IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2014 **(archived)**
Finalised on 13 November 2014

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

2014 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 over about 30% of the site area, localized impacts of domestic and agricultural pollution. Tourism infrastructure development is satisfactory at present but continuing growth creates a growing threat. 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. Small size and limit of site within Fujian leave the site vulnerable to climate change and not really preserving the full range of as much of the best natural habitat is outside the site in adjacent Jiangxi.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Low Concern
Trend: Stable

The current state of the site’s natural values and attributes can be rated as of low concern and the trend is stable. There is minor concern regarding the continuing impacts on soil and water from agricultural activities inside the property. Management authorities need to be vigilant in respect of pressures from growing numbers of people and village development in surrounding areas.

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 4 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 aahe largest intact forest wilderness in SE China of great conservation significance. This encompasses Chinese subtropical forest and South Chinese rainforest, including 11 broad vegetation types and 53 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 2,888 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 475 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 tragopanhinese black-backed 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).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

High Threat

Overall, threats can be rated as low/ to 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 fromare 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

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

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).

► 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).

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).

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).

► Legal framework and enforcement

Highly Effective

The property consists of four protected areas and there is strong local and national legislation protecting the property and its values (China, 1998; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011).

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Data Deficient

N.A.

► Management system

Some Concern

There is a master plan for each of the four protected areas of the property (China, 1998). However the protected areas are managed by different government agencies and there is insufficient harmony and overall coordination especially between the nature reserve and the scenic area (IUCN 2006).

► Management effectiveness

Mostly Effective

There are special administrative bodies with responsibility for protection and management o f the property (China, 1998).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Data Deficient

N.A.

► Boundaries

Mostly Effective

The boundaries of the property and buffer zone are appropriate (WCMC,

2011).

▶ Sustainable finance

Mostly Effective

Funding is not well shared so the scenic area has large earnings but the nature reserve faces fund shortages and difficulty maintaining museum and other facilities (IUCN Consultation, 2014).

▶ Staff training and development

Highly Effective

There are 275 staff in total, 145 professional and 130 management and maintenance. Extensive trainingprogrammes are available (China, 1998; WCMC, 2011).

▶ 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 interpretation

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).

▶ Monitoring

Highly Effective

A monitoring centre conducts programmes for monitoring environmental

conditions, and tourist use, among others (China, 1998).

► 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 4 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

Mostly 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 is in fact outside Fujian in neighbouring Jaingxi Province. There is a great need for better coordination across the province divide and the site would be greatly strengthened if Jiangxi sections could be added. Jiangxi Wuyishan NR management are reluctant to be included in the WH site out of fear of losing independence to Fujian province and pressures to open tourism. (IUCN Consultation, 2014).

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**

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

There is on-going accelerated soil erosion and some loss of air and water quality. No significant detrimental changes are reported in the plant and animal populations

▶ **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**

Low Concern

Trend: Stable

The current state of the site’s natural values and attributes can be rated as of low concern and the trend is stable. There is minor concern regarding the continuing impacts on soil and water from agricultural activities inside the property. Management authorities need to be vigilant in respect of pressures from growing numbers of people and village development in surrounding areas.

Additional information

Key conservation issues

▶ Climate change

Global

The site is relatively small to maintain resilience in face of climate change and could be much improved by extending site into Poyang Basin catchment of Jiangxi

▶ Tourism impacts

Local

Impacts emanate from a few thousand inhabitants that still cultivate tea, other crops and bamboo. Additional impacts growing from largescale tourism with currently 3 million visitors per year.

▶ Extensive mao bamboo cultivation

Local

Extensive mao bamboo management/cultivation within site replaces more than 30% of forest area including mid-altitude zone

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.

▶ **Is the protected area valued for its nature conservation?**

The property protects one of the largest natural forest wilderness areas in China and has great value for protection of biodiversity of global significance

▶ **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.	Proposed revision of existing boundaries and extension as serial site.	

REFERENCES

№	References
1	China, 1998. Mount Wuyi World Heritage nomination file.
2	ICOMOS, 1999. Evaluation of Mount Wuyi nomination.
3	IUCN, 2006. Field Assessment of Wuyishan World Heritage Site
4	SoOUV, 2012.
5	WCMC, 2012. Data Sheet for Mount Wuyi, China.