

World Heritage Site Managers Meeting

Round 2: Roles, Responsibilities and Partnership
27-28 October, 2023, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur



 भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान
Wildlife Institute of India


United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
World Heritage Centre
Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre
World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region
Under the auspices of UNESCO

Submitted By:
Wildlife Institute of India – Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C)
for World Natural Heritage Management and Training
for Asia and the Pacific Region,
under the auspices of UNESCO

World Heritage Site Managers Meeting Round 2: Roles, Responsibilities and Partnership

Fri-Sat, 27-28 October, 2023



Attendees (from L to R)

1. Dr. Bhumesh Singh Bhadouria, Technical Officer, WII Category 2 Centre
2. Sh. Ganapathi K, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Kudremukh National Park, Karnataka Forest Department
3. Sh. Rajendra Jakhar, Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, West Bengal Forest Department
4. Sh. Pramod P P, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) & Field Director, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala Forest Department
5. Ms. Meera Sharma, Chief Conservator of Forests & Director, Great Himalayan National Park, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh Forest Department
6. Dr. R Suresh Kumar, Scientist – F, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun & Nodal Officer, WII-Category 2 Centre
7. Sh. Manas Singh, Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan Forest Department
8. Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Scientist – D, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun & Associate Nodal Officer, WII Category 2 Centre
9. Dr. Chitiz Joshi, Assistant Technical Officer, WII Category 2 Centre
10. Sh. Anuranjan Roy, World Heritage Assistant, WII Category 2 Centre

Meeting Summary

On 27-28 October, 2023 at Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, the Wildlife Institute of India – Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) for World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region, under the auspices of UNESCO organized “World Heritage Site Managers Meeting Round 2: Roles, Responsibilities and Partnership”. The various sections of the meeting are elaborated as below.

Friday, 27th October, 2023

Site Managers Meeting

Venue: Conference Room, Udai Vilas Palace, Bharatpur

- Sh. Manas Singh, Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Keoladeo National Park welcomed the attending World Heritage Site (WHS) managers to Bharatpur for a constructive discussion on managing World Heritage Sites.
- Dr. R Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer, WII-C2C addressed the attendees on the need to increase awareness of the World Heritage Sites and for partnerships which leverage the visibility of the World Heritage (WH) tag.
- Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, WII-C2C looked at the meeting as an opportunity for everyone to develop a deeper understanding of heritage.
- Dr. Bhumes Singh Bhadouria, Technical Officer, WII-C2C offered the participants a brief recap of the Round – 1 meeting held in Rishikesh in July 2022 before bringing up the purpose of this meeting and expected outcomes.
- The documentary “Whispers of Silence” shot at Eravikulam National Park was then screened for the participants following which a brief discussion was held on the wattle removal initiatives at Periyar TR.
- Dr. Chitiz Joshi, Assistant Technical Officer, WII-C2C then presented on “Overview of World Heritage System” looking at the history of World Heritage, governance, categories, criteria and nomination process.
- The meeting participants sought clarifications on the differences between the Tentative List and the World Heritage Site list and transition from one to the other.
- The participants also sought clarification on the referral/deferral process during Nomination and the screening process for a site to be put on a State Party’s Tentative List.
- Next, Mr. Anuranjan Roy, World Heritage Assistant, WII-C2C presented on “WII-Category 2 Centre - Mandate & Functions” discussing with the participants the reasons for establishing a natural heritage Category 2 Centre (C2C) at WII and the span of activities of the Centre.
- Participants sought to understand the difference between a Category 1 Centre (institutionally and legally part of UNESCO) and a Category 2 Centre (associated with UNESCO through formal arrangements to engage in support of its strategic programme objectives)

This was followed by site presentations by the respective site managers in attendance. Highlights from their presentations are provided next.



Site Presentation 1 - Sh. Manas Singh – Keoladeo National Park

- Sh. Manas Singh spoke on the management of Keoladeo National Park and upgradation of park facilities to enhance the visitor to this World Heritage Site
- He spoke of the maintenance work of Salim Ali Interpretation Centre before its reopening for tourists
- The recent initiative of replacing tourist cycle-rickshaws with e-rickshaws which reduced the physical efforts of the aging rickshaw guides was brought up
- He elaborated on the involvement of Eco Development Committees in water hyacinth management
- The measures to involve the rickshaw-guides in African catfish management in the off-season were also brought up
- The re-introduction of blackbuck, the management of feral cattle and the social issues WRT the use of water from the Panchna Dam were also discussed

Site Presentation 2 – Sm. Meera Sharma – Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (GHNPCA)

- Sm. Meera Sharma brought the various efforts of GHNP to promote and preserve the World Heritage tag awarded to the park
- She presented on the multi-year Vishwa Dharohar Utsav being celebrated in GHNP on the date the World Heritage Day was awarded
- The involvement of local communities including 55 Self Help Groups were discussed along with the changing lifestyles of agro-pastoral communities
- The rising problem of garbage management with increasing tourist visitation was also highlighted, as it featured regularly in local consultations
- A captivating and beautifully shot documentary by one of GHNP's Forest Guards on the elusive Western Tragopan, one of the key attributes behind World Heritage status, was also screened for the meeting participants

Site Presentation 3 – Sh. Rajendra Jakhar – Sundarbans National Park

- Sh. Rajendra Jakhar made an extensive presentation on the qualities that make the Sundarbans a one-of-a-kind biodiverse location earning it the World Heritage tag
- He elaborated on the protection objectives of the Forest Department in the park along with the challenges to completing the same
- The increasing frequency of extreme weather events like super-cyclones which had moved from a 10-year cycle to almost one every year was highlighted as a particularly strong challenge

- Breach of saline water into embankments causing agricultural lands to be unusable leading to increased dependence on forests was a direct result of the above as well
- Alongside ongoing conservation works, the need for scientific studies looking at sea level rise and other climate change aspects was brought up
- Alternative livelihood initiatives for local communities like the successful Bonphool Natural Mangrove Honey and other JFMC aspects were discussed
- The ongoing experimentation with building longer lasting but cheaper PVC jetties instead of concrete constructions was also presented

Site Presentation 4 – Sh. Pramod PP – Periyar Tiger Reserve (Part of Western Ghats WHS Serial Nomination)

- Sh. Pramod PP spoke on the historical legacy of Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala from the days of the Travancore kingdom and the dependency on the reservoir for the neighbouring districts of Tamil Nadu.
- He shared that the economic value of Periyar Tiger Reserve was immense in terms of the ecosystem services provided to the region particularly in terms of usable and potable water
- He shared the various methods used by the Park to reduce negative human-wildlife interactions and the involvement of indigenous communities to ensure that tourists have a safe visit
- He presented on the novel Real Time Monitoring (RTM) system developed at Periyar which work on relays sending critical information to the Forest Department and researchers within an actionable timeframe
- The SARPA App, developed in Kerala to streamline the rescue of snakes from human habitations and to provide rapid life-saving help, was another example given of how peaceful human-nature co-existence can be fostered
- The cultivation of organic pepper for export markets, the harvesting of exotic invasive fish from Periyar Lake were other initiatives mentioned
- The rehabilitation of former smugglers/poachers through Vidiyal Vana Pathukappu Sangham and the involvement of all-women volunteer patrollers of Vasanthasena were discussed

Site Presentation 5 – Sh. Ganapathi K – Kudremukh National Park (Part of Western Ghats WHS Serial Nomination)

- Sh. Ganapathi K spoke on the natural attributes that made Kudremukh National Park a haven for natural heritage particularly in terms of ground orchids
- The issue of fire management in a park which sees an extensive change in weather through the seasons was brought up, necessitating the use of vertical firelines

- The absence of elephants from the park for most of its recent history and their return were also brought up as a management issue for the future
- As per him, the relocation and rehabilitation of settlements from inside the park to the outside was an ongoing management objective with 350 of the original 1300 families already relocated
- He mentioned that the use of apps and other IT-enabled tools was greatly enhanced for Kudremukh due to its popularity with the weekend visitors from Bengaluru
- The post-COVID boom in travel was felt in Kudremukh with the 8-km Kudremukh trek alone earning significant revenue for the Forest Department

Selected Key Points from “Site Managers Presentations”

- The site managers elaborated on what makes their respective sites special in terms of biodiversity and conservation value.
- The ongoing and future management interventions at the site necessary to preserve these values were presented to the participants like the replacement of foot-pedal rickshaws with e-rickshaws at Keoladeo.
- GHNP brought up how the World Heritage status of the park was actively celebrated to help local communities appreciate its importance.
- The need to study and document the impact of larger forces like climate change on these areas was highlighted in the case of Sundarbans
- The importance of digital tools like apps and field equipment utilizing digital technology was also an important feature in the presentations on Periyar and Kudremukh

Saturday, 28th October, 2023

Site Managers Field Visit

Venue: Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur



On the morning of 28th October, Sh. Manas Singh hosted the participants of the meeting at the World Heritage Site of Keoladeo National Park. The team visited the Goverdhan Drain inlet which is an important site management initiative drawing on flood water during the monsoon to address seasonal water shortages inside the park. The team then visited the heronry block near Sapan Mori as the nesting colonies of painted storks, cormorants and other birds which serve as the Park's resident bird population. The management strategies and challenges were further discussed by the team at the watchtower near Keoladeo Temple from which the park draws its name.

Saturday, 28th October, 2023

Closing Discussion

Venue: Conference Room, Udai Vilas Palace, Bharatpur



After the field visit, the meeting participants gathered to summarize their learnings from the past two days. They recognized that they had developed newer perspectives on heritage and World Heritage in particular and then discussed a suggested agenda for the way forward. The main outputs from the same are as below:

Dr. R Suresh Kumar indicated that management of the sites needed to be from a World Heritage perspective enabling the tag for improvement in the same. He suggested that an Annual Meeting for Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites to be institutionalized in the framework of a Consortium or similar grouping. He emphasized the need to study, understand and document how the World Heritage tag has impacted the sites. The upcoming World Heritage General Assembly in Delhi in 2024 offered the opportunity to showcase the same to an audience of key decision-makers. Existing UNESCO documents for managing Natural Heritage, Outstanding Universal Values and site-specific World Heritage milestones may be leveraged to create signages, flyers, outreach materials and promotions in an identifiable visual format for World Heritage. Inscription certificates of those sites which do not have a copy may be sought from the World Heritage Committee.

Sm. Meera Sharma said research specific to World Heritage status which affect OUVs needs to be done. In the original proposal for GHNPCA, adjoining protected areas like Pin Valley and Khirganga were in consideration for future addition to the Site because of which it was also important to understand the Convention's requirements in terms of major and minor boundary modifications and the subsequent research. Impacts of changing socio-economic scenarios like increasing female literacy and the resulting change in occupations must also be studied and documented. Through visits to each other's sites, existing best practices in individual sites may be further shared among World Heritage Sites for cross-learning and implementation.

Sh. Rajendra Jakhar felt that the inclusion of World Heritage status in souvenirs and promotional materials was a task which could be accomplished first while addition of a new section to management plan would necessitate long term research as a corollary. Certain studies and initiatives would need to be taken up by multi-disciplinary teams as factors like climate change have sources and impacts far beyond protected areas. The involvement of national governments in cross-border protected areas like Sundarbans and Manas would be increasingly important and in continuation of that suggestion, Dr. R Suresh Kumar suggested looking through the international list of World Heritage Sites for good examples of successful collaborations and implementations.

Sh. Manas Singh acknowledged the importance of the World Heritage tag in terms of foreign tourists who may or may not know of National Park and other designations but definitely would be aware of World Heritage. The location of Bharatpur close to the cultural World Heritage Site of Taj Mahal helped them experience iconic examples of both natural and cultural heritage in close proximity. He mentioned that the previously instituted Green Standards for Bharatpur hotels had raised a question of how implementation of the standards would help businesses and their customers. In this regard, he suggested the provision of subsidies and discounts for properties and businesses which follow prescribed standards.

Sh. Pramod PP spoke of the need for World Heritage specific suggestions to be simple and actionable and that adding a chapter to management plans may be considered if more details of OUVs applicable to Periyar are made available. The inclusion of the World Heritage status in publicity materials was identified as an important first step. Similar to the ‘Pugmark’ rating for hotels in the Periyar area, a similar certification may be envisioned for heritage guidelines. He suggested approaching government authorities for a special fund dedicated to the preservation of World Heritage properties which would be utilized for enhancement of World Heritage OUVs. He agreed that a common visual language for all World Heritage Sites promotional material would help promote it better.

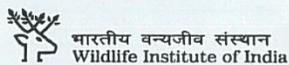
Sh. Ganapathi K acknowledged that the World Heritage status of Kudremukh National Park was not in focus in the website and other public interfaces of the Park and good work could be done in that regard. He suggested that in the manner that the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) co-ordinates a lot of common activity between the Tiger Reserves, the WII-C2C could have an enhanced role in a similar nature for heritage sites. He also requested that a brief document be created a ready reference for site managers looking to learn about heritage management guidelines. He mentioned of many heritage aspects of Kudremukh which could serve as alternative attractions which could attract a niche heritage tourist like the origin of the river Bhadra (Tungabhadra) alongside two other rivers from a cave inside the park. Dr. Bhumesh Singh Bhadouria had also suggested developing similar heritage-focused experiences inside World Heritage Sites to help visitors better understand the reasons for that designation.

Dr. Nehru Prabakaran thanked everyone for the discussion on how the World Heritage tag could be used for enhanced management practices and assured the participants that a draft document summarizing the discussions in the meeting would be shared for their comments.

Selected Key Points from “Closing Discussion”

- The World Heritage status of the sites need to be promoted more through souvenirs, signages and other means.
- A uniform visual language/branding for World Heritage Sites making them instantly identifiable in flyers, websites and other media.
- The Outstanding Universal Values that the sites have been inscribed on need further study and documentation, particularly for the 39 sub-sites of the Western Ghats.
- Collaborations and site visits between World Heritage Sites should be developed as a part of a Consortium or other such arrangements.

Annexure – I



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Wildlife Institute of India



**WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGERS MEETING
ROUND -2: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP
KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR (RAJASTHAN)
26TH OCTOBER-, 2023**

PARTICIPANT LIST

S. No	Name	Designation	Email/ Phone No	Signature
1.	Pranod PP	CCF(WL)&RDPT	9447979090	
2.	Ganapathi. K.	DCF, Kudremukh National park.	9480040025.	
3.	RAJENDRA JAKHER	CCF, CD/STR	9434706166	
4.	MEERA SHARMA	CCF GirNP Kullu	9816251166	
5.	Manas Singh	DCF (WL) Bharatpur	9717340749	
6.	DR BHUMESH SINHA	TECHNICAL OFFICER WII-C2C	9456103455	
7.	Anuramjan Roy	World Heritage Assistant WII-C2C	7044294470	
8.	Dr. Chitiz Joshi	Associate Teh. officer	941189127	
9.	Dr. R. SURESH KUMAR	Model Officer, WII C2C	9359433837	
10.	Dr. Nehru P	Associate Model officer WII-C2C	8903216101	
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Annexure – II



WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGERS MEETING
ROUND 2: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP
KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR (RAJASTHAN)
27TH - 28TH OCTOBER, 2023

	26th October (Thursday) Arrival at Bharatpur (Rajasthan)
Friday, 27th October	Day-1
1030h-1040h	Inaugural & Welcome Address – Manas Singh, DCF (WL) KNP
1040h – 1100h	Address by
	1040h - 1050 h - Dr R Suresh Kumar, Scientist- F & Nodal Officer-WII- C2C
	1050h - 1100 h - Dr Nehru Prabakaran, Scientist- D & Associate Nodal Officer, WII-C2C
1100h-1130h	Group Photo Followed by Coffee/ Refreshments
1130h -1145h	Context Setting – Dr Bhumesh Singh Bhadouria, Technical Officer, WII-C2C
1145h- 1215h	Overview of World Heritage System, Current World Heritage Sites in India – Updates- Dr Chitiz Joshi, Assistant Technical Officer, WII-C2C
1215h - 1245h	India's Role in World Heritage Committee and Other International Obligations- Dr Nehru Prabakaran, Scientist-D & Associate NO, WII-C2C
1245h- 1300 h	WII-Category 2 Centre - Mandate & Functions – Sh. Anuranjan Roy, World Heritage Assistant, WII-C2C
1300h-1400h	Lunch Break
1400h-1500 h	Presentations by Site Managers
1400-1415 h	Keoladeo National Park- Sh. Manas Singh, IFS, DCF, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur (Rajasthan)
1415-1430 h	Great Himalayan NP – Smt. Meera Sharma, IFS, CCF & Director, GHNP, Kullu (HP)
1430-1445 h	Sundarbans WHS, West Bengal – Sh. Rajendra Jakhar, IFS, CCF & FD, Sundarbans TR (WB)
1445-1500 h	Periyar TR Sub-Cluster (Western Ghats WHS), Sh P.P. Pramod, IFS, CCF (WL) & FD, Periyar TR (KL)
1500-1530 h	Tea/Coffee Break
1530-1545 h	Periyar TR Sub-Cluster (Western Ghats), Sh P.P. Pramod, IFS, CCF (WL) & FD, Periyar TR (KL)
1545-1600 h	Kudremukh Sub-cluster (Western Ghats WHS), Sh Ganapathi K, IFS, DCF, Kudremukh National Park (TA)
1600h-1700h	Discussion /Tea
Friday, 28th October	Day-2
0730h-1030h	Morning Visit to understand OUV of KNP
1030h-1130h	Site Management of KNP – Sh. Manas Singh , IFS, DCF, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur