

Annual REPORT

2024 - 25



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
DEHRADUN, INDIA



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World Natural Heritage Management and
Training for Asia and the Pacific Region

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BACKGROUND

The Centre for World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region was formally established following the signing of an agreement between the Government of India and UNESCO on 2nd September 2015. This agreement, approved earlier by the Cabinet of Ministers chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 5th August 2015, was signed by the Director General of Forests, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, and the Director General of UNESCO, Paris. Recognized as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre and housed within the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, the Centre was created to strengthen the conservation and management of Natural World Heritage across the Asia-Pacific region. Since its inception, it has successfully implemented Annual Work Programmes for the years 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18, 2018–19, 2019–20, 2020–21, 2022–23, and 2023–24.

Located in a region abundant in natural and mixed heritage sites, the Centre engages in close collaboration with State Parties, the World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention, academic institutions, and other Category 2 Centres. Through a combination of long and short-term capacity-building initiatives led by experienced heritage professionals, the Centre supports a wide network of stakeholders. These include site managers, government officials, tourist guides, and local community members. To date, the Centre has trained participants from more than 50 different countries and 5 continents, reinforcing its role as a vital platform for regional cooperation and knowledge exchange in the realm of Natural World Heritage conservation.

MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The Centre's mission is to strengthen implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Asia and the Pacific Region by building the capacity of all those professionals and bodies involved with Natural Heritage site inscription, protection, conservation and management in Asia and the Pacific region, through training, research, dissemination of information and network building. The overall objective is to focus on Natural Heritage conservation issues with the aim to:

- Contribute to the strengthening of capacities in the management of Natural World Heritage in the region.
- Contribute to achieving a more balanced representation of properties from Asia and the Pacific on the World Heritage List.
- Raise awareness among the general public and the youth in particular of the importance of Natural World Heritage and the need to protect it;
- Foster international cooperation on Natural World Heritage initiatives.



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES DURING 2024-25

WII-C2C was engaged in a wide spectrum of activities during April 2024 – March 2025 to fulfill its unique role as the only UNESCO Category 2 Centre dedicated to natural heritage. Drawing on collaborations, some of which had been in place from the early years of establishment of the Centre and others which had just been initiated through growing international reach, WII-C2C implemented multiple capacity-building programmes in natural heritage management catering to all levels of stakeholders; fulfilled its technical role by reviewing proposed nomination documents and connected with the global network of expertise offered by the UNESCO network to help enhance the reach of the World Heritage Convention.

WII-C2C had conducted training courses and workshops on natural heritage management where communities associated with World Heritage Sites, Forest Service officers, and international trainees were introduced to the interdisciplinary aspects of heritage. Through the two courses

funded by the Ministry of External Affairs ITEC programme, 25 trainees from 18 countries and 4 continents returned to their homes equipped with the various concepts and practical implications of world heritage sites including nomination process, reporting mechanism, management and stakeholder involvement. The two courses focusing on the Indian Forest Service officers (a 1-week training course and a 4-week Certificate course), 23 trainees from 10 states learnt of the methods to use heritage as a tool to enhance impact of their management plans. Besides these, trainings organized for the local communities of the Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area to experience World Heritage and for IFS officers to understand the interconnectedness of global conservation conventions helped convey the many facets of heritage to groups that live amongst heritage landscapes as well as those tasked with managing them. World Heritage Day (18th April, 2024) also provided an avenue for the Centre to collaborate with the National Museum of Natural History, the 4 Regional Museums of Natural History, 6 Indian Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites (WHS) to spread heritage awareness to 60 schools around the country, 4000 museum visitors and the local communities and staff at WHS.

At the 46th World Heritage Committee, New Delhi in July 2024, WII-C2C linked at its side-event the wide network of C2Cs to harness their respective expertise towards common goals, presented at the Young Professionals Forum and the Site Managers' Meeting and brought up the importance of natural heritage at the Committee's main Plenary session. Further taking up a leading role, the Centre made important contributions to initiatives towards documenting geoheritage with Geological Survey of India and the UNESCO Global Geoparks programme; represented natural heritage and the Asian Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) at the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum in Bangkok; discussed implementation of the Regional Framework Action for Asia-Pacific as well overlaps between the Convention and the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in Vilm, Germany. Finally, in its reviews of 12 potential World Heritage Sites as Tentative List documents, the Centre applied its know-how from a decade of being fully engaged with the broad dimensions of heritage management spanning nature, culture and intangible identities.



ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING 2024-25



A. CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMMES AND OUTREACH

Aligned with the World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy, the Centre focuses on enhancing the capacities of individuals and institutions involved in the conservation and management of World Natural Heritage. Guided by the World Heritage Committee's five strategic objectives—the 5Cs: Credibility, Conservation, Communication, Capacity Building, and Community—the Centre develops and implements programmes that support effective heritage management. In 2024-25, WII-C2C continued this mandate through a range of training initiatives conducted both at the WII campus in Dehradun and on-site at natural and cultural World Heritage Sites. These programmes engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials, international delegates, school educators, tourism operators, and forest frontline personnel.

1. World Heritage Day Celebration 18th April, 2024

To commemorate World Heritage Day (WHD) 2024, the Wildlife Institute of India–Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C), in collaboration with the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), New Delhi, organized a week-long national celebration on 18th April 2024. The event aimed to raise awareness of India's rich natural and mixed World Heritage Sites among school children, museum visitors, local communities, and wildlife researchers.

The celebration was marked by a range of engaging outreach initiatives. A customized Natural Heritage Pledge

was developed by WII-C2C, encouraging participants to recognize the value of heritage and take a stand for its protection. Visually appealing posters and educational materials were also created to spark curiosity and convey conservation messages in an accessible format. A national-



Natural and Mixed World Heritage Sites across India celebrated WHD 2024 in collaboration with WII-C2C



World Heritage Day celebration at the Wildlife Institute of India included a heritage quiz and awareness program



School students across India participated the World Heritage Day celebrations 2024



The artwork that won first prize in the All-India Art Contest on 'Saving India's Natural Heritage'

level art competition for students of Classes 8 to 12, themed on natural heritage, further enriched the celebrations and inspired creative expression among young minds.

Across India, in-person programmes were conducted in multiple locations. Two major schools in Delhi hosted interactive sessions attended by nearly 2,000 students, with active participation from representatives of WII-C2C and NMNH. The following week, over 60 schools across India; in Delhi, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh conducted educational activities on natural heritage using the outreach materials developed for the event. The four Regional Museums of Natural History (RMNH) also held a series of events, engaging more than 4,000 visitors. Celebrations extended to several Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites, including Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Khangchendzonga National Park, Kaziranga National Park, Sundarbans National Park, and Kudremukh National Park in the Western Ghats. These sites organized local programmes involving site staff and community members.

At the Wildlife Institute of India campus, WII-C2C hosted a special event for researchers and students, featuring a thematic discussion and a quiz on India's natural heritage and its relevance to biodiversity conservation.

2. WII Foundation Day Quiz 22nd May, 2024

As part of the Wildlife Institute of India's Foundation Day celebrations on 22nd May, WII-C2C organized a quiz event titled "Nature and Steel" – A WII Heritage Quiz. The quiz aimed to engage participants in an exciting exploration of the institute's rich legacy, highlighting key milestones, people, and achievements that have shaped WII over the years. Designed to celebrate the heritage and institutional memory of WII, the event brought together staff, students, and faculty in a spirited and informative session that blended fun with learning.



3. Training Courses Organized by WII-C2C

3.1) 2nd Certificate Course in Heritage Management 12th August – 6th September, 2024

The 2nd Certificate Course in Heritage Management, organized by WII-C2C from 12th August to 6th September 2024 at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, trained 11 officer trainees from the Forest Departments of Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. This 4-week residential course aimed to build professional capacity in heritage conservation, focusing on natural heritage and World Heritage management through lectures, group work, case studies, and field visits. Key themes included Heritage Concepts and Conventions, Heritage Management, and Heritage Interpretation. Field tours included visits to the Forest Research Institute, Jabarkhet Nature Reserve, Asan Conservation Reserve, Ashokan Rock Edict at Kalsi, and a five-day tour covering Keoladeo National Park, Taj Mahal, Humayun's Tomb, and the National Museum. The final course assignment reports prepared by the officers oriented them towards implementing the course learnings at the respective states they represent in India.





3.2) Capacity Building Workshop for Declaration of UNESCO World Heritage Site 25th – 29th November, 2024

The WII-C2C (Wildlife Institute of India – Category 2 Centre) organized a fully residential capacity-building workshop on the Declaration of UNESCO World Heritage Sites for Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers from 25th to 29th November 2024, at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. Sponsored by the Research and Training Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the workshop aimed to integrate heritage conservation concepts into protected area management and introduce participants to the World Heritage nomination process. It also provided a unique platform to engage with leading experts in the field and to foster networking and collaboration among professionals committed to natural heritage conservation.

A total of 12 IFS officers from six Indian states participated in the workshop, including several with prior experience in managing World Heritage Sites. The five-day program comprised two days of interactive lectures and practical sessions, followed by a three-day field visit to the UNESCO Natural Heritage Site Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, and the Cultural Heritage Site Fatehpur Sikri.

The curriculum included 14 sessions, covering topics such as Heritage Concepts and Approaches, Protection and Management of Natural Heritage Sites, World Heritage and Biodiversity-Related Conventions, Nomination Dossier Preparation, and case studies, including 'Serial Site Nomination: The Case of the Western Ghats for World Heritage Conservation'.





3.3) Two - Week Training Course on Natural Heritage 20th – 31st January, 2025

The Training Course on Natural Heritage (TCNH) for international participants was conducted by WII-C2C from 20th –31st January, 2025, under the Ministry of External Affairs – Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (MEA-ITEC), fully sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs. Ten participants from seven countries (Ecuador, Ghana, Palestine, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, and Tanzania) across three continents took part. The course focused on natural heritage management and its role in conservation, leveraging WII's and WII-C2C's expertise while fostering cross-cultural learning. Through expert-led in-person and online lectures, group work, and case studies, it covered themes such as Natural Heritage & Conservation, Heritage Concepts and Conventions, Management, Interpretation, and Socio-Economic Aspects. Sessions addressed biodiversity, World Heritage management, the OUV framework, and community-based conservation. Lectures were delivered by WII and WII-C2C faculty, experts from IUCN, WHIPIC, and the Asia-Pacific Unit of the World Heritage Centre. As part of the training course, participants have made presentations about heritage of their respective countries. Each presentation effectively showcased the rich cultural heritage, history,

and unique traditions of their homeland. Field visits included UNESCO natural and cultural heritage sites such as Keoladeo National Park, Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Qutub Minar, and the National Museum.



3.4) Four - Week Certificate Course in Natural Heritage Management 17th February – 14th March, 2025

The four-week Certificate Course in Natural Heritage Management for international participants was conducted by WII-C2C from 17th February to 14th March, 2025, under the MEA-ITEC Programme, fully sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs. Fifteen participants from fourteen countries—Bhutan, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Paraguay, Peru, Rwanda, Russia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam—across four

continents took part. Drawing on WII's expertise in wildlife conservation and C2C's strengths in heritage management, the course covered key themes including heritage concepts and conventions, the history and philosophy of conservation, and landscape-level and transboundary management approaches. Lectures were delivered by WII-C2C staff, WII faculty, and external experts, including site managers of UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites in India, as well as experts from IUCN, WHIPIC, the Asia-Pacific Unit of the World Heritage Centre, and other eminent institutions. As part of the certificate course, participants have made presentations about heritage of their respective countries. Each presentation effectively showcased the rich cultural heritage, history, and unique traditions of their homeland.



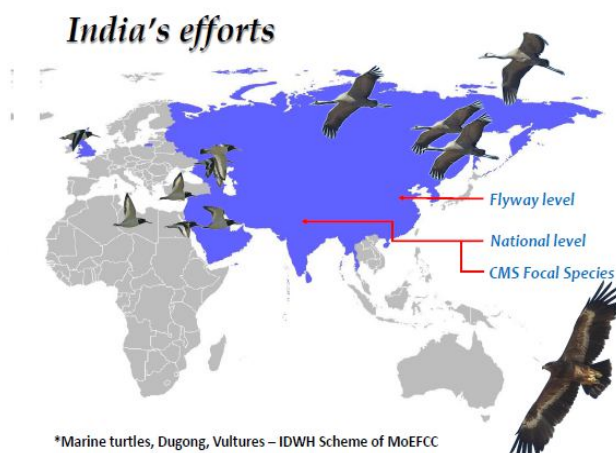
Participants gained practical skills through case studies, heritage interpretation techniques, and field visits to UNESCO natural and cultural heritage sites such as Keoladeo National Park, the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Qutub Minar, and the National Museum. The course also included a visit to the Arth Ganga Interpretation Centre in Haridwar under the NMCG-WII Ganga Biodiversity Conservation Initiative, offering insights into community-linked river conservation efforts. As part of the field tour, participants visited the headquarters of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), where they had the privilege of interacting with senior officials. Shri Janhwij Sharma, Additional Director General (Conservation, World Heritage, NCF, Scientific Conservation), and Shri Madan Singh Chauhan, Joint Director General (World Heritage), engaged with the group and shared valuable insights. Shri Madan Singh Chauhan also delivered a brief presentation highlighting the history of ASI and its ongoing projects, providing participants with a deeper understanding of the organization's significant role in heritage conservation across India.

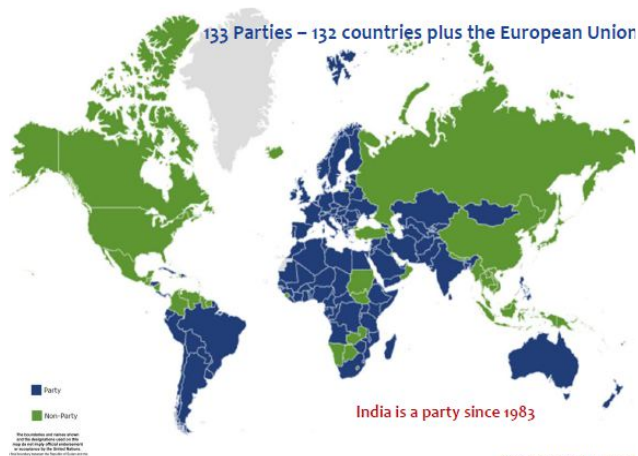
4. Training Courses Co-facilitated by WII-C2C

4.1) WII-C2C at the One-Week Training Course for IFS Officers on International Agreements Related to Forestry, Climate Change, and Environment and Their Implications for the Indian Scenario 26th September, 2024

Dr. R. Suresh Kumar, the Nodal Officer of WII-C2C, participated as a resource person in the one-week training course for IFS officers on international agreements related to forestry, climate change, and the environment, and their implications for India. He delivered a lecture on the "Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the World Heritage Convention, highlighting India's commitments" under these international frameworks.

The presentation emphasized CMS as the only global treaty specifically aimed at protecting migratory species





and their habitats. It serves as a platform for international cooperation, addressing critical threats such as habitat degradation, climate change, pollution, infrastructure development, and illegal hunting.

Dr. Suresh highlighted India's significant role as a CMS Party since 1983. India has undertaken several notable conservation initiatives, particularly under the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) framework, including conservation breeding of the Great Indian Bustard, vulture protection efforts, and mitigation of bird collisions with power lines. He also outlined India's leadership during CMS COP 13 (2020) in Gandhinagar, where it proposed a draft institutional framework for coordinated conservation actions across CAF countries.

4.2) Exposure Visit of GHNP Ambassadors and Ecozone Stakeholders – Bringing World Heritage Knowledge to the Grassroots 6th – 10th January, 2025

WII-C2C in collaboration with the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department, organized this 5-day programme aimed at extending the understanding of why sites are designated as World Heritage Sites beyond heritage practitioners and senior officials involved in the process. This initiative sought to engage a broader audience, including local communities and stakeholders. The programme brought together 25 participants – a diverse group comprising



community representatives, tourism operators and forest department staff – hailing from the vicinity of the Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site. Adopting a structured approach, the programme began with an exploration of the breadth of heritage across nature प्रकृति, monument ईमारत and traditions प्रथा – referred to as PIP – before delving into in-depth discussions about World Heritage. Conducting these sessions on-site at iconic World Heritage Sites such as Keoladeo National Park and the Taj Mahal further reinforced the importance of pride, ownership and collective responsibility required to preserve heritage.

4.3) Conference on Negotiating Heritage, Identity & Citizenship in the Himalayas, Aiding Academic Discourse on Heritage 6th – 7th January, 2025

The multi-disciplinary nature of heritage calls for engagement with many schools of thought and academic disciplines. WII-C2C in collaboration with Centre for Himalayan Studies, School of Civilization, and Somaiya Vidyavihar University and Humanities Himalaya Society have conducted a two days conference that gathered scholars from different states and communities to focus on the heritage of Himalayan region and the human communities. The conference, attended by 25 participants,





highlighted inspiring narratives of resilience, community-led conservation, and harmonious living with nature. These discussions explored potential frameworks and actionable directions for preserving the region's remarkable heritage. The workshop also had a heritage walk to Guru Ram Rai Darbar, a historically significant landmark in Dehradun and integral to the city's identity and culture. A session organized by WII-C2C highlighted nature-culture linkages and the significance of protecting the natural heritage for the preserving the cultural heritage.

4.4) One-Day Session on International Conventions, For IFS Officers 22nd January, 2025

A one-day session at WII-C2C for Indian Forest Service officers highlighted the critical role of five key international conventions that embody the global commitment to safeguarding natural heritage—recognizing that environmental challenges transcend borders and require collective action.

The session covered the following conventions:

- **World Heritage Convention (WHC):** Protects globally significant natural sites and fosters nature-culture linkages.
- **International Whaling Commission (IWC):** Conserves whale populations and marine biodiversity.



- **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS):** Ensures safe migratory routes and international cooperation for migratory species.
- **Ramsar Convention:** Safeguards wetlands of international importance.
- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):** Regulates and combats illegal wildlife trade.

The session emphasized the importance of these conventions for Indian Forest Service officers, whose field-level work is directly aligned with India's global environmental obligations.

In the face of accelerating climate change and biodiversity loss, the relevance of these conventions is greater than ever—providing platforms for international cooperation, knowledge exchange, and collective environmental action.

4.5) ITEC Executive Course on Capacity Building for Wildlife & Conservation Practitioners, Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve, Assam, India 10th – 16th February, 2025

An India Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Executive Course of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) India was held at Kaziranga National Park, the renowned





Natural World Heritage Site. Kaziranga's contribution to saving the one-horned rhinoceros from the brink of extinction, has made it an exemplary site for wildlife conservation. The course covered a wide range of topics crucial to wildlife and natural heritage management, showcasing India's achievements. The training co-organized by the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) and Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve, Assam, India saw Dr. R Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer, WII-C2C provide his expert inputs to 44 officials from 27 countries through classes on "World Heritage Convention: Concept, Nomination, Reporting & Monitoring" and field sessions on "Understanding flyways and migratory bird conservation and habitat restoration (Agaratoli Range)". The participants who shared 108 World Heritage Sites in between them were better equipped to implement heritage as a multi-utility tool for conservation.

4.6) Visit of Penn Global Seminar Participants from the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), USA 11th March, 2025

The students of the Penn Global Seminar from the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), USA, visited WII-C2C. During the visit, Dr. Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer of WII-C2C, delivered a lecture on the *Amur Falcon Conservation Initiative*. Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, spoke on the topic Islands in Flux, and Mr. Anuranjan Roy, Lead-International Relations, WII-C2C, gave a presentation on *Conserving Natural Heritage*. The WII-C2C staff also facilitated visits to the Wildlife Forensic Lab and the Pashmina Lab, providing the students with valuable insights into applied conservation science.





B. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ON IDENTIFIED WORLD HERITAGE PRIORITY ISSUES

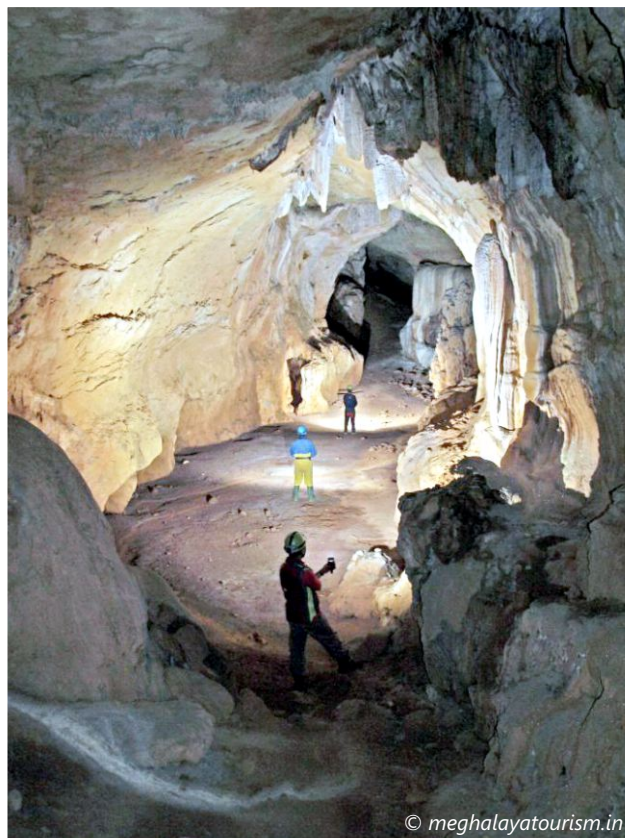
1. Tentative List Review - For 10 Sites from GSI

The Geological Survey of India (GSI) proposed ten sites of geological significance for potential inclusion in India's UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List. WII-C2C provided the technical support in preparation of tentative list nominations and reviewed the proposals of the following sites:

1. Meghalayan Age Caves
2. Natural and Cultural Heritage of Gandikota
3. Natural and Cultural Heritage of Naga Hills
4. Lonar Crater
5. Natural and Cultural Heritage of Tirumala Hills
6. Geological Heritage of St. Mary's Island Cluster
7. Deccan Traps at Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar
8. Natural Heritage of Mamley
9. Natural Heritage of Erra Matti Dibbalu, Visakhapatnam
10. Natural and Cultural Heritage of Varkala

In several cases, sites had been assessed only under natural heritage criteria; however, WII-C2C noted cultural attributes as well and recommended considering them as Mixed Heritage Sites. A notable example is 'the Natural Heritage of Mamley' in Sikkim. Some sites were also found to be eligible under additional World Heritage criteria not originally considered—for example, the 'Deccan Traps at Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar', which were initially evaluated under Criterion (viii) alone, were recommended for inclusion under Criterion (x) as well, owing to their ecological significance.

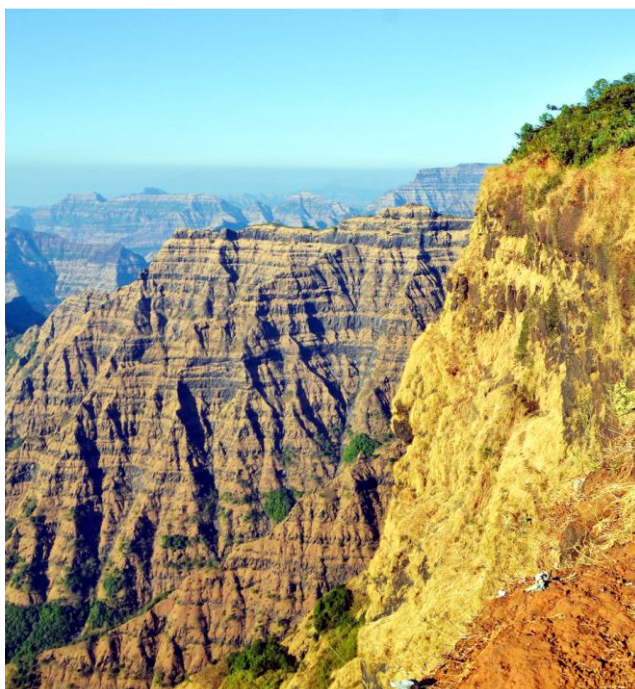
WII-C2C also raised concerns about threats such as anthropogenic pressure and pollution at certain sites, including Erra Matti Dibbalu and the St. Mary's Island cluster, emphasizing the need for urgent conservation measures to protect their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and integrity. These reviews are intended for submission to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for onward transmission and further evaluation.



Meghalayan Age Caves



Lonar Crater, Maharashtra



Deccan Traps at Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra



Geological Heritage of St. Mary's Island Cluster

2. Tentative List Review – Salkhan Fossils Park

WII-C2C had reviewed the Tentative List documentation of 'Salkhan Fossil Park', which was proposed by the Directorate of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh. While the site's relevance under Criterion (viii) had already been noted in the documentation, WII-C2C's review further reinforced this by highlighting that Salkhan Fossil Park aligns with key geoheritage interest categories outlined by IUCN — particularly the "evolution of life" — as per the 2020 Guidelines for Geo-conservation in Protected and Conserved Areas. Additionally, the site corresponds to Theme 1 — History of the planet Earth and the evolution of life — from the 2021 Thematic Framework for Geological World Heritage, further supporting its significance under Criterion (viii).



Stromatolite fossil formations – a key feature of the Salkhan Fossil Park.

3. Tentative List Review – Rann of Kachch

WII-C2C had reviewed the tentative list proposal of 'Rann of Kachch' proposed by the Gujarat Forest Department under the Criteria (viii), (ix), and (x). However, based on WII-C2C's review, it is suggested that additional information is required to adequately justify Criterion (ix). Furthermore, it was observed that the proposed site overlaps with the Wild Ass Sanctuary in the Little Rann of Kutch, which is already included in India's Tentative List. It needs to be verified whether this new proposal can proceed in light of the existing listing. WII-C2C and the Gujarat Forest Department had detailed deliberations on the potential way forwards for including the Rann of Kachch in India's Tentative List.



Wild Ass a significant aspect of the natural heritage in the Rann of Kachch



C. CO-ORDINATED ACTIVITIES WITH WORLD HERITAGE STAKEHOLDERS AND EXPERT EXCHANGES

1. WII-C2C at the 46th World Heritage Committee 21st – 31st July, 2024, New Delhi

The 46th World Heritage Committee (WHC) meeting, a statutory assembly under the World Heritage Convention, was held in New Delhi from 21st to 31st July 2024. Aligned with its mandate of strengthening natural heritage capacity building, WII-C2C served as a key stakeholder during the event. Represented by Dr. R. Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer, WII-C2C, in the Indian delegation, the team actively contributed to plenary sessions on natural heritage and participated in a range of skill development and networking programmes.

In its official advisory role to the Indian delegation—and as the only Category 2 Centre (C2C) globally focused exclusively on natural heritage—WII-C2C provided critical inputs on State of Conservation (SOC) Reports and Nomination Dossiers, aiding in informed decision-making processes.

During the course of the meeting, WII-C2C engaged constructively with other C2Cs, Advisory Bodies, and the World Heritage Centre on key issues concerning natural heritage. The team facilitated dialogue among diverse stakeholders on common themes such as capacity and skills gaps, contributed meaningfully to the global heritage discourse, represented India's position on natural heritage management and nominations, and effectively communicated WII-C2C's mandate, vision, and capabilities to a broad audience—including site managers, young professionals, and delegates—through its presence in the plenary proceedings.

1.1) Presentation at the World Heritage Young Professionals Forum 2024 17th July, 2024, New Delhi

As an integral part of the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee, World Heritage Young Professionals Forum 2024 was held from 14 to 23 July 2024 to enhance the expertise and capacities of young professionals in protecting, preserving, and promoting Natural and Cultural World Heritage. The director of WII, Shri. Virendra R Tiwari, presented on "Natural Heritage, Climate Change and Ganga Rejuvenation" at Red Fort, New Delhi on 17th July, 2024 engaging the audience of 50 participants from 25 countries on India's natural heritage, the impact of



Director WII, Shri Virendra R. Tiwari, presented on "Natural Heritage, Climate Change, and Ganga Rejuvenation" during the World Heritage Young Professionals Forum

climate change and the efforts for the rejuvenation of the Ganga drawing on WII-C2C and National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

1.2) Presentation at the 6th World Heritage Site Managers Forum 21st July, 2024

The 6th World Heritage Site Managers Forum, held from 18th – 25th July, 2024, was organized in conjunction with the World Heritage Committee to help the site managers understand their crucial role in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, WII-C2C made a presentation at the 6th World Heritage Site Managers Forum (WSMF24) on the theme "Mosaics of Life" to an audience of World Heritage Site managers from around the world about the role of WII-C2C. The focus of his talk were the intrinsic



Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, WII-C2C, at the 6th World Heritage Site Managers Forum

values of nature and the legacy of nature-culture linkages in India emphasizing how WII-C2C and its parent institution, Wildlife Institute of India convey the same.

1.3) Inputs at the Plenary Session

C2C Progress Report Intervention

The 46th World Heritage Committee introduced a new Document 6B: 'Progress Report on the Activities Concerning the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention by the World Heritage-related Category 2 Centres' and invited all the World Heritage C2Cs to provide a brief presentation of their respective Centres' past and planned activities within a 3-minute duration for each. Dr. R Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer, WII-C2C, in the plenary session, shared about the broad span of capacity building activities undertaken by the Centre, both national as well as a recent international 4-week Natural Heritage course with 12 participants from 4 continents supported by India's Ministry of External Affairs. He also brought up the active technical support being provided to UNESCO for Periodic

Reporting, State of Conservation Reports and Reactive Monitoring of World Heritage Sites. He expressed the need to boost nature-culture linkages and synergies with other biodiversity conventions by increased collaboration between C2Cs.



*Dr. R. Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer,
WII-C2C, speaking during the plenary session.*

Technical Inputs to GoI Delegation on SOC Reports

The SOC of selected World Heritage properties are examined each year by the World Heritage Committee. For the 46th WHC, WII-C2C provided technical inputs to the Government of India delegation by reviewing and commenting on the SOC Reports for the below listed World Heritage properties.

S.No.	World Heritage Site	State Party
1.	Ancient Maya City and Protected Tropical Forests of Calakmul, Campeche	Mexico
2.	Bialowieza Forest	Belarus, Poland
3.	Bialowieza Forest	Belarus, Poland
4.	East Rennell	Solomon Islands
5.	El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve	Mexico
6.	Great Barrier Reef	Australia
7.	Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area	India
8.	Ha Long Bay- Cat Ba Archipelago	Vietnam
9.	Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California	Mexico
10.	Lake Baikal	Russian Federation
11.	Lake Turkana National Parks	Kenya
12.	Laponian Area	Sweden
13.	Lorentz National Park	Indonesia
14.	Manas Wildlife Sanctuary	India
15.	Mosi-oa-Tunya/ Victoria Falls	Zambia, Zimbabwe
16.	Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region	Albania, North Macedonia
17.	Ngorongoro Conservation Area	United Republic of Tanzania
18.	Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve	Honduras
19.	Selous Game Reserve	United Republic of Tanzania
20.	Serengeti National Park	United Republic of Tanzania
21.	The Alwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities	Iraq
22.	Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra	Indonesia
23.	Volcanoes of Kamchatka	Russian Federation
24.	Wadden Sea	Denmark, Germany, Netherlands
25.	Western Caucasus	Russian Federation

Technical Inputs to GoI Delegation on Nomination Dossiers

The nomination dossier is the official document submitted to UNESCO by States Parties for the potential inscription of a property on the World Heritage List. For the 46th WHC,

WII-C2C provided technical inputs to the Government of India delegation by reviewing and commenting on the Nomination Dossiers for the below listed sites. Two interventions were made by Dr. R Suresh Kumar in support and appreciation of the below listed sites during the WHC discussion.

S.No.	World Heritage Site	State Party
1.	Badain Jaran Desert: Towers of Sand and Lakes	People's Republic of China
2.	Lencóis Maranhenses National Park	Brazil
3.	Melka Kunture and Balchit Archeological and Paleontological Site	The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE)
4.	Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea- Bohai Gulf of China (Phase II)	People's Republic of China
5.	The Flow Country	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
6.	Vjetrenica Cave, Ravno	Bosnia and Herzegovina

1.4) WII-C2C Side Event at the WHC

To discuss the contribution of Category 2 Centres to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and to enhance the scope of their partnerships and networking for the C2Cs, the WII-C2C hosted an interaction with World Heritage-related C2Cs during the 46th World Heritage Committee Session in New Delhi on 24th July 2024 titled "World Heritage-Related Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO: Prospects and Opportunities". Special guests at the event included the Director World

Heritage Centre, the Additional Director General of Forests, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India and the Director Wildlife Institute of India. The need for a forum on the lines of the Site Managers Forum and Young Professionals Forum for the C2Cs in future Committee meetings was acknowledged. The C2Cs also agreed on the need to better integrate natural heritage relevant skills into their programmes aided by Improved recognition of site-level gaps and expectations.



WII-C2C team with the attendees of the WII-C2C side event that reinforced the significance of coordinated efforts by C2Cs in implementing the World Heritage Convention

1.5) Bilateral Meetings

The 46th WHC offered avenues for interactions with the World Heritage Committee, Advisory Bodies, country representatives and institutions, all of whom play important roles in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Summarized below are some of the key meetings that WII-C2C had during the event.

Interaction with IUCN Representatives

A meeting between IUCN and WII-C2C representatives was held on 24 July 2024 during the 46th World Heritage Committee (WHC) in India. IUCN recognized WII and WII-C2C's potential to lead natural heritage initiatives in Asia and proposed enhanced collaboration to strengthen WII's capacity. The IUCN Asia Regional Office highlighted opportunities for mutual benefit through joint efforts, especially in implementing the CBD and KMGBF. IUCN encouraged WII to pursue membership in the Asia Protected Area Partnership (APAP) and engage in the Green Listing programme, potentially integrated into joint training courses. WII was also invited to play an active role in the Regional Conservation Forum in Bangkok (September 2024). Both parties agreed to formalize collaboration through an MoU and explore future joint initiatives.

Interaction with WHIPIC

An in-person meeting was held between International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC), Republic of Korea and WII-C2C on 24th July 2024 on the sidelines of the 46th World Heritage Committee (WHC) in India. This meeting was held with reference to a request by Mr. Chang-nam HONG, Director General, WHIPIC wherein prospects for collaboration between the two C2Cs were discussed.

Interaction with multiple country Delegations/Representatives

Brazil: Supported collaboration on natural heritage capacity building in Latin America and Portuguese-speaking African countries. Discussed partnership between WII and ACADEBio for specialized training.

Kenya: Emphasized shared heritage challenges, especially community involvement, and the need for qualitative heritage research and better interpretation methods.

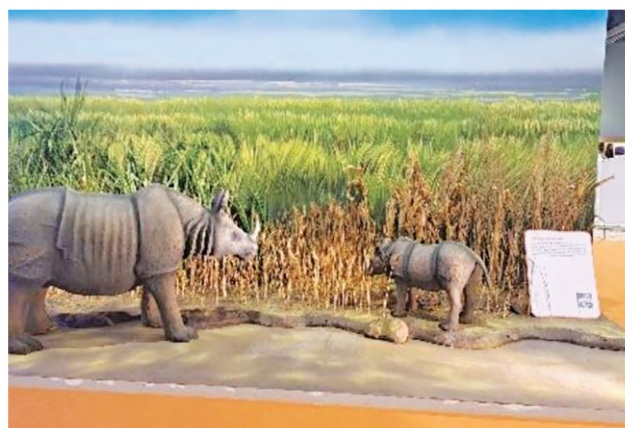
Botswana: Proposed joint training on managing iconic World Heritage Sites like Kaziranga and Okavango Delta. Highlighted opportunities for expert exchange through UNESCO programs like the World Heritage Volunteers.

1.6) Natural Heritage Exhibition & WII-C2C Publications

Natural Heritage Exhibition

As part of the Ministry of Tourism's Incredible India exhibition during the 46th WHC, WII-C2C contributed to

the development of a diorama display of two of India's most iconic natural heritage sites, Keoladeo National Park and Kaziranga National Park along with informational slides on the 8 Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites and the 11 Natural/Mixed on India's Tentative List presented on an LCD screen display next to the exhibit.



Diorama display of Kaziranga National Park



Diorama display of Keoladeo National Park



A digital informational display focused on India's 7 Natural and 1 Mixed World Heritage Sites, and the 11 Natural/Mixed sites on India's Tentative List.

WII-C2C Publications

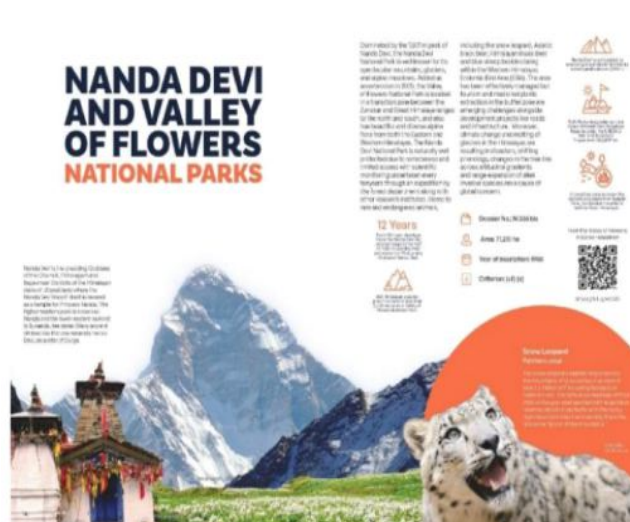
Two WII-C2C publications were released by the dignitaries in attendance at the WII-C2C Side Event and an informational article on the WII-C2C was published in the

special edition of the World Heritage Review. The books conveyed the natural splendor of India and the Asia-Pacific Region in a visual and captivating manner while the article discussed WII-C2C capabilities and achievements.



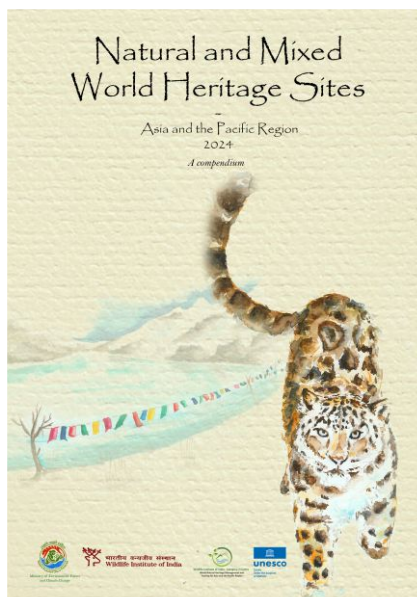
a) Mosaics of Life

"Mosaics of Life: Natural/ Mixed World Heritage Sites of India" an informational booklet presents the significance and nature-culture interlinkages of India's Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites.



b) Natural/Mixed Heritage Compendium

"Natural and Mixed World Heritage Sites - Asia and the Pacific Region 2024: A Compendium" consolidates information on the locations, ecosystem, management challenges and management strategies of Asia-Pacific's Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites.

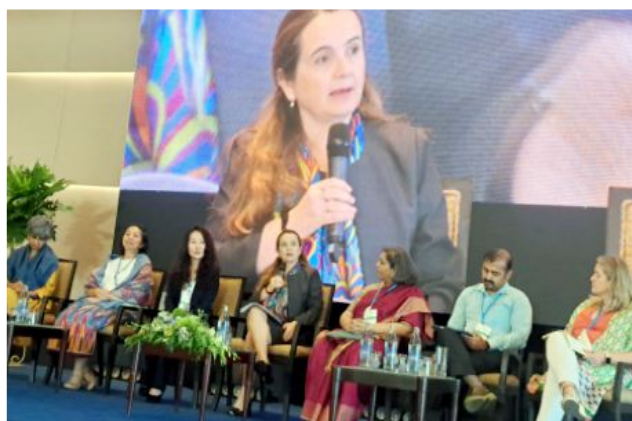


c) Inspiring Care for Natural Heritage – Promotional Feature in the World Heritage Journal

World Heritage is the official UNESCO publication from the World Heritage Centre about cultural and natural World Heritage sites published quarterly. It is produced in English, French and Spanish. For the 46th World Heritage Committee, a special edition of the World Heritage Journal (No. 106, July 2024) was produced in which WII-C2C's legacy and capabilities were shared to the publication's worldwide subscriber base.

2. WII-C2C at the 8th IUCN Asia Regional Conservation Forum Reimagining Conservation in Asia: A Nature-Positive Future 3rd – 5th September, 2024, Bangkok, Thailand

WII-C2C was represented by Mr. Anuranjan Roy, Lead – International Relations at the 8th IUCN Asia RCF held in Bangkok, focusing on the theme "Reimagining Conservation in Asia: A Nature Positive Future". The event featured key sessions on climate, biodiversity, and equity, along with youth and commission forums. WII-C2C engaged with IUCN leadership, ASEAN representatives,



Glimpse into the 8th IUCN Asia Regional



Director, WII, Shri Virendra R. Tiwari speaking during the WII-C2C IUCN RCF Side Event



youth leaders, and corporate partners, exploring future collaboration, regional outreach, and joint programmes. Recommendations included deeper involvement in IUCN commissions, youth networks, citizen science, and enhanced digital engagement through social media.

An event was organized by the IUCN Asia Regional Office (ARO) to highlight the significance of Asia Protected Area Partnership APAP's 10-year journey in advancing protected and conserved areas governance and management across Asia. Through a video on the occasion, Director WII, Sh. Virendra R Tiwari announced the new collaboration between WII-C2C, the Asian Protected Areas Partnership and the IUCN Asia office as a CBD Technical and Scientific Co-operation Centre.

3. Training-cum-Workshop on UNESCO Global Geoparks, Organized by UNESCO and the Geological Survey of India 23rd - 26th September, 2024, New Delhi

From 23 to 26 September 2024, UNESCO and the Geological Survey of India, Ministry of Mines, organized a Training-cum-Workshop on UNESCO Global Geoparks at UNESCO House, New Delhi. The workshop aimed to raise awareness about the UNESCO Global Geoparks programme (UGGP) in India and develop a strategic



Dr. Nehru Prabakaran speaking during the Training-cum-Workshop on UNESCO Global Geoparks



roadmap for identifying and establishing potential geopark sites across the country. It brought together stakeholders from government, academia, geology, tourism, and environmental sectors, along with international geopark managers. Over two days, national and international experts delivered technical sessions on geopark fundamentals, geoheritage and cultural heritage linkages, and global case studies. Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer of WII-C2C, participated in the workshop, and presented a talk on the role of protected area network in preserving the Geological heritage of India.

4. East-Asia Consultation Meeting on the Implementation of the Regional Framework Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific

16th - 17th October, 2024, Beijing, China

UNESCO's Regional Office for East Asia, in collaboration with the National Cultural Heritage Administration of China, organized a consultation meeting with East Asian countries to support the implementation of the 2023–2030 Regional Framework Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific.



Participants of the East-Asia Consultation Meeting on the Implementation of the Regional Framework Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific



WII-C2C's virtual presentation at the consultation meeting

The meeting aimed to establish a cohesive approach for the Action Plan, identify regional priorities for capacity building, and strengthen cooperation in World Heritage protection. Participants included delegates from China, DPR Korea, Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea, along with representatives from UNESCO, Advisory Bodies, UNESCO Category 2 Centres, UNESCO Chairs, and World Heritage experts and professionals. WII-C2C's virtual presentation at the consultation meeting Participants of the East-Asia Consultation Meeting on the Implementation of the Regional Framework Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific

WII-C2C participated virtually in the Meeting. Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, represented WII-C2C and contributed to the discussions by introducing the Centre's mandate, core capabilities, and ongoing initiatives. The meeting served as a platform to deliberate on strategies and innovations for the effective implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the region.

5. Expert Meeting on World Heritage and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

24th – 29th November, 2024,
Vilm Island, Germany



Attendees during the invited talk on the Bern Process to align MEA goals with the Global Biodiversity Framework targets



Attendees during the invited talk on the Bern Process to align MEA goals with the Global Biodiversity Framework targets

The Expert Meeting on World Heritage and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was held on Vilm Island, Germany, jointly organized by UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). The meeting aimed to explore synergies between the objectives of the World Heritage Convention and the GBF targets. Key discussions focused on aligning both frameworks, identifying actionable steps to enhance implementation, supporting the Joint Programme on biological and cultural diversity, and fostering collaboration with other UNESCO-designated sites.

As the only Natural Heritage-related Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, WII-C2C was invited to participate in the meeting. A total of 17 experts attended, representing various State Parties—including Bulgaria, Brazil, Belgium, Colombia, Norway, Switzerland, Kazakhstan, and Mexico—as well as key World Heritage-related organizations affiliated with UNESCO, such as IUCN, ICOMOS, ICCROM, and the World Heritage Centre from the Secretariat of the World Heritage Convention.

Inputs by Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer of WII-C2C, during the meeting

In addition to actively participating in various group exercises during the meeting Dr. Nehru have specifically provided following inputs during the meeting:

- Secretariat of each MEA's in general and World Heritage Convention in particular to engage with the Global funding mechanisms such as GEF to facilitate funding on priority areas that require immediate assistance to manage, protect, and restore biodiversity in the heritage sites.
- Strengthen and support existing organizations like WII-C2C to build capacity on World Heritage site management across the key biodiversity areas.
- The NBSAP of majority of the countries are yet not strongly linked with the World Heritage Convention or the GBF targets. This needs to be urgently addressed for the effective implementation of WHC and GBF.

- The site level management needs to be strengthened for achieving the GBF targets.
- Group discussions facilitated by the World Heritage Centre; UNESCO have identified six major gap areas.

6. Online Meeting on Decision 46 COM 7B.63 on Manas WLS 28th November, 2024

An online meeting was convened by Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) to follow up on actions required by Decision 46 COM 7B.63 made at the 46th World Heritage Committee held in New Delhi from 21st-31st July 2024 concerning the World Heritage Site of Manas Wildlife Sanctuary in India. The meeting had representatives from India, Bhutan, UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The meeting was held on Thursday, Nov 28, 2024, from 1400-1500 hrs IST. The aim of the meeting was to clarify the current status of the Mangdechhu hydroelectric project which lies upstream of the Indian World Heritage property of Manas WLS, monitoring of any impacts on the OUV of the property, and any mitigation measures that are being implemented to assure the OUV of the property. The Bhutanese representative stated that the project implemented the mitigation measures mentioned in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) of the project. UNESCO representatives assured the Bhutanese representative that this requested review of EIA and EMP reports was to evaluate the potential for such impacts, and not that the dam was already affecting the WHS downstream. Dr. R Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer, WII-C2C suggested that to obtain a fuller understanding of the impacts, immediate and long-term, of the dam, a field-based research initiative may be considered.

7. Online Meeting with UNESCO WHC on potential for Manas Boundary Extension 18th December, 2024

An online meeting was organized by the Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) with representatives of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to discuss on possibilities of boundary extension and further proceedings under various case scenarios such inclusion of all of Manas Tiger Reserve and larger adjacent and transboundary landscapes. It was suggested during the meeting that drawing on past experiences, that typically a modification of boundaries may be considered Minor as long as the OUV and criteria under which the site was originally nominated does not change. The meeting concluded that further consultations were needed with the UNESCO Natural Heritage team and IUCN for insights into this matter. This was to determine whether proposed modifications were likely to qualify within Minor boundary modifications requirements.



COLLABORATIONS

WII-C2C collaborated with a range of local, regional, national, and international institutions and organizations including Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.



Government of Rajasthan
Forest Department

Rajasthan Forest Department



PRINCIPAL CHIEF CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS
& HEAD OF THE FOREST FORCE
Government of Gujarat

Gujarat Forest Department



UTTAR PRADESH TOURISM

Directorate of Tourism, Uttar Pradesh



National Museum of Natural History



Kaziranga National Park



West Bengal Forest Department



Great Himalayan National Park



Uttarakhand Forest Department



Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy



Forest Research Institute (FRI)



Been There Doon That (BTDT)



Indian Institute of Heritage
(formerly National Museum Institute)



प्रत्नकीर्तिमपावृणु
Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)



Geological Survey of India (GSI)



Ministry of External Affairs –
Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (MEA-ITEC)



International Big Cat Alliance
(IBCA)



UNESCO Global Geoparks



International Union of
Conservation of Nature (IUCN)



unesco
World Heritage Convention
UNESCO
World Heritage Centre

WII-C2C TEAM



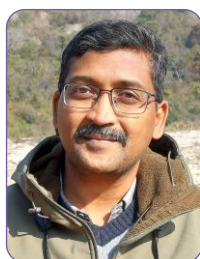
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