IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
Finalised on 09 November 2017

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Mount Wuyi. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Mount Wuyi

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
China
Inscribed in: 1999
Criteria:
(iii) (vi) (vii) (x)

Site description:
Mount Wuyi is the most outstanding area for biodiversity conservation in south-east China and a refuge for a large number of ancient, relict species, many of them endemic to China. The serene beauty of the dramatic gorges of the Nine Bend River, with its numerous temples and monasteries, many now in ruins, provided the setting for the development and spread of neo-Confucianism, which has been influential in the cultures of East Asia since the 11th century. In the 1st century B.C. a large administrative capital was built at nearby Chengcun by the Han dynasty rulers. Its massive walls enclose an archaeological site of great significance. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Good with some concerns

The conservation outlook of the Mount Wuyi World Heritage property is good with some concerns. Its values and attributes are in good condition and but there are several pressures or threats, including extensive modification of habitats to produce mao bamboo, localized impacts of domestic and agricultural pollution. Tourism infrastructure development is satisfactory at present but continuing growth creates a growing threat. The successful modification of the site boundary in 2017, although minor in area (c.7%) has high significance in improving the resilience and viability of the Mount Wuyi ecosystem and biodiversity. Some new habitats, many additional species and larger populations of iconic key species are now included within the boundaries of the site. The property enjoys adequate protection and the management regime is moderately effective with adequate administrative framework and comprehensive management plans. Staff capacity could be increased, especially for the newly added Jiangxi section.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Good
Trend: Stable

The current state of the site’s natural values and attributes can be rated as good and the trend is stable.
However, management authorities need to be vigilant in respect of pressures from growing numbers of people and village development in surrounding areas. The successful modification of the site boundary in 2017, although minor in area (c.7%) has high significance in improving the resilience and viability of the Mount Wuyi ecosystem and biodiversity. Some new habitats, many additional species and larger populations of iconic key species - black muntjac, Cabot's tragopan etc. are now included.

Overall THREATS

High Threat

There are a few current and potential threats to the property. Inside the property, agricultural activities by local residents, particularly bamboo cultivation in the nature reserve and tea cultivation in both nature reserve and scenic area, cause replacement of original vegetation and accelerated rates of soil erosion, and agricultural runoff along with domestic sewage and waste production has impacts on water quality. Tourism infrastructure development is a concern in the property as visitor numbers are very high and tourism is now the major economic mainstay of Wuyishan. Pressure from population growth and village expansion in surrounding areas means the buffer zone is very important for maintaining the integrity of the property. But the management has little control in the buffer zone.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Mostly Effective

Overall, the protection and management of the property can be assessed as mostly effective. However, there are concerns regarding the ability to control some impacts from activities of local residents and from tourism developments both inside and outside the property and concerns with regard to smooth cooperation between different management agencies responsible for the 5 different sections of the site. The property enjoys adequate legal protection and strong administrative support but law enforcement is weak and staff capacity could be improved. Management is guided by adequate master plans and underpinned by monitoring and research.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

- **One of the largest and best preserved areas of humid subtropical forest in the world**
  Criterion:(x)

  The property protects the largest intact forest wilderness in SE China, an area of great conservation significance. This encompasses Chinese subtropical forest and South Chinese rainforest, including 11 broad vegetation types and 55 discrete plant associations. The forests have high plant diversity and are a refuge for a host of ancient, relict plant species, many of which are endemic to China and are rare elsewhere in the country. There are 2,457 species of vascular plants have been recorded, of which 15 endangered species and 13 rare species are listed on the China Red List. The rich fauna includes 598 vertebrate species of which 49 are endemic to China, and 46 are listed under CITES. Rare and important species include Chinese tiger, clouded leopard, leopard, black muntjac, mainland serow, Cabot’s tragopan, Elliot´s pheasant and Chinese Giant Salamander. There are significant numbers of reptiles and amphibians, and 4,635 insect species are described so far. The area is also very important for migratory birds (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011).

- **Spectacular rocky, forest-covered mountains and riverscape**
  Criterion:(vii)

  The property comprises a rocky landscape of high peaks, 112 of which are higher than 1,000 m. Huanggang Mountain, its main peak, is 2,158m above

level, making it the highest peak in Southeast China. Rugged, sheer-sided monoliths and domed cliffs in red sandstone, craggy forested gorges, cave systems and winding streams create very attractive scenery (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011; China, 2017).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

High Threat

Overall, threats can be rated as low/ too high. They include the extensive swathes of mao bamboo in the nature reserve sections of the site and intense numbers of tourists using the Nine-bend stream scenic area sections of the site. There is a low threat from tea cultivation and mao bamboo production confined to soil erosion and loss of water quality and air pollution, with minor impacts from tourism infrastructure development in the adjacent service area.

▶ Water Pollution, Household Sewage/ Urban Waste Water

Low Threat
Inside site, localised(<5%)

Accelerated soil erosion accompanies tea cultivation, there is some water pollution from sewage and solid waste production and air pollution is ubiquitous in the area (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011).

▶ Forestry/ Wood production

High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)

There are 24,500 residents (2012), mostly subsistence farmers, but some are engaged in growing tea and in subsistence (bamboo) forestry. Managed Mao bamboo covers large swathes of the site replacing natural forest vegetation. Some agricultural runoff occurs and tea growing causes loss of soil and water

quality (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011; IUCN, 2006; China 2017).

► Tourism/ visitors/ recreation

Low Threat
Outside site

Annual tourist numbers increased markedly from around 450,000 in 1993 to c. 1 million by 2004 and currently at 3 million per year. While most tourism infrastructure is confined to a Tourist Service Centre just outside the property boundary, there is minor environmental impact inside the property (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011). Impacts of such large numbers of visitors are significant (IUCN 2006). Tourism is not encouraged on the Jiangxi extension to the site (China, 2017).

Potential Threats

Low Threat

Pressure from population growth and village expansion around the property is the only significant potential threat.

► Housing/ Urban Areas

Low Threat
Outside site

The buffer zone is important for shielding the property from rapid social and economic development in surrounding villages, which poses a threat to the rich resources of the property (WCMC, 2011; China, 2017).

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Some Concern

About 24.500 people in 14 villages lived in the property in 2012. Most are subsistence farmers. There are no reports of engagement with local people in the management of the property (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011).

There is inherent conflict in that protection of the site involves reducing the area used for bamboo and tea cultivation and a lack of alternative livelihood offered in compensation (IUCN 2006). The boundary modification of the property extending into Jiangxi adds two villages to the buffer zone but no additional residents inside the property (China,2017).

► Legal framework

Highly Effective

The property consists of several protected areas and there is strong local and national legislation protecting the property and its values. The entire Mount Wuyi property is owned by the People’s Republic of China. (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011; State Party of China, 2017). All areas of the enlarged World Heritage property are located within strict protection zones of national level protected areas, and are thus fully protected by national and provincial laws and regulations (State Party of China, 2017).

► Enforcement

Mostly Effective

Law enforcement is adequate in both provincial sections of the property.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Data Deficient

N.A.

► Management system

Mostly Effective

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage have the overall responsibility for the management of the property. The Steering Committee of Mount Wuyi World Heritage site oversees its overall management. The management of the newly added Jiangxi section falls under the Housing and Urban-Rural Development Department of Jiangxi province. The enlarged property is now jointly managed by the People’s Government of Jiangxi Province and Fujian Province through a coordination

committee (State Party of China, 2017).

▶ Management effectiveness

Mostly Effective

There are special administrative bodies with responsibility for protection and management o f the property (China, 1998). Management overall is considered effective. It is planned to start applying international management effectiveness assessment tools, such as METT, to assess it (State Party of China, 2017).

▶ Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Data Deficient

N.A.

▶ Boundaries

Highly Effective

The boundaries of the property and buffer zone are appropriate (WCMC, 2011). A boundary modification which was approved in 2017 adds a section (7,069 ha) of Mount Wuyi lying in Jiangxi Province to the large component part of the property, and reconfigures the buffer zone (IUCN. 2017).The northern sectors of the Mount Wuyi ecosystem, now added to the site, are different from the originally inscribed area as they contain different vegetation formations (including some deciduous broadleaf forest), with more tropical broadleaf forest, more rare wildlife and many additional species not found on the southern side of the mountain (State Party of China, 2017).

▶ Sustainable finance

Mostly Effective

The recently added areas of Mount Wuyi Jiangxi are reported to have stable funding (State Party of China, 2017); however, no up-to-date figures are available for the entire enlarged property.

▶ Staff training and development

Highly Effective

There were 275 staff in total, 145 professional and 130 management and maintenance reported at the time of inscription (China, 1998; WCMC, 2011).. More up-to-date figures are not available for the entire property. The newly added areas of Mount Wuyi Jiangxi section has 25 staff. Extensive training programmes are available (State Party of China, 2017).

► Sustainable use

Some Concern

Sustainable agriculture, subsistence bamboo forestry, and tourism operations. Commercial tea growing occurs also (China, 1998; WCMC, 2011).

► Education and interpretation programs

Highly Effective

Good programmes are reported. There are several cultural and natural museums and a great deal of literature is available for visitors (China, 1998; WCMC, 2011).

► Tourism and visitation management

Mostly Effective

Tourism is growing steadily. Rafting on the Nine-Bend river is among the most popular activities, as are cave visits. Most tourist facilities are located outside the property (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011). Visitation to the newly added Jiangxi section is limited and is only allowed by a special permit (State Party of China, 2017).

► Monitoring

Highly Effective

A comprehensive monitoring programme is in place which encompasses air and water quality monitoring and monitoring of vegetation cover, visitation levels and biodiversity. This is based on an advanced GIS-based system developed with funding from a GEF-supported project (State Party of China, 2017).

► Research

Highly Effective

There is a long history of biological research. There is also research on the sustainable development of the local community. Research results are used in policy review (China, 1998; WCMC, 2011).

Overall assessment of protection and management

Mostly Effective

Overall, the protection and management of the property can be assessed as mostly effective. However, there are concerns regarding the ability to control some impacts from activities of local residents and from tourism developments both inside and outside the property and concerns with regard to smooth cooperation between different management agencies responsible for the 5 different sections of the site. The property enjoys adequate legal protection and strong administrative support but law enforcement is weak and staff capacity could be improved. Management is guided by adequate master plans and underpinned by monitoring and research.

► Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site

Highly Effective

Some concern has been expressed about the growth of village population and tourism infrastructure development outside the property, which have the potential for impacting the property (WCMC, 2011). The original reserve was confined to Fujian Province but the northern side of the Mountain, only access road to Huangganshan peak and best natural habitat and wildlife are in fact outside Fujian in neighbouring Jiangxi Province. There was a great need for better coordination across the province divide but this has now been addressed as the site has been greatly strengthened now that the Jiangxi sections have been added to the site through the boundary modification process (State Party of China, 2017; IUCN Evaluation, 2017).

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ **One of the largest and best preserved areas of humid subtropical forest in the world**

Good
Trend:Improving

No significant detrimental changes are reported in the plant and animal populations. The integrity of the site has been further strengthened by adding the Jiangxi section which added new areas of the same ecosystem contiguous with the original site, but which are somewhat different in terms of vegetation and species composition (State Party of China, 2017).

▶ **Spectacular rocky, forest-covered mountains and riverscape**

Good
Trend:Stable

The scenic and aesthetic values and attributes of the property remain intact

Summary of the Values

▶ **Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values**

Good

Trend: Stable

The current state of the site’s natural values and attributes can be rated as good and the trend is stable.
However, management authorities need to be vigilant in respect of pressures from growing numbers of people and village development in surrounding areas. The successful modification of the site boundary in 2017, although minor in area (c.7%) has high significance in improving the resilience and viability of the Mount Wuyi ecosystem and biodiversity. Some new habitats, many additional species and larger populations of iconic key species - black muntjac, Cabot's tragopan etc. are now included.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

▶ **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

The property has become a popular tourist destination and visitor numbers are growing steadily. Tourism infrastructure is developed mainly outside the property boundaries.

▶ **History and tradition**

The property is of global significance for protection of archaeological sites and relics of great spiritual and cultural value.

▶ **Soil stabilisation, Water provision (importance for water quantity and quality)**

The property is important for protecting soil and water resources over a very large area.

▶ **History and tradition**

The property is of significance as the birthplace of Neo-Confucianism, which is a philosophy of international religious and political importance

Summary of benefits

The Mount Wuyi property provides benefit to the local and national communities and to the world especially in respect of commercial and recreational tourist opportunities, conservation of biodiversity and natural ecosystems, environmental services in soil and water conservation, and protection of sites, relics and other intangible values of great antiquity and

religious significance.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	N.A.		N.A.

Compilation of potential site needs

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
1	N.A.	Strengthen coordination between two provincial sections of the site	

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