IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
Finalised on 10 November 2017

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

Mistaken Point

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Canada
Inscribed in: 2016
Criteria:
(viii)

Site description:

This fossil site is located at the south-eastern tip of the island of Newfoundland, in eastern Canada. It consists of a narrow, 17 km-long strip of rugged coastal cliffs. Of deep marine origin, these cliffs date to the Ediacaran Period (580-560 million years ago), representing the oldest known assemblages of large fossils anywhere. These fossils illustrate a watershed in the history of life on earth: the appearance of large, biologically complex organisms, after almost three billion years of micro-dominated evolution. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Good

The values of this recently inscribed property are robust and stable. Mistaken Point’s relative isolation and exposed windswept coastal location have protected it from past development. Current threats to the property are very low. Visitation is the only potential disturbance, but remains strictly controlled. Prospects of any significant development within or adjacent to the property are very limited and therefore overall potential threats are very low. The property is well managed, with highly effective legal and management systems in place.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Good
Trend: Stable

The values of the property are in good condition and stable, with almost no threats currently or potentially affecting them.

Overall THREATS

Very Low Threat

Mistaken Point’s relative isolation and exposed windswept coastal location have protected it from past development. Current threats to the property are very low. Visitation is the only potential disturbance, but remains strictly controlled and no incidences of successful thefts of fossils have occurred since 1987 when the area was declared a reserve. Prospects of any significant development within or adjacent to the property are very limited and therefore overall potential threats are very low.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Highly Effective

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FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

- **An outstanding record of a critical milestone in the history of life on Earth “when life got big”**
  Criterion:(viii)

  Mistaken Point fossils constitute an outstanding record of a critical milestone in the history of life on Earth, “when life got big” after almost three billion years of microbe-dominated evolution. The fossils range in age from 580 to 560 million years, the longest continuous record of Ediacara-type megafossils anywhere, and predate by more than 40 million years the Cambrian explosion, being the oldest fossil evidence of ancestors of most modern animal groups. Mistaken Point contains the world’s oldest-known examples of large, architecturally complex organisms, including soft-bodied, ancestral animals. Ecologically, Mistaken Point contains the oldest and most diverse examples of Ediacaran deep-sea communities in the world thus preserving rare insights into the ecology of these ancestral animals and the early colonization of the deep-sea floor. Other attributes contributing to the property’s Outstanding Universal Value include the world’s first examples of metazoan locomotion, exceptional potential for radiometric dating of the assemblages, and evidence for the role of ancient oxygen levels in the regional and global appearance of complex multicellular life (World Heritage Committee, 2016).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Very Low Threat

Current threats to the property are very low. Visitation is the only potential disturbance, but remains strictly controlled and no incidences of successful thefts of fossils have occurred since 1987 when the area was declared a reserve.

► Tourism/ visitors/ recreation

Very Low Threat
Inside site, localised(<5%)

Visitation to the property is limited and is strictly controlled. No successful fossil thefts have occurred since the property was designated as an ecological reserve in 1987 (World Heritage Committee, 2016). The remoteness of the area limit the number of tourists who are mainly geotourists or educational groups (IUCN, 2016).

Potential Threats

Very Low Threat

Prospects of any significant development within or adjacent to the property are very limited and therefore overall potential threats are very low.

► Housing/ Urban Areas, Tourism/ Recreation Areas

Very Low Threat
Outside site

Mistaken Point’s relative isolation and exposed windswept coastal location have protected it from past development (IUCN, 2016). There are no permanent inhabitants within the property or its buffer zone and prospects

for any development within the property or adjacent to it are very limited (World Heritage Committee, 2016).

► Avalanches/ Landslides, Erosion and Siltation/ Deposition

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

The main potential threat to the property stems from the impact of natural processes, such as surface erosion, wave erosion, rock falls and landslides. High energy storm waves constitute the biggest potential threat but the rate of erosion is very slow (IUCN, 2016).

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Highly Effective

Relationship with local communities is positive with various community initiatives empowering stakeholders in active management of the property. Various mechanisms for stakeholder engagement are in place including the Mistaken Point Ambassador Inc (MPAI); Scientific Advisory Committee; Cape Race – Portugal Cove South Heritage Inc.; Edge of Avalon Interpretive Centre; Reserve Interpreters Team, and a Fossil Guardians Team (IUCN, 2016).

► Legal framework

Highly Effective

The area of the property is provincial Crown lands administered by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Almost all of the property lies within the boundaries of Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve and falls under the jurisdiction of the Newfoundland and Labrador Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act. Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve is governed by the Fossil Ecological Reserve Regulations. The remaining 0,03% of the property is designated as a Crown Lands Reserve under the Lands Act. Designation under Lands Act allows
development of trail infrastructure to enhance visitor safety and reduce

ecological impacts (Nomination dossier, 2016).

▶ Enforcement

Highly Effective

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▶ Integration into regional and national planning systems

Highly Effective

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▶ Management system

Highly Effective

99,97%l of the property lies within the boundaries of Mistaken Point Ecological
Reserve (Nomination dossier, 2016).

▶ Management effectiveness

Highly Effective

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▶ Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Data Deficient

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▶ Boundaries

Highly Effective

The boundaries of the property encompass all attributes of its Outstanding Universal Value (IUCN, 2016). All of the key fossils and strata are within the property. The width of the property and its buffer zone, which in large part corresponds to the Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve, are sufficient to absorb the very gradual, long-term retreat of the coastline due to natural erosion (World Heritage Committee, 2016).

► Sustainable finance

Mostly Effective

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► Staff training and development

Mostly Effective

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► Sustainable use

Highly Effective

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► Education and interpretation programs

Mostly Effective

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► Tourism and visitation management

Highly Effective

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► Monitoring

Mostly Effective

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► Research

Mostly Effective

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Overall assessment of protection and management

Highly Effective

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▶ **Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site**
Highly Effective

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State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ **An outstanding record of a critical milestone in the history of life on Earth “when life got big”**
Good
Trend:Stable

The values of the property are in good condition and stable, with almost no threats currently or potentially affecting them (IUCN, 2016).

Summary of the Values

▶ **Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values**
Good
Trend: Stable

The values of the property are in good condition and stable, with almost no threats currently or potentially affecting them.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► Importance for research, Contribution to education

to add

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	Data deficient		Data deficient

REFERENCES

№	References
1	IUCN. (2016). World Heritage Nomination – IUCN Technical Evaluation, Mistaken Point (Canada). In: IUCN World Heritage Evaluations 2016, IUCN Evaluations of nominations of natural and mixed properties to the World Heritage List. WHC/16/40.COM/INF.8B2. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.