Mistaken Point

2017 Conservation Outlook Assessment

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

Finalised on 10 Nov 2017

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
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 and enforcement

**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

► Integration into regional and national planning systems
Highly Effective

► Management system
Highly Effective

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

► Management effectiveness
Highly Effective

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations
Data Deficient

► 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

Staff training and development
   Mostly Effective

Sustainable use
   Highly Effective

Education and interpretation programs
   Mostly Effective

Tourism and interpretation
   Highly Effective

Monitoring
   Mostly Effective

Research
   Mostly Effective

Overall assessment of protection and management
   Highly Effective
Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site

Highly Effective

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

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