of useful information on the issues facing the Great Barrier Reef and the management approaches taken by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to address these issues. The report therefore has wide application for Australian World Heritage managers whose properties may be facing similar challenges. Chapters of particular relevance include:

- Chapter 3 - Current management
- Chapter 5 - Drivers and activities
- Chapter 6 - Impacts on the values
- Chapter 7 - Current condition and trend (this includes the grading statements, trend arrows and confidence indicators about the four WH criteria)
- Chapter 8 - Management effectiveness - an independent assessment
- Chapter 10 - Resilience and risk
- Chapter 13 - Adaptive management

The GBR strategic assessment is being undertaken in accordance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 with public consultation a statutory requirement. These reports are out for public comment and are due to be finalised next year. Feedback and comments received during the public consultation will inform the preparation of final reports for the Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment. All four draft reports, two GBRMPA reports and the two Queensland reports, are available at www.reefhaveyoursay.com.au/draft-reports.

Reflecting IUCN’s special status as the expert advisory body to the World Heritage Committee on natural heritage, the Australian Committee for IUCN has convened two consultative meetings in Sydney and Brisbane.

Senior representatives attended from the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Queensland’s Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Australian IUCN members, and other environmental groups.

Consultation closes on Friday 31 January 2014.

Jon Day
Director of Planning, Heritage and Sustainable Funding within GBRMPA
Restoring and protecting the unique ecosystems of the Lord Howe Island Group

The Lord Howe Island Group (LHIG) is a volcanic remnant located in the Tasman Sea about 770km north east of Sydney and 570km east of Port Macquarie. Lord Howe Island (LHI) is the largest island in the group, with an area of 1,455ha and is 11km long and 2-3km wide.

LHI is part of New South Wales (NSW) and is administered by the Lord Howe Island Board (LHIB) under the Lord Howe Island Act 1953.

The LHIG was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982, and includes the whole main island, surrounding islets and the marine area totaling 146,300ha.

The LHIG World Heritage property’s geographic location, limited access and small size, mean that it is vulnerable to the impacts of invasions and species extinctions. Conversely its limited size and access enables conservation managers to aim for eradication of certain pest plant and animal species.

This will allow implementation of effective threatened species recovery actions and planning for species re-introductions. The greatest current challenge facing LHIG World Heritage managers is to implement a systematic, island wide approach to the eradication of key pest species, which still severely compromise the island’s diverse habitats, inhibit important ecosystem processes and the island’s World Heritage values.

The LHIB has been implementing a holistic island-wide ecological restoration program to effectively restore health to the island’s ecosystems and protect, maintain and improve its World Heritage values. The program provides a valuable case-study for island communities and other localities dealing with landscape scale, multi-species pest species invasions.

The overall aim of the project is to reverse species declines and extinctions, protect and enhance priority habitats and to restore the unsettled parts of the island to as near as pristine a condition as possible.

Some of the key outcomes and actions implemented through the program include the successful eradication of feral pig (1979) and cat (1981), which were instrumental in the recovery of the endangered Woodhen. A feral goat eradication program undertaken in 1999 resulted in over 250 goats being culled in two weeks. A wild population of five non-reproductive nannies’ was left to succumb to old age and regulations were imposed to allow leaseholders that held goats prior to the eradication attempt to keep a non-reproductive domestic herd through annual registration until they succumbed through natural attrition. Total eradication is estimated to be about five years away.
Recent project initiatives include:

- A three year project to target the eradication of key invasive weeds, such as, cherry guava funded through the NSW Environmental Trust and the Commonwealth Government’s Caring for Our Country (CFOC) program. The project aims to treat about 40% of the main island landscape per year, with control effort being repeated every second year to remove any missed weeds and newly germinated weed seedlings.

- A two year project to map, treat and follow up treatment of an African Big-headed Ant (ABHA) infestation within the settlement area. The program, with funding assistance provided by the Commonwealth Government’s CFOC program, has been developed with the assistance of Dr. Ben Hoffmann, an ecologist from the CSIRO’s Tropical Ecosystem Research Centre. Board staff have been monitoring areas that were treated between October 2012 and May 2013. Results are showing success throughout the treated areas, allowing native ant species and other invertebrates to bounce back. There are still two known infestations on the island and the Board is working closely with the affected leaseholders to survey and treat these areas.

- A four year project to eradicate invasive rodents (ship rats and house mice) along with the introduced masked owl funded through the NSW Environmental Trust and the Commonwealth Government’s CFOC program. Planning is currently under way to implement this in 2016.

Some of the key learnings from the ecological restoration program are listed below:

- The most cost-effective means of managing weeds, plant pests, animals and pathogens is to prevent their initial incursion. Effective legislation, policy and procedures are required to reduce biosecurity risks.

- Early intervention provides significant cost savings when attempting eradication and leads to reduced environmental impact in the long term.

- Meticulous planning and a high degree of attention to detail in the planning, community consultation, logistics, and operational stages is essential to achieve success.

- Each project has been included in policy documents or strategic plans so that they are appropriately funded and resourced. The LHIB is reliant on the support of State and Australian government support to achieve eradication.

- Maintaining a pest free environment requires the awareness, understanding and support of the community, which is critical to the success of the projects. Ensuring the community is engaged through a collaborative process in the formation and delivery of the project is integral to them understanding the justification and methods to be used in each project.

- Eradication on LHI requires working closely with the community to gain access to their leases to treat infestations. Communication, particularly one-on-one conversations and provision of leaseholder assistance are essential to build partnerships.

- Implementing best practice and site specific techniques for surveys, treatment, control of movements within infested areas, recording and monitoring.

- Training of locals is essential to increase local capacity and awareness.

- Use of trained and dedicated volunteers are valuable to the success of these types of programs, providing value in labour, helping build team capacity and enthusiasm through sharing of knowledge and experiences.

- Adaptive management focusing on lessons learnt from previous eradication projects on and off the island and through targeted research and monitoring, to ensure project aims and objectives are clearly stated and met.

Hank Bower
Manager Environment/World Heritage
Lord Howe Island Board
Tim O takes another plunge

After 28 years of dedicated service, Tim O’Loughlin, trusty, long serving World Heritage Planning Officer from Tasmania’s Parks and Wildlife Service (famous for that stuck in the mud cover of Wild magazine) is bidding his career a fond farewell and heading off to better enjoy life with his wife, his veggie patch, camper van and his grandkids - not to mention his new mountain bike, kayak and outdoor gear.

As many readers will know, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is one of our most loved but also most talked about properties - whether we are talking about local, state or national media, state or federal parliament or the agenda of the World Heritage Committee. First listed in 1982 the property has been extended four times and has been at the heart of Tasmania’s and Australia’s conservation debate – at first centred on plans for a Gordon below Franklin dam (including a high court challenge) and debate on the future of Tasmania’s forests.

With so much attention it will be a great loss to our World Heritage network to see this veteran of world heritage planning and state of conservation reporting walk out the door. I asked colleagues for suggestions for this article and they told me Tim O is known as a ‘bit of a wag’ but despite definite signs of wagginess (see photo) I’ve always appreciated his skill for patient and polite reflective listening in the quest for words that walk softly where angels fear to tread...(waggle words?). Always encouraging and friendly with stakeholders, he played a major hand in the celebrated TWWHA plan of 1999 which has been worth its weight in protection of Outstanding Universal Value.

The Plan is currently undergoing a process of renewal (he would say it is just a little bit tired and so is he) including writing in the two latest additions agreed to by the World Heritage Committee in 2012 and 2013. His legacy will ring on in the merry culture he helped to build up in TWWHA’s world heritage advisory committee (current acronym NPWAC).

I’m told he has been at every meeting since 1992. Members and staff participants will miss Tim's dedication and his end of field trip slide shows— unless of course you are the hapless federal observer that got caught by his latest zappy camera unawares. Tim O we wish you well...

Anne Brady
TWWHA desk officer, Australian Government Department of Environment

Queensland’s World Heritage Advisory Committee Chairs meeting

In September 2013, Queensland’s Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, Andrew Powell, met with the Chairs of Queensland’s World Heritage Advisory Committees on Fraser Island. An agreed desire to increase the quality and quantity of information provided to visitors was discussed in detail, particularly in respect to enhancing visitor’s recreation experience, appreciation of place, and improved awareness of the cultural and natural values.

The Minister and Chairs agreed a greater understanding of values would help engender minimal impact practices leading to improved sustainability of visitation across properties.

In particular, Minister Powell sought advice from the Chairs on how best to engage more people, using various media, in appreciating the wonder of these special places and the Outstanding Universal Value of these areas.

Outcomes from the meeting identified a need for further research to fill gaps in bio-physical knowledge and public interface research for Queensland’s World Heritage properties.

Minister Powell initiated these meetings in 2012 to provide an opportunity for World Heritage Advisory Committees, through their Chairs, to provide feedback directly to him about their respective World Heritage properties.

The meetings also offer the varied World Heritage interest groups an opportunity to be kept up-to-date on the management priorities for Queensland five World Heritage Areas.

Andy Quirk
Executive Officer, Fraser Island World Heritage Area, Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Communities help celebrate 25 years of Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area celebrated its 25th birthday on 9 December 2013 so it’s time to celebrate!

Last year the Wet Tropics Management Authority rolled out a number of events and other communication campaigns to engage its global communities in celebrating this important milestone for north Queensland’s magnificent rainforest gem.

To brand the milestone year, the Authority established a 25-year portal on its website and launched a 25-year logo which used on products and communications last year. The brand is simple and incorporates the Bowenia leaf, an enduring symbol of the ancient lineage of the World Heritage Area’s flora.

To revitalise the Authority’s communication material a colourful eight page new brochure was produced celebrating the Outstanding Universal Value and cultural values of the property. A new series of fact sheets is expected to go on-line early this year.

In collaboration with the Cairns Regional Council, ten colourful street banners adorned a section of Grafton Street in the Cairns Central Business District (CBD), highlighting the anniversary. This part of the CBD is popular with locals and visitors alike with a high level of street activity in the local markets, cafes and restaurants.

Continuing the partnership with the Cairns Regional Council, the Authority installed 12 display panels in the Cairns Botanic Gardens Visitor Information Centre. The panels provided a vivid account of the history and values of the World Heritage Area, and highlight the threats to the Area and community efforts in taking care of the Wet Tropics. The Authority also organised a series of Saturday talks at the centre providing community groups with an opportunity to raise awareness of their work in the Wet Tropics.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority was delighted to be involved in the visit of Tourism Australia’s ‘Best Job in the World’ Park Ranger Elisa Detrez. Elisa cut a 25th anniversary cake at ‘Trees for Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands’ (TREAT) headquarters whilst visiting the Atherton Tablelands in October. The combined efforts of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Tourism Queensland helped bring this anniversary milestone to international attention whilst acknowledging the important work of a key community group involved in restoring rainforests in the Wet Tropics.

Local community and volunteer organisations as well as visitor centres across the region are at the forefront of taking care of the World Heritage Area and promoting its values. The Authority has encouraged visitor centres to hold their own special event to celebrate the anniversary and many have enthusiastically taken up the opportunity. They can download the anniversary logo, invitation posters and a generic media release from the Wet Tropics website as well as receive a 25 year community celebration package.

The Authority held its own 25th celebration with invited guests at the Cairns Botanic Gardens on 7 December. Highlights included Rainforest Aboriginal dancers, a commemorative video produced by the Authority, the launching of Wet Tropics Vegetation Maps, and the second edition of the hugely popular Repairing the Rainforest book. A video message was also received from past Prime Minister the Hon. Bob Hawke AC for the occasion, recalling the listing of the Wet Tropics during his term as Prime Minister. The commemorative videos are available on the Wet Tropics website.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of listing of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has helped strengthen links with the Wet Tropics community. The various events have cemented the role of the world heritage property in the social and economic life of the community, building support for the protection of its outstanding natural and cultural values.

For more information go to www.wettropics.gov.au

Patricia O’Loghlen
Principal Project Officer, Communities and Partnerships Wet Tropics Management Authority

Elisa Detrez and Angela McCaffrey at morning tea to celebrate 25 years. Image courtesy of Campbell Clarke, Wet Tropics Images
Greater Blue Mountains fires

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWHA) is comprised of 7 national parks and the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve, managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), now part of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

For millions of years fire has been a major driving force in the evolution of the distinctive and diverse flora and fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains. Fire management is a significant factor affecting biodiversity conservation and uncontrolled or inappropriate use of fire is a management challenge identified in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value. Since listing in 2000, major bushfires across the Greater Blue Mountains in the summers of 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2006-07 have affected approximately 25%, 19% and 10% of the GBMWHA reserves (source Vegetation, Fire and Climate Change in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, 2010, Tasker and Hamill www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectedareas/DECCW20100941.pdf).

From September to November 2013, 25 fires affected the reserves that make up the GBMWHA and areas immediately adjacent.

Over 12% of the GBMWHA has been affected by fire with 128,542ha of reserved lands. An additional 29,177ha of adjacent lands (ie private land, State Forests, Council reserves etc) has also been affected. Nearly 200 homes were lost in the City of the Blue Mountains adjacent to the GBMWHA.

All the major fires started outside the GBMWHA. Multiple causes are identified including strong winds causing powerline damage, military operations and the use of explosive devices and suspected arson. Dry windy conditions and dry fuels promote the rapid spread of fires through built up areas.

Reserve fire management strategies are in place for the reserves that make up the GBMWHA. NPWS fire management is integrated with fire management and disaster planning at agency, state and national levels. NPWS has cooperative fire fighting arrangements which have been ratified through multi-agency policies and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU). NPWS works in close partnership with other NSW fire authorities including the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), Fire and Rescue NSW, and Forestry Corporation of NSW.

Fire management within NPWS-managed lands is crucial to the conservation of biodiversity in the GBMWHA and the broader NSW landscape. NPWS promotes biodiversity conservation as a major objective of fire management and provides advice to and cooperates with other land managers and fire services in this regard. Last year the NPWS treated more than 50,000ha of the GBMWHA in fuel reduction burns.

The principal goal of NPWS fire management for biodiversity conservation is to avoid the extinction of species that occur naturally within its reserves. This entails avoiding disruption to ecosystem processes that may be associated with the decline and loss of native species. Individual plant and animal species require particular fire regimes for their long-term survival. Such requirements may vary within the ecological and geographic range of species.

NPWS recognises fire as a natural and recurring factor shaping the NSW environment and acknowledges that altered fire regimes may pose a significant threat to human life, property and other values including biodiversity, cultural heritage and tourism. Fuel reduction burns to ameliorate the consequences of changed fire regimes.


Jacqueline Reid
Executive Officer, Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

NPWS and RFS crews work side by side, October 2013

Image courtesy of Michelle Barton, Ranger, NWS
World Heritage quick facts

The 10 countries with the largest natural World Heritage area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total area of World Heritage sites (ha)</th>
<th>% of protected areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 USA</td>
<td>46,504,275</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Australia</td>
<td>45,419,471</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Kiribati</td>
<td>40,825,813</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>4 Russian Federation</td>
<td>23,338,640</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Ecuador</td>
<td>14,948,879</td>
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<td>6 Canada</td>
<td>10,691,395</td>
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<td>7 Niger</td>
<td>8,092,128</td>
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<td>8 Algeria</td>
<td>7,571,268</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Tanzania</td>
<td>6,972,264</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 The Democratic Republic Of The Congo</td>
<td>6,895 266</td>
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The 10 largest natural World Heritage sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World Heritage Site</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Phoenix Islands Protected Area</td>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>40,825,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Papahānaumokuʻākea</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>36,479,268</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Great Barrier Reef</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>34,823,325</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Galápagos Islands</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>14,696,203</td>
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<td>5 Kluane / Wrangell-St Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek</td>
<td>USA/Canada</td>
<td>9,732,580</td>
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<td>6 Lake Baikal</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>8,550,838</td>
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<td>7 Air and Ténéré Natural Reserves</td>
<td>Niger</td>
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<td>8 Tassili n’Ajjer</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
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<td>9 Central Amazon Conservation Complex</td>
<td>Brasil</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Selous Game Reserve</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>4,751,807</td>
</tr>
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Snorkellors swim through the clear blue waters of Nathan Reef

Image courtesy of Commonwealth of Australia GBRMPA