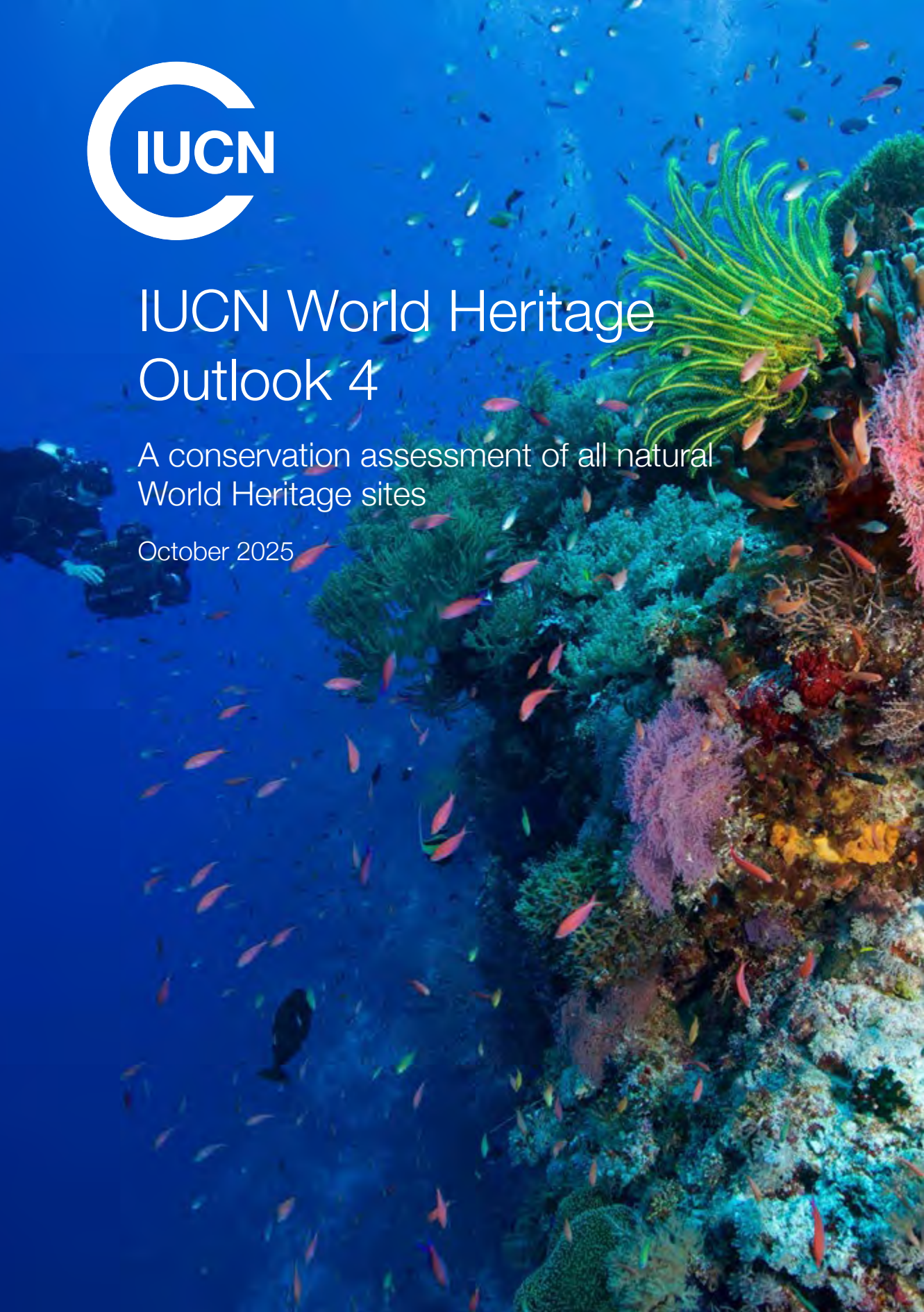

IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4

A conservation assessment of all natural World Heritage sites

October 2025

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together. Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,400 Member organisations and around 17,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous peoples organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development. Working with many partners and supporters, IUCN implements a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects worldwide. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being.

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IUCN and World Heritage

IUCN is the official advisory body on nature to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. IUCN brings together knowledge across IUCN's Commissions, especially the World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN-WCPA) and the Species Survival Commission (IUCN-SSC), IUCN Members and a range of partners, to evaluate new sites nominated to the World Heritage List, monitors the conservation of listed sites, and promotes the World Heritage Convention as a leading global instrument for conservation. The IUCN World Heritage Team coordinates this work and provides support, advice and training to site managers, governments, scientists and local communities.

IUCN also initiates innovative ways to enhance the role of the World Heritage Convention in protecting the planet's biodiversity and natural heritage, and in positioning the worlds' most iconic places as exemplars of nature-based solutions to global challenges.

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worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/

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A conservation assessment of all natural World Heritage sites

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Foreword by the IUCN Director General

This year marks a pivotal moment in our collective journey to stay on track toward achieving global biodiversity targets. The closely intertwined challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss are transforming the natural world, challenging our collective capacity to act and safeguard the ecosystems that sustain life. Meeting these challenges requires urgent, coordinated action to protect what matters most – life on this precious planet.

Natural World Heritage sites play a crucial role in helping to address global challenges and safeguard nature for all. Covering less than one percent of the planet yet harbouring more than 20% of mapped global species richness, they serve as vital refuges for elephants, tigers, great apes and many other iconic species. Collectively, such sites provide a protective home for over 20,000 globally threatened species. They sustain people's well-being by protecting water sources, buffering against climate impacts, supporting livelihoods and preserving cultural values. The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* offers a comprehensive assessment of how these sites are faring and highlights the urgent actions required to ensure their long-term protection, in turn securing critical biodiversity for future generations.

This edition comes at an important moment. The world has agreed to halt biodiversity loss through the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention is uniquely placed to meet these challenges by bridging the gap between nature and culture, and protecting places with extraordinary biodiversity, functional habitats and high ecosystem integrity. These sites also show us where conservation is working – and where it is needed most. By analysing the conservation outlook of natural and mixed World Heritage sites over the past ten years, the report presents a litmus test of conservation action more broadly. To achieve the ambitious targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, it is essential that some of the most outstanding places on earth are equitably and effectively managed and protected.

IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4 assesses 271 natural and mixed World Heritage sites. Complementing the official monitoring processes under the World Heritage Convention, the World Heritage Outlook offers the most in-depth analyses of threats facing natural World Heritage around the world and their protection and management status. It is based on the knowledge of hundreds of experts, site managers and partners. A key finding is that almost 40% of sites face conservation concerns, with climate change continuing to be the most prevalent threat. Although there is room for optimism. As the report shows, there are many examples of strong and effective protection of sites across the world, where lessons and best-practices can be learnt and shared. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook helps us learn from these successes and challenges. One powerful example is the way these sites are addressing climate resilience – an issue that will only grow in importance.

This report is more than a health check. It is a guide for action. It shows us how to strengthen protection, involve Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and ensure that natural World Heritage continues to benefit both people and planet. It highlights how we can make better decisions - through strong policies, smart investments and shared responsibility – to safeguard these irreplaceable places. The findings in *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* remind us both of what is at stake and of what is possible when we act together.

Dr. Grethel Aguilar
IUCN Director General

Foreword by the World Commission on Protected Areas and Species Survival Commission

We are at an inflection point. Decisions being made today by governments, by corporate leaders, and by consumers will determine whether we can reverse global biodiversity loss in this critical decade - or whether we experience a catastrophic collapse of our biosphere.

To reverse biodiversity loss, we must protect what remains and restore what has been degraded. Natural heritage is our blueprint for this restoration. World Heritage sites are living memory, living culture, living laboratories. They are unique and irreplaceable visions of a future for protected and conserved areas around the world, one where humans do in fact live in harmony with biodiversity.

The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* contains hopeful messages. Several World Heritage properties have improved their conservation status by identifying and mitigating the urgent threats to the outstanding universal value — unique or vulnerable species, fragile or rare ecosystems, and natural phenomena — contained within their boundaries. Often, they have done this through strengthened cooperation with Indigenous Peoples and other rights holders living within and around these sites.

At the same time, the existing threats - such as climate change, which emerged in the previous Outlook as the preeminent threat to World Heritage sites globally - continue to be existential for some properties and the species and natural phenomena within them. Persistent threats from climate change, overexploitation, unregulated tourism, and infrastructure remain. In addition, we are now facing a growing crisis of political will. Amid geopolitical turbulence, some decision-makers are deprioritizing the management and conservation of our natural heritage despite its critical support to life on Earth.

We must recall that natural heritage is not only linked to our individual and national identities, but also that the interconnectedness of these ecosystems binds us together in a common journey towards planetary stability.

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook is a shining example of collaboration. We hope that you will see within this sleek report the complex mechanics of collaboration between the constituent parts of IUCN. Hundreds of experts, including but not limited to those from the IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and Species Survival Commission (SSC), have provided expert technical analysis that underpins this analysis. Together, we are more than the sum of our parts.

The same logic underpins our collective efforts to safeguard natural world heritage. We hope that the value of *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* will extend far beyond news headlines. This Outlook provides some of the clearest information to date on the challenges facing our most spectacular natural heritage, but it also provides a blueprint for its recovery.

We hope these lessons will inform global reviews of implementation of biodiversity-related conventions, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and its global target to conserve at least 30% of land and sea areas by 2030. There is so much to learn from these inspiring places and the people who have dedicated their lives to their conservation; now it is time to act.

Madhu Rao
Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

Alfred DeGemmis
Vice-Chair, World Heritage, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

Jon Paul Rodriguez
Chair, IUCN Species Survival Commission

Executive summary

This report, *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4*, builds on four cycles of Conservation Outlook Assessments undertaken since 2014. It presents the main results for 2025, but also some longer-term trends based on the four data sets now available. It provides an indicator of the effectiveness of protected and conserved areas at a time when the international community seeks to measure progress towards global biodiversity and climate targets, especially the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook assesses the conservation prospects of all World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values. It focuses on the values for which sites are inscribed, threats to these values, and the effectiveness of protection and management. These sites are globally recognised as some of the most significant natural areas on Earth and their conservation must meet the high standards of the World Heritage Convention. The ability to conserve these sites is a litmus test for the broader success of conservation worldwide. Securing a positive outlook for these sites is therefore a priority, as expressed in the Promise of Sydney adopted at IUCN's World Parks Congress in 2014.

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook includes two equally-important components: a website (https://worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org) providing detailed Conservation Outlook Assessments for each site, and a report, summarising global and regional results. Key findings of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* are presented below. Readers are encouraged to explore the online assessments to discover the full depth of information and stories of conservation on the ground.

The conservation outlook of sites is decreasing

The percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook has, for the first time, decreased significantly. Of the 228 sites assessed since 2014, c. 63% of sites had a positive outlook in 2014, 2017 and 2020, however, the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* shows that in 2025 only 57% of these sites have a positive conservation outlook.

Between 2014 and 2025, the conservation outlook of 70 sites changed at least once, which is 30% of sites assessed since the launch of IUCN World Heritage Outlook: 29 improved, 40 declined, and one changed to "data deficient". While for many sites there has been a consistent trend, for a few sites there has been a fluctuation in the conservation outlook (both increases and decreases).

The trend observed in 2020 of more sites declining than improving has continued into 2025. The most notable shift has been in the number of sites (14) changing their outlook from "good with some concerns" to "significant concern". Although four sites have been removed from the critical category, three new sites have been added: Białowieża Forest (Belarus, Poland), Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region (Albania, North Macedonia), and The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities (Iraq).

Biodiversity values continue to be most at risk

The situation has continued to worsen for values recognised under World Heritage selection criterion (x), which relates to threatened biodiversity, with only 52% of these values assessed to be in a good state or of low concern in 2025, compared to 58% in 2020, 62% in 2017 and 71% in 2014.

Climate change remains the top threat

Climate change remains the greatest current threat to natural World Heritage globally. For 43% of all sites (117) climate change is a high or very high threat. Climate change also remains the fastest growing current threat. For the 228 sites assessed since 2014, there has been an increase of 31 sites (14%) reporting climate change as a high or very high threat between 2020 and 2025.

This edition of the World Heritage Outlook assessed for the first time the local action being taken on climate. It finds that less than half the sites have mostly or highly effective climate action (42%), while in 27% of sites climate action was rated as of some or serious concern. This result highlights that further efforts are needed to enhance climate action both at the site level and globally.

Invasive alien species and diseases are of great concern

Invasive alien species are again the second highest current threat globally, and pathogens causing plant and animal diseases are the second fastest growing threat in 2025. While in 2020 only two sites reported a high or very high threat from pathogens, this increased to 19 sites in 2025, when focussing on the 228 sites assessed since 2014. The cause-and-effect relationship with climate change needs to be better understood and planned for, to tackle impacts on both natural World Heritage sites and human wellbeing. Predicting how invasive alien species and pathogens will respond under potential climate change scenarios is difficult but essential to develop effective prevention, control, and restoration strategies.

Tourism activities and infrastructure development continue to impact World Heritage

There has been an increase in the number of sites affected by infrastructure development (residential areas, recreation and tourism areas, commercial and industrial areas) and recreational activities. Focussing on all assessed sites, there has been a 4% increase since 2020 in the percentages of sites reporting tourism activities or tourism areas as a high or very high threat. For residential areas there has been a 5% increase and for commercial and industrial areas a 3% increase compared to 2020.

Sustainable tourism practices and best practice environmental impact assessment processes are essential to protect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of sites from potential negative impacts of infrastructure developments and tourism activities.

There are important regional variations to consider

While the top three current threats globally remain the same since 2017, significant regional differences were observed in 2025. Hunting remains the greatest current threat in Africa (as in 2020), climate change is the greatest threat in Asia and Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, water pollution has become the top current threat in the Arab States and recreational activities are now the greatest threat to natural World Heritage sites in South America. Therefore, while site-level action is important, there is potential for regional efforts to be more impactful by focussing action and resources on the most significant regional threats.

Management effectiveness remains of concern

Half of all sites assessed in 2025 (50%) have mostly or highly effective protection and management, as was the case in 2020. When focussing on the 228 sites assessed since 2014, a positive finding is that there has been a consistent reduction in the percentage of sites where management is assessed as of serious concern (13% in 2014, 11% in 2017, 10% in 2020 and 8% in 2025). However, there has also been a consistent increase in the percentage of sites where management is assessed as of some concern (33% in 2014, 40% in 2017, 41% in 2020 and 43% in 2025). Furthermore, the percentage of sites where management has been assessed as highly effective has halved between 2020 and 2025 (from 10% in 2020 to 5% in 2025). This suggests a concerning tendency towards more mediocre management in many World Heritage sites.

It is alarming that critical aspects of protection and management remain of serious concern across many natural sites. Notably, sustainable finance continues to be the biggest management effectiveness issue, assessed most frequently as of serious concern in 2017, 2020 and 2025 (15% of all sites across all three cycles).This signals that more commitment is needed to adequately resource the protection and management of the world's most precious and irreplaceable places.

Effective action beyond site boundaries is essential

The effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats from outside the World Heritage site boundaries is falling short of what is required. In 2025, management effectiveness in addressing threats outside site boundaries was of some or serious concern for 62% of sites. When focussing on the 228 sites assessed since 2014, this issue has increased, from 61% of sites with concerns in 2020, to 65% in 2025.

With several of the greatest threats originating from outside site boundaries, stronger regional, national and global action is needed. Effective site management alone is not sufficient to ensure a positive conservation outlook for natural World Heritage.

An improved outlook remains possible

A new global ambition for World Heritage to inspire success and investment in conservation is needed, building on positive results recognised in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook. Comparing the outlook of sites in 2014 and in 2025, 15 sites with previous concerns progressed to the achievement of a good outlook. The conservation outlook for 14 sites moved from significant concern to good with some concerns and one from critical to good with some concerns.

Comoé National Park in Côte d'Ivoire, is a flagship example, being removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger due to concerted efforts by the State Party and numerous partners to enhance anti-poaching measures, manage livestock grazing, and meaningfully engage local communities in decision-making processes. Between 2020 and 2025 four sites in West and Central Africa saw an improvement in their conservation outlook from critical to significant concern. Enhanced anti-poaching efforts, strengthened relationships with local communities and the stabilisation of key animal populations are leading to an improved outlook in Dja Faunal Reserve (Cameroon), Salonga National Park, Garamba National Park (both Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Niokolo-Koba National Park (Senegal), demonstrating remarkable resilience in the face of long-term challenges.

These achievements demonstrate that concerted local action can effectively improve the conservation outlook of World Heritage sites. However, global partnerships and regional commitments are essential to maintain such positive developments, scale up action in other sites and inspire further success stories in the face of growing challenges.

Acknowledgements

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook is so much more than a report and a website. It is a united endeavour, bringing together global and local knowledge, to improve the conservation outlook of natural World Heritage. Hundreds of experts have contributed to the Conservation Outlook Assessments and continue to support follow-up action at the site level. We are extremely grateful to each and every person that has engaged in the Outlook process, whether as an assessor, reviewer or knowledge holder.

We are thankful for the extensive IUCN network that has supported the consultation and review processes, especially the members of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). The input from IUCN's regional and country offices has been invaluable in ensuring the Conservation Outlook Assessments accurately reflect the current context and to develop the regional chapters in this report. Furthermore, IUCN sincerely thanks the site managers and management authorities who provided extensive feedback to comprehensively updated site assessments and from whom we have learned so much. This report and the Conservation Outlook Assessments scratch only the surface of the incredible work being done daily to protect some of the world's most incredible places.

We give special thanks to IUCN World Heritage Outlook Partners – currently the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), BirdLife International, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), Fauna & Flora, Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), World Heritage Watch, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute (BMWHI) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) – who have committed to addressing the conservation issues in natural World Heritage sites.

We also thank our colleagues in the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM for their collaboration in the preparation of State of Conservation documentation for the World Heritage Committee, which provides an important information base for many sites that are discussed in this report.

We thank the many individuals who have provided advice and expertise on shaping the IUCN World Heritage Outlook methodology over the last decade. Furthermore, the contribution of the IUCN Regional Review Groups and the IUCN World Heritage Panel has been instrumental in ensuring quality and consistency across all assessments. We also thank the reviewers of this report, Barbara Engels and Çigdem Adem, for bringing their respective expertise and oversight to this publication.

IUCN thanks all members of the IUCN World Heritage Team for their work in drawing together the Conservation Outlook Assessments, with special thanks to Matilde Montagna and Mizuki Murai. The support from our partner Eau de Web has been essential to allow the hundreds of assessors, reviewers and other contributors to complete the Conservation Outlook Assessments effectively online. The assistance from Eleanor Winter to develop the high-quality regional maps is also greatly appreciated.

IUCN gives special mention and thanks to Lisa Aylett, IUCN World Heritage Outlook Coordinator, whose commitment in managing each and every element of this 2025 Outlook assessment process is sincerely appreciated.

Finally, IUCN acknowledges with sincere thanks the Korea Heritage Service and the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, whose generous financial support has made the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* possible. This publication has also been produced with support of the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) through the BIOPAMA Programme, along with support from the Ministry of the Overseas (France) under the France-IUCN Partnership. The contents of this publication do not reflect the views of these partners.

Introduction

UNESCO World Heritage sites enjoy the highest level of international recognition under the 1972 World Heritage Convention. These are places of such exceptional value that their protection transcends national boundaries, cultures and generations. Natural World Heritage sites therefore serve as a litmus test for how effectively the global community can safeguard nature in pursuit of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) targets by 2030.

Following the 2025 World Heritage Committee meeting, the World Heritage List includes 1,248 sites. Of these, 276 are recognised for their nature conservation values (235 natural and 41 mixed sites), referred to as natural World Heritage sites throughout this report. Although they represent only 8% of the total surface area of terrestrial and marine protected areas recognised by the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), they include some of the most important places for nature.

While natural World Heritage sites make up less than 1% of the Earth's surface, they harbour more than 20% of mapped global species richness. This includes over 75,000 species of plants, and over 30,000 species of mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles and amphibians. They are estimated to protect over 20,000 globally threatened species and are home to some of the last individuals of many iconic species (UNESCO and IUCN, 2023). These sites make a substantial contribution to global biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, climate change solutions, and health.

Yet the extraordinary values found in World Heritage sites are increasingly threatened by climate change and anthropogenic pressures including unsustainable tourism, agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, poaching, overexploitation of resources, pollution and the introduction of invasive alien species. These challenges are manifested in World Heritage sites and require dedicated collective action across governments, the public and private sector, and by embracing the stewardship of Indigenous peoples and local communities, to ensure the continued protection of these globally important areas.

Natural World Heritage sites also act as a lens through which to view successes and gaps in global conservation. They contribute to nearly all 23 KM-GBF targets and offer a barometer of international conservation effectiveness. Monitoring them can help align national biodiversity strategies, climate action and development plans, and guide scaling up of conservation across the more than 3,500 Internationally Designated Areas, many of which overlap with World Heritage sites.

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook complements the Convention's statutory monitoring mechanisms by providing an independent, global, snapshot evaluation of all natural World Heritage sites — in 2014, 2017, 2020 and now 2025. Produced by IUCN, it supports World Heritage site managers and management authorities, governments, non-governmental organisations, scientific institutions and Indigenous Peoples' Organisations.

The main objectives of the IUCN World Heritage Outlook are to:

- Track the state of conservation of all World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values over time and raise awareness of their importance.
- Recognise well-managed sites for their conservation efforts and encourage the transfer of good management practices between sites.
- Identify the most pressing conservation issues affecting World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values and the actions needed to remedy those issues.
- Understand and communicate the benefits of World Heritage sites for local and global communities, for example in providing livelihoods and sustaining healthy ecosystems.

This report considers all 271 natural World Heritage sites that were included on the World Heritage List as of January 2025. In addition, with four cycles of data over ten years, the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* offers a unique opportunity to identify evolving trends in the global conservation status of natural World Heritage, focussed on the trends seen in the 228 sites that were assessed since 2014. It serves as a tool to track progress towards achieving better conservation outcomes for World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values over time. Results from the IUCN World Heritage Outlook are already contributing to action on the ground and improving conservation outcomes. The aim is to continue inspiring targeted and collective actions to protect the outstanding values of natural World Heritage sites and optimise their contribution to human well-being.

This report provides an overview of the main conservation issues that natural World Heritage sites are facing, and the trends and changes observed over the last decade. It presents an inventory of sites under each conservation outlook rating category – good, good with some concerns, significant concern and critical – and reveals global results on the state of natural values, threats and protection and management. Finally, it breaks down the results across different regions of the world.

Beyond the global and regional trends presented in this report, each individual Conservation Outlook Assessment, accessible at https://worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org provides a unique insight into the challenges, opportunities, successes and benefits of conserving these special places.

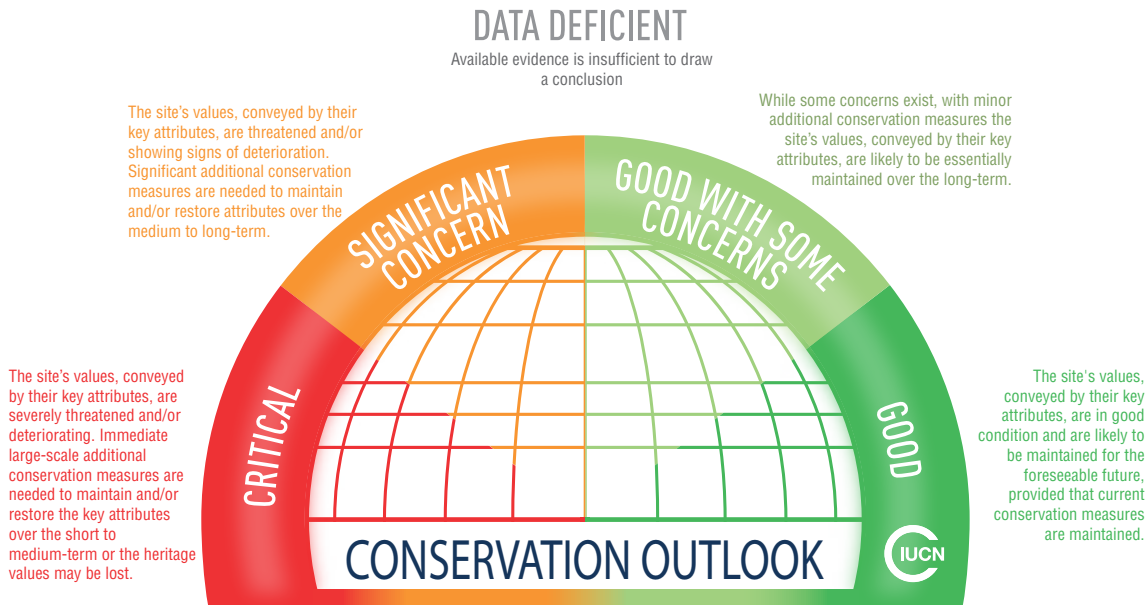
Methodology

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook is unique in its assessment of all World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values simultaneously, at regular intervals (every 3-5 years). It is the only global assessment of natural World Heritage at a single point in time. The assessment includes both natural and mixed (natural and cultural) World Heritage sites. While components of the methodology have evolved with each subsequent cycle, the underlying assessment framework has remained the same since 2014, thereby allowing for consistency and comparability of data between cycles.

Much more than a report, the IUCN World Heritage Outlook consists of individual Conservation Outlook Assessments prepared for each natural World Heritage site, available online at https://worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org. The Conservation Outlook Assessments provide a projection of whether a site is likely to maintain its World Heritage values and associated key attributes over time based on the assessment of:

- The current state and trend of values conveyed by their key attributes
- The threats affecting those values conveyed by their key attributes
- The effectiveness of protection and management

Based on the assessment of these elements, the overall conservation outlook for a particular site is assessed against four rating categories. Where there is insufficient data to draw a conclusion, a site may be categorised as "data deficient". The Conservation Outlook Assessments also compile additional information on the specific benefits that each site provides, and on active projects in and around the site; however, these data do not influence the rating.



The standardised methodology for the Conservation Outlook Assessments was developed by IUCN in 2011 by an IUCN-led technical advisory group. The methodology draws on a wide range of existing methodologies for protected area assessments, including:

- Methodologies and frameworks for management effectiveness of protected areas, developed by IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (Hockings et al., 2006)
- Lessons learned from the assessment framework developed for the Great Barrier Reef Outlook report (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, 2009)
- The Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkits (Hockings et al., 2008; UNESCO et al., 2023)
- The Managing Natural World Heritage Manual (Stolton et al., 2012)
- The World Heritage Periodic Reporting questionnaire 2018-2024 (Third Cycle) (UNESCO, 2024)
- The IUCN Green List Standard for Protected and Conserved Areas (IUCN, n.d.).

Following the 2020 assessment cycle, the methodology was further refined by IUCN based on feedback collected during the assessment cycle and the results of the review by the Methodology Review Group. Key changes since the last cycle include the addition of the section "Other Important Values", amendments to the threat categories to align with updates to the IUCN-CMP threat taxonomy and restructuring and extension of the protection and management section to better align with the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard at the level of criteria (Box 1). Additionally, in this cycle, overlaps of World Heritage sites with other international designations, specifically Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks, are captured and evaluated (see Box 2 for an example of a MIDA site). Further details on these new elements are included throughout this report.

All Conservation Outlook Assessments are desk-based, and no new site visits are undertaken. The assessments are completed by experts based on their own knowledge of a site and on information from sources including, but not limited to: IUCN's knowledge base on natural World Heritage sites; official and publicly available documents on the UNESCO World Heritage Centre's website (such as State of Conservation reports, mission reports, periodic reports); existing management effectiveness evaluations and other relevant management documents; scientific articles; and information gathered through consultations with a wide range of knowledge-holders, including site managers and management authorities.

Each type of information source has its strengths and limitations in terms of depth, coverage and quality. Assessments help identify information gaps which, if filled, will aid future assessments. The source information for each Conservation Outlook Assessment is listed on the IUCN World Heritage Outlook website.

The Conservation Outlook Assessments undertaken in 2014 established a baseline for monitoring the conservation outlook of sites over time, with the 2017 and 2020 updates providing opportunities for comparison. The 2025 edition represents the third update of assessments and allows for the identification of longer-term trends and changes in the conservation outlook of natural World Heritage sites since 2014. This report focuses predominantly on recent changes (i.e. between 2020 and 2025); however, an overview of global trends since 2014 is provided for values, threats, protection and management, and overall conservation outlook of sites. This offers valuable insights into the role of natural World Heritage sites in achieving global biodiversity and climate-related goals and informs action to further strengthen their contribution.

Box 1. IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard

IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard

The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard (often referred to as the IUCN Green List Standard) is recognised as one of the complementary indicators within the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Monitoring Framework (Decision CBD/COP/DEC/16/31, 2025). The Standard is also the basis for the IUCN Green List that recognises effective conservation practice and outcomes.

A crosswalk (UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2022) conducted to clarify the links between protected area management effectiveness (PAME) and governance assessment tools, and the IUCN Green List Standard utilised seven commonly used assessment methods, including the IUCN World Heritage Outlook. This mapping exercise identified the IUCN World Heritage Outlook to be well aligned with the IUCN Green List Standard criteria and indicators for those concerning effective management, and sound design and planning, whilst differences existed for those concerning successful conservation outcomes and good governance.

As a result, for the development of *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4*, the methodology was further updated to improve the alignment with the IUCN Green List Standard. Specific protection and management sub-categories were further refined to include key aspects of the IUCN Green List process. In this way it is planned that the data included within the IUCN World Heritage Outlook can contribute directly to World Heritage sites that are involved in the IUCN Green List.

The IUCN Green List and the IUCN World Heritage Outlook serve different purposes however, and it is possible that a site may be included on the IUCN Green List, while it may not have a positive conservation outlook, depending on the full assessment of all subcategories of protection and management along with the threats and state and trend of values. This is for example relevant for some serial World Heritage sites like the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe. While the Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona and Campigna National Park was included on the IUCN Green List in 2021, it represents one component part of a total 93 component parts in 18 countries. The conservation outlook rating is based on the assessment of threats, protection and management and values across all component parts.

Consultation process

The consultation process is essential to ensure that Conservation Outlook Assessments are as accurate and comprehensive as possible, and capture the most up-to-date information, focussing on the most pressing issues.

A range of knowledge-holders are invited to take part in the consultation process. They typically include:

- IUCN Commission members, particularly those of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and Species Survival Commission (SSC)
- IUCN Secretariat, which includes offices in more than 40 countries and Member organisations and State Members in more than 160 countries
- Site managers, management authorities and other stakeholders involved in the management of sites (including IUCN Member organisations, government authorities, non-governmental organisations, community groups, and international agencies)
- Researchers and the scientific community, along with other knowledge-holders

Main steps in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook consultation process

Each assessment undergoes several internal and external reviews before finalisation. Draft assessments, prepared by assessors (independent experts) selected for their knowledge of a site, are first reviewed internally to verify that they meet the required standards. Inputs are then sought from external peer reviewers. Following this, all assessments are reviewed by IUCN's operational regions. These Regional Review Groups consist of the IUCN WCPA Regional Vice-Chairs and IUCN SSC Regional Vice-Chairs, representatives of the IUCN regional offices, and regional specialists for World Heritage. A final draft is then prepared for each Conservation Outlook Assessment, incorporating feedback from site managers and management authorities. The IUCN World Heritage Panel, composed of conservation experts specialised in fields relevant to the World Heritage process, provides final approval of all completed assessments.

All assessments are publicly available online on https://worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org and comments are welcome at any time through the online feedback form. Full details of the Conservation Outlook Assessment methodology are also available on the website. This report provides a global and regional overview of 271 World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values. It does not include the sites inscribed by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session in July 2025 due to the timelines for the extensive consultation and review process.

Box 2. Effectively managing Multi-Internationally Designated Areas

Effectively managing Multi-Internationally Designated Areas (MIDAs)

By the Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA), in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea

Internationally Designated Areas (IDAs), including World Heritage sites, UNESCO Global Geoparks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, Ramsar sites, and FAO Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), play an important role in advancing global conservation. As the number of internationally designated areas grows, overlaps between multiple designations (so-called Multi-Internationally Designated Areas or MIDAs) are becoming increasingly common—over half of all natural World Heritage sites overlap with at least one other designation. While MIDAs share the overall goal of conservation, each instrument has distinct purposes and management requirements. This diversity calls for a nuanced, tailored approach to managing overlapping areas.

Jeju Island (Republic of Korea) exemplifies this complexity and opportunity. It holds multiple IDAs, including a natural World Heritage site, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO Global Geopark, five Ramsar sites and two GIAHS, and uniquely combines these with UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage and Memory of the World (MoW) recognitions. People in Jeju harmoniously coexist with their outstanding natural environment, generating diverse socio-economic benefits through ecotourism and international collaboration. To ensure effective harmonious management, the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province has established the World Heritage Headquarter of Jeju, a unified institutional mechanism coordinating the objectives and operations across various designations. These strategic governance and management arrangements position Jeju as a global model of successful MIDA governance.

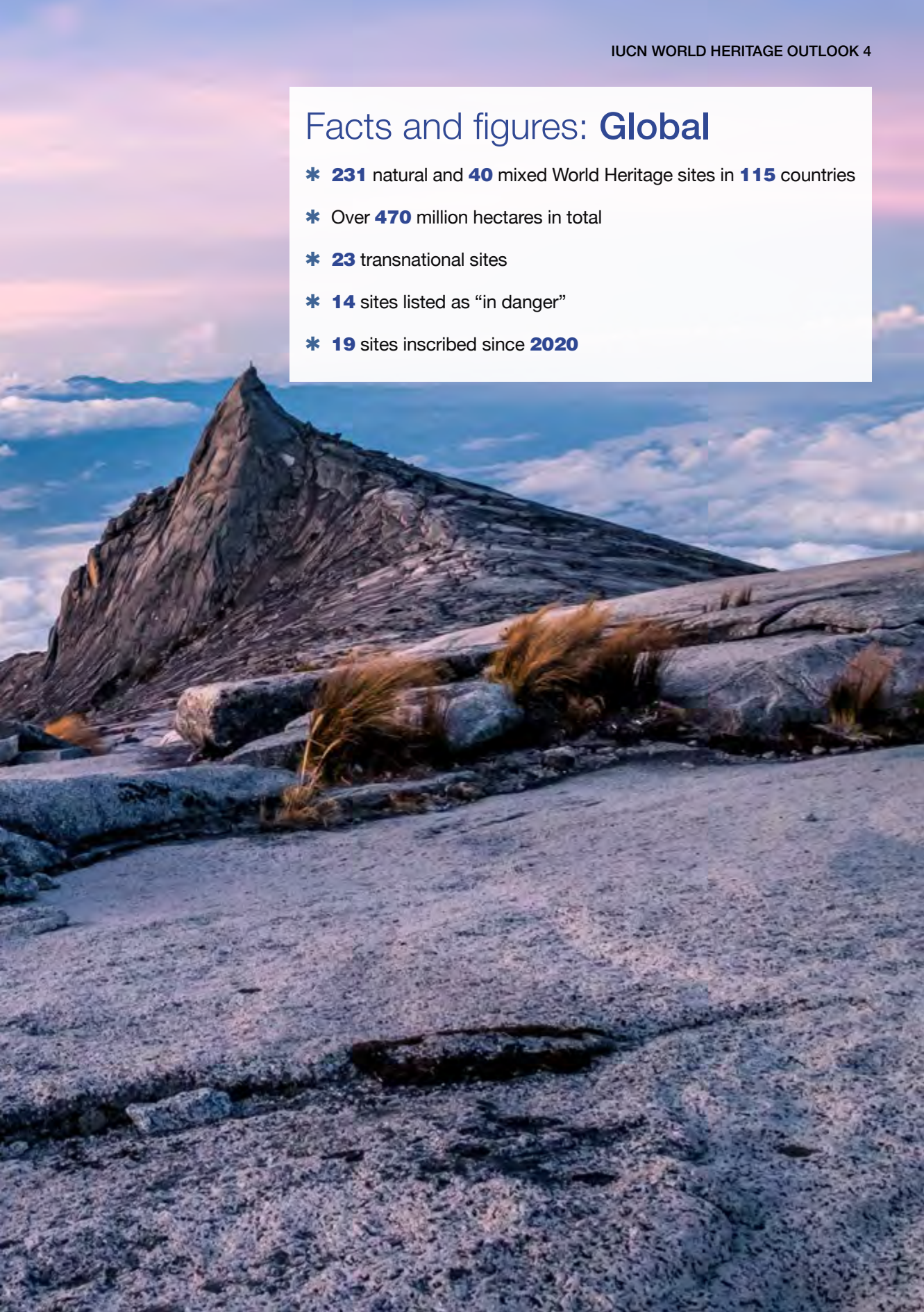
As demonstrated by Jeju, MIDAs present a unique opportunity to serve as exemplary models of conservation management, where strategic governance and coordinated management arrangements maximize the benefits of multiple designations.

Photo: Haenyeo harvesting and sorting their catch © Jeju Special Self-Governing Province

Global Outlook

Facts and figures: **Global**

* **231** natural and **40** mixed World Heritage sites in **115** countries
* Over **470** million hectares in total
* **23** transnational sites
* **14** sites listed as “in danger”
* **19** sites inscribed since **2020**



Overview

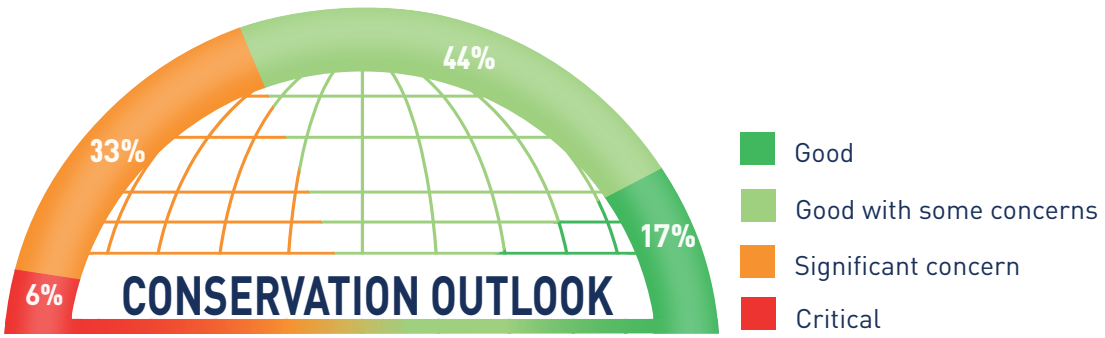
The IUCN World Heritage Outlook provides a global assessment of natural World Heritage, based on data from Conservation Outlook Assessments for every natural and mixed site on the World Heritage List. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook in 2014 provided the first assessment for 228 sites inscribed at the time for their nature conservation values. This was followed by the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2 and 3, which assessed 241 and 252 listed sites respectively. The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* includes 19 new sites within 20 countries, which were inscribed for their natural values on the World Heritage List since 2020, bringing the total number of sites assessed to 271.

This chapter presents the main findings from the 2025 Conservation Outlook Assessments, providing the overall results for all 271 natural sites listed as of early 2025 when the assessments were undertaken, and a comparison of results over time for the 228 sites for which there are now four cycles of assessments available (2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025).

Global assessment of conservation outlook

The results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* indicate that for 61%[1] of sites (165 sites) the conservation outlook is either "good" or "good with some concerns", while for 33% (88 sites) the outlook is of "significant concern", and for 6% (17 sites) it is assessed as "critical". For one site (Lena Pillars Nature Park, Russian Federation) the conservation outlook is "data deficient".

Figure 1. Conservation outlook 2025 for all 271 natural World Heritage sites.



The overall picture of the conservation outlook for natural World Heritage sites in 2025 remains similar to the overall results in 2020, but with a slightly downward trend. There was a 2% decrease in sites assessed as "good", a 2% increase in sites assessed as "significant concern", though a positive result of a 1% decrease in sites assessed as "critical". Overall, conservation prospects are positive for less than two-thirds of all assessed sites, indicating that further significant efforts are required to improve the outlook of many sites.

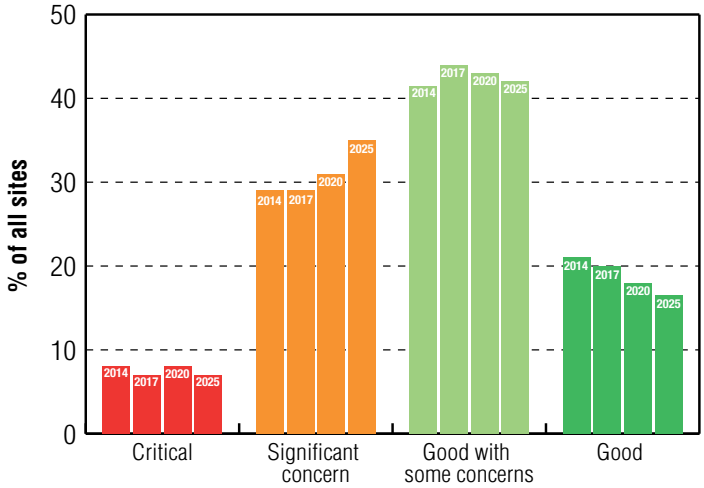
Conservation outlook trends over time

Looking at the comparative results of 228 sites for which four datasets are now available (Figure 2), the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* shows that the percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook has for the first time decreased significantly since 2014. While 63% of sites had a positive outlook in 2014 and 2017 and 62% in 2020, only 57% of sites have a positive conservation outlook in 2025. The indicative trends from the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 3 have become more pronounced, with a notable increase in the percentage of sites assessed as "significant concern" (from 31% in 2020 to 35% in 2025) and a decrease in the percentage of sites assessed as "good" (from 18% in 2020 to 15% in 2025) or "good with some concerns" (from 44% in 2020 to 42% in 2025).

1. All figures in this report were rounded to the nearest whole number

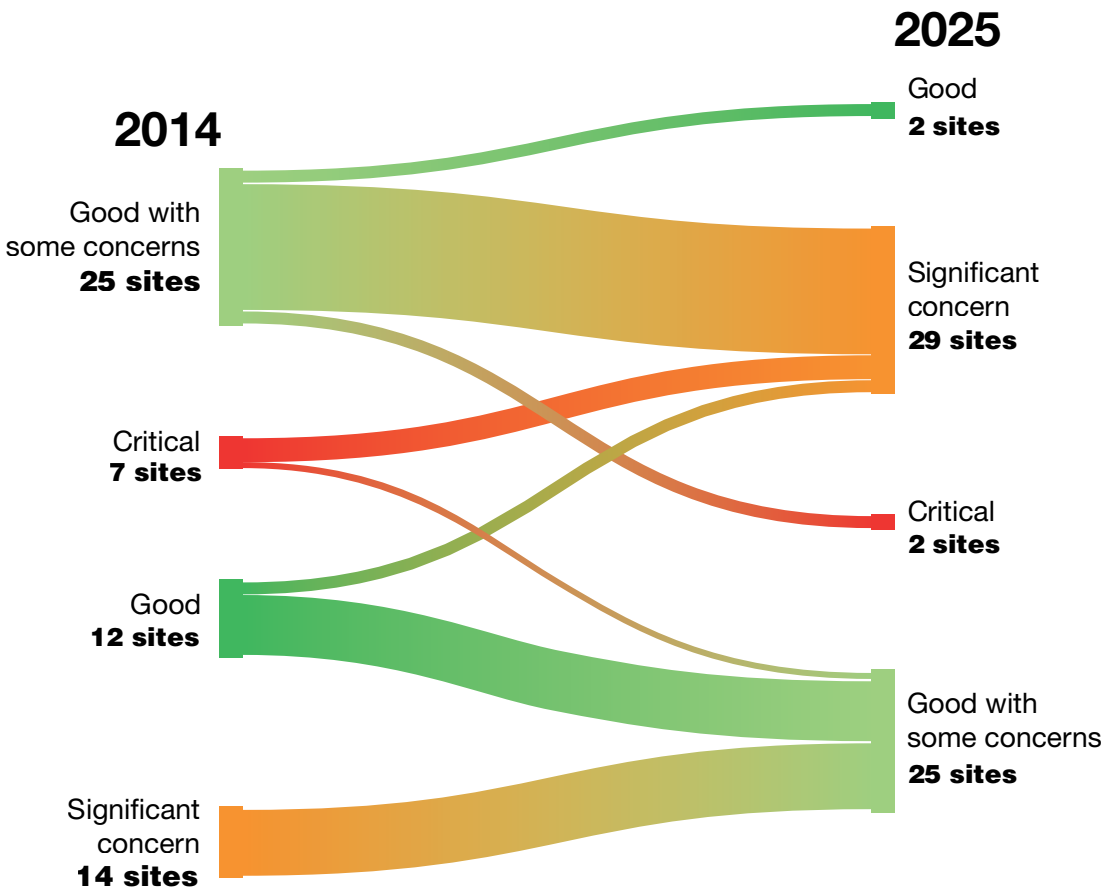
A more detailed analysis shows that, for some sites that have followed a trajectory from "good" to "good with some concerns" since 2014 (10 sites), there are issues in protection and management, which are affecting the conservation outlook rating. For example, in Ischigualasto / Talampaya Natural Parks (Argentina) and Lakes of Ounianga (Chad), human and financial resource constraints and inadequate integrated management systems and/or lack of operational structure affect implementation overall. Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh / Naracoorte) (Australia) is also affected by a lack of consistent funding and financial security, which affects various aspects of management and governance in a component part. For other sites there are increasing concerns for the World Heritage values. For example, in Purnululu National Park (Australia) fire and invasive alien species affect or have the potential to affect the aesthetic landscape and the majestic Livistona fan palms. With the increasing impact from climate change, there is also a need to develop an updated management plan to address current issues more holistically. In the Wadden Sea (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands) there are high threats relating to climate change effects, chemical contamination from industry and agriculture, invasive alien species, unsustainable fisheries, industrial and harbour development (including maritime traffic), offshore wind farm development and visitor pressure. Similarly, the West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord (Norway) faces high threats from marine aquaculture development, mineral mining and climate change effects. In both cases the cumulative impacts are raising concerns for the values.

Figure 2. Conservation outlook of sites in 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025, for the 228 sites for which four datasets are now available.



Over the past decade, the conservation outlook of 70 sites in total changed at least once; 29 improved; 40 declined; and one moved to "data deficient". While for many sites there has been a consistent overall direction of trend, for a few sites there has been a fluctuation in the conservation outlook. One such example is Península Valdés (Argentina) where the southern right whale (*Eubalaena australis*) population in the past contributed to an improved conservation outlook, yet since 2020, unexplained whale mortality has risen again. Combined with a mass mortality event of southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*) due to avian influenza A/H5N1, there is a renewed high concern for the key attributes. Plitvice Lakes National Park (Croatia) has also changed outlook ratings several times, demonstrating the sensitivity of the hydrogeological system to both natural and anthropogenic influences but also the success of management measures in addressing pollution and spatial planning concerns. Focussing on the conservation outlook ratings for the 228 sites in 2014 versus in 2025 (i.e. without considering changes in 2017 and 2020), 35 sites have decreased, and 23 sites improved in their conservation outlook (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Conservation outlook rating of sites in 2014 compared to 2025, focussing on the sites where there has been a change in rating.



Changes since 2020 assessments

A comparison between 2020 and 2025 shows that a total of 41 sites changed their overall conservation outlook with 27 decreasing, 13 improving (Figure 4) and one moving to "data deficient". This reflects the prevailing negative trend from 2020 where 16 sites decreased and 8 improved.

Notably, 14 sites changed their outlook from "good with some concerns" to "significant concern" between 2020 and 2025. For several, this change is associated with increasing tourism activities and associated infrastructure developments placing pressure on key attributes. For example, in Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia (Türkiye) illegal infrastructure development continues to impact on the natural landforms. In the Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve (France) over-visitation and climate change have affected avifauna, Lithophyllum algae and red coral. In Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago (Viet Nam) large-scale developments of recreation areas, overcrowding and pollution are directly impacting the spectacular seascape and scenic beauty.

The results also highlight that the conservation outlook is affected by factors, including many key threats, from outside World Heritage site boundaries, which are beyond the scope of site managers. For example, air pollution in Yosemite National Park (USA), climate change and severe weather events in Ningaloo Coast and Shark Bay (both Australia), salinity, heavy metal contamination, and unsustainable resource extraction in Sundarbans National Park (India), and avian influenza A/H5N1 in Península Valdés (Argentina). This highlights that the effective conservation of

World Heritage sites requires actions beyond site boundaries and the responsibilities cannot be seen as only those of relevant site managers.

Despite the overall negative trend, the cases where the conservation outlook has improved demonstrate that, where concerted conservation action is applied, successful outcomes ensue (see Box 3 and 4). Especially the change from "critical" to "significant concern" for four sites in Africa deserves to be highlighted.

Figure 4. Sites with an improved conservation outlook since 2020.

Box 3. Progress in Garamba National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Garamba National Park

The decrease in poaching and the subdued presence of armed groups in combination with improvements in law enforcement and enhanced community engagement has led to the change of rating for state of values from high concern to low concern and a change in overall threat level from very high threat to high threat. The conservation outlook has subsequently improved from "critical" to "significant concern". Some animal populations are showing positive trends, for example elephants, buffalo, and hippopotamus, which have shown annual growth rates due to enhanced anti-poaching measures and improved security. The trend for Garamba's World Heritage values is cautiously improving, thanks to significant conservation actions by African Parks and Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN). Anti-poaching efforts, including increased aerial surveillance and strengthened ranger patrols, have resulted in a notable decline in elephant poaching incidents. The Kordofan giraffe population has also shown growth, increasing from 45 individuals in 2017 to 91 in 2024. To further restore the park's ecological balance and especially the megaherbivore richness, 16 southern white rhinos were safely translocated to the park in 2023. This subspecies introduction gives hope that it will adapt and fulfil the same role as the now extinct northern white rhino.

Box 4. Positive action in Macquarie Island, Australia

The Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project

Protection and management on Macquarie Island are highly effective. The threat of invasive alien species represents a lower threat than in previous years, following The Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project, and subsequent monitoring declaring no mammal pest sightings, continued vegetation recovery response (aiding in the slowing down of land slippage) and increasing non-target species recovery. This success of the invasive alien species eradication programme is an example of good practice in the field of invasive biology.

Ongoing monitoring is being undertaken for the outcomes of the eradication programme to track the recovery of the site's values and preparedness for future potential threats. 2024 was the ten-year anniversary of the Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project being declared a success. The investment in the new research station on the island shows the long-term commitment of the Australian Government DCCEEW's Australian Antarctic Division along with the Tasmanian Government (through the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, NRE Tas) to conserving the Outstanding Universal Value of Macquarie Island.

Although the conservation outlook for Macquarie Island is good, maintaining and improving the efficiency of biosecurity procedures remains critical to protecting the ecological gains made from pest removal and mitigating the increasing biosecurity risks resulting from climate change. The protection and management aspects of the site are for the most part highly effective and will serve as an example of good practice in how to conserve and maintain extremely vulnerable island ecosystems.

Generally, the positive changes in conservation outlook are a result of better management, decreasing threats, or an improved state of values. In most cases it is a combination of these elements that has affected the overall outlook. In Pirin National Park (Bulgaria) the strengthening of the legal framework has contributed to more effective protection and management and a reduction in previously high threats such as illegal logging, grazing and infrastructure developments. In Los Katíos National Park (Colombia) the measures taken by national authorities to reduce illegal logging and overfishing led to the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2015 and the addition to the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas in 2024. The enhanced effectiveness of protection and management also supported the positive outlook trends for Plitvice Lakes National Park (Croatia), Salonga National Park (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Manú National Park (Peru). In the case of Plitvice Lakes National Park monitoring has also shown improvements in key attributes like the tufa dams and surface water quality. In the Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve and Virgin Komi Forests (both Russian Federation), there has been a decrease in the current and/or potential threats. For example, some potentially high threats anticipated in 2020 have not materialised and the threats from tourism, oil and mining activities have reduced. In Dja Faunal Reserve, threats are being addressed by anti-poaching measures and capacity building efforts and the population densities of great apes, although they remain lower than the populations at the time of its inscription, are now stable.

Newly inscribed sites

For a site to be added to the World Heritage List, it should demonstrate that effective protection and management requirements have been met. New sites inscribed on the World Heritage List since the last cycle should therefore in theory score highly in this regard. However, the assessments show mixed results, illustrating that strong protection and management measures at the time of inscription are key in the long-term conservation of the values of a site, against the backdrop of increasing global pressures.

Table 1: Conservation outlook for 19 sites inscribed between 2020 and 2024.

Site	Country	Region	Inscription year	Conservation Outlook 2020
Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, Northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island	Japan	Asia	2021	Good with some concerns
Anticosti	Canada	North America	2023	Good
Badain Jaran Desert - Towers of Sand and Lakes	China	Asia	2024	Good
Bale Mountains National Park	Ethiopia	Africa	2023	Significant concern
Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands	Georgia	Europe	2021	Good
Cold Winter Deserts of Turan	Kazakhstan/ Turkmenistan/Uzbekistan	Asia	2023	Good with some concerns
Evaporitic Karst and Caves of Northern Apennines	Italy	Europe	2023	Good with some concerns
Forest Massif of Odzala-Kokoua	Congo	Africa	2023	Good with some concerns
Getbol, Korean Tidal Flats	Republic of Korea	Asia	2021	Good with some concerns
Ivindo National Park	Gabon	Africa	2021	Good with some concerns
Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex	Thailand	Asia	2021	Good with some concerns
Lençóis Maranhenses National Park	Brazil	South America	2024	Good with some concerns
Nyungwe National Park	Rwanda	Africa	2023	Good with some concerns
The Flow Country	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Europe	2024	Good
Te Henua Enata – The Marquesas Islands	France	Europe	2024	Good with some concerns
Tugay forests of the Tigrovaya Balka Nature Reserve	Tajikistan	Asia	2023	Significant concern
'Uruq Bani Ma'arid	Saudi Arabia	Arab States	2023	Good
Vjetrenica Cave, Ravno	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Europe	2024	Good
Volcanoes and Forests of Mount Pelée and the Pitons of Northern Martinique	France	Europe	2023	Significant concern

The following sections include an overview of sites according to the overall conservation outlook categories ("good", "good with some concerns", "significant concern" and "critical"). Each of these categories not only shows the potential for a site to preserve its values and underlying attributes but also indicates the urgency of measures that need to be taken to improve the conservation outlook and ensure the long-term conservation of all sites.

Good

If a site has a "good" conservation outlook, it indicates that its values and underlying attributes are currently in good condition and likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future, provided that current conservation measures are maintained. Some threats to the site's values, conveyed by their key attributes, might exist and it is therefore essential that effective management efforts are maintained to ensure the site's conservation in the long term. It is important that World Heritage sites with a good outlook maintain their current performance and serve as examples of good management practices. The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* assesses the following 46 sites to have a good conservation outlook:

Country		Site
Canada	*	Anticosti
China	*	Badain Jaran Desert - Towers of Sand and Lakes
Hungary, Slovakia		Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst
France	▲	Chaîne des Puys - Limagne fault tectonic arena
China		Chengjiang Fossil Site
China		China Danxia
Georgia	*	Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands
Canada		Dinosaur Provincial Park
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)		Dorset and East Devon Coast
United States of America (USA)		Hawaii Volcanoes National Park
Australia		Heard and McDonald Islands
Finland, Sweden		High Coast / Kvarken Archipelago
Republic of Korea (South Korea)		Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes
Canada		Joggins Fossil Cliffs
India		Khangchendzonga National Park
Sweden		Laponian Area
Australia		Lord Howe Island Group
Australia	▲	Macquarie Island
Germany		Messel Pit Fossil Site
Canada		Miguasha National Park
Canada		Mistaken Point
Italy, Switzerland		Monte San Giorgio
China		Mount Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area
Italy		Mount Etna
Philippines		Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary
China		Mount Huangshan
China		Mount Sanqingshan National Park

OUTLOOK: GOOD

Country		Site
China	▲	Mount Wuyi
Namibia		Namib Sand Sea
New Zealand		New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands
Canada		Pimachiowin Aki
Russian Federation		Putorana Plateau
Japan		Shirakami-Sanchi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)		St Kilda
Denmark		Stevns Klint
Iceland		Surtsey
Switzerland		Swiss Tectonic Arena Sardona
Spain		Teide National Park
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)	*	The Flow Country
New Zealand		Tongariro National Park
Australia		Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park
Iceland		Vatnajökull National Park - Dynamic Nature of Fire and Ice
Bosnia and Herzegovina	*	Vjetrenica Cave, Ravno
Egypt		Wadi Al-Hitan (Whale Valley)
Australia		Willandra Lakes Region
Saudi Arabia	*	'Uruq Bani Ma'arid

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 * New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020

Sites with an improved conservation outlook since 2020*

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025	Values	Threats	Protection and management
Chaîne des Puys - Limagne fault tectonic arena	France	Good with some concerns	Good	→	↘	↗
Macquarie Island	Australia	Good with some concerns	Good	→	→	→
Mount Wuyi	China	Good with some concerns	Good	→	↘	→

** The columns Values, Threats and Protection and Management show the change in these aspects (arrows) and the 2025 rating (colours).*

Good with some concerns

If a site's conservation outlook is "good with some concerns", it indicates that its values and underlying attributes are currently in good condition and are likely to be maintained in the long term, provided that additional conservation measures are put in place to address existing concerns. It is hoped that these sites will address key issues and seek to move to an improved conservation outlook in future assessments. The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* assesses the following 119 sites to have a conservation outlook that is good with some concerns:

Country		Site
Seychelles		Aldabra Atoll
Cuba		Alejandro de Humboldt National Park
Japan	*	Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, Northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island
Mexico		Archipiélago de Revillagigedo
Australia	▼	Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh / Naracoorte)
South Africa		Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains
Jamaica		Blue and John Crow Mountains
Uganda		Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
Canada		Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks
South Africa		Cape Floral Region Protected Areas
United States of America (USA)		Carlsbad Caverns National Park
Brazil		Central Amazon Conservation Complex
Russian Federation		Central Sikhote-Alin
Brazil		Cerrado Protected Areas: Chapada dos Veadeiros and Emas National Parks
Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	*	Cold Winter Deserts of Turan
Côte d'Ivoire		Comoé National Park
Romania		Danube Delta
Cuba		Desembarco del Granma National Park
Gabon		Ecosystem and Relict Cultural Landscape of Lopé-Okanda
Mexico		El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve
Italy	*	Evaporitic Karst and Caves of Northern Apennines
China		Fanjingshan
Congo	*	Forest Massif of Odzala-Kokoua
Australia		K'gari
France	▼	French Austral Lands and Seas
Republic of Korea (South Korea)	*	Getbol, Korean Tidal Flats
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)		Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast

OUTLOOK: GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

Country		Site
Russian Federation		Golden Mountains of Altai
United States of America (USA)		Grand Canyon National Park
India		Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area
United States of America (USA)		Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Canada		Gros Morne National Park
Malaysia		Gunung Mulu National Park
Türkiye		Hierapolis-Pamukkale
China		Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area
China		Hubei Shennongjia
Denmark		Ilulissat Icefjord
Argentina	▼	Ischigualasto / Talampaya Natural Parks
South Africa		iSimangaliso Wetland Park
Italy		Isole Eolie (Aeolian Islands)
Gabon	*	Ivindo National Park
China		Jiuzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area
Thailand	*	Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex
India		Kaziranga National Park
India		Keoladeo National Park
Tanzania (United Republic of)		Kilimanjaro National Park
Malaysia		Kinabalu Park
Canada, United States of America (USA)		Kluane / Wrangell-St Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek
France		Lagoons of New Caledonia: Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems
Chad	▼	Lakes of Ounianga
Mongolia, Russian Federation		Landscapes of Dauria
Portugal		Laurisilva of Madeira
Brazil	*	Lençóis Maranhenses National Park
Argentina	▼	Los Alerces National Park
Argentina		Los Glaciares National Park
Colombia	▲	Los Katíos National Park
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	▼	Lut Desert
Colombia		Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary
United States of America (USA)		Mammoth Cave National Park
Peru	▲	Manú National Park
Greece		Meteora
Dominica		Morne Trois Pitons National Park
Zambia, Zimbabwe		Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls
Greece		Mount Athos
China		Mount Taishan
Canada		Nahanni National Park
India		Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks
Russian Federation	▲	Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)		Noel Kempff Mercado National Park
Rwanda	*	Nyungwe National Park
Japan		Ogasawara Islands
Botswana		Okavango Delta
United States of America (USA)		Olympic National Park
United States of America (USA)		Papahānaumokuākea
Brazil		Paraty and Ilha Grande – Culture and Biodiversity

OUTLOOK: GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

Country		Site
Bulgaria	▲	Pirin National Park
Croatia	▲	Plitvice Lakes National Park
Philippines		Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park
Australia	▼	Purnululu National Park
France, Spain		Pyrénées - Mont Perdu
China		Qinghai Hoh Xil
United States of America (USA)		Redwood National and State Parks
Peru		Rio Abiseo National Park
Palau		Rock Islands Southern Lagoon
Uganda		Rwenzori Mountains National Park
Sudan		Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dungonab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park
Ecuador		Sangay National Park
Kazakhstan		Saryarka – Steppe and Lakes of Northern Kazakhstan
Japan		Shiretoko
China		Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries - Wolong, Mt Siguniang and Jiajin Mountains
Slovenia		Škocjan Caves
China		South China Karst
Bulgaria		Srebarna Nature Reserve
Switzerland		Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch
Côte d'Ivoire		Taï National Park
Tajikistan		Tajik National Park (Mountains of the Pamirs)
Australia		Tasmanian Wilderness
Algeria		Tassili n'Ajjer
France	*	Te Henua Enata – The Marquesas Islands
New Zealand		Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand
Mexico		Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica
Italy		The Dolomites
Thailand		Thungyai - Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries
Guatemala		Tikal National Park
Viet Nam		Trang An Landscape Complex
Madagascar		Andrefana Dry Forests
Philippines		Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park
Mongolia, Russian Federation		Uvs Nuur Basin
Seychelles		Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve
Russian Federation	▲	Virgin Komi Forests
Denmark, Germany, Netherlands	▼	Wadden Sea
Jordan		Wadi Rum Protected Area
Canada, United States of America (USA)		Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park
Norway	▼	West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord
Mexico		Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaíno
China		Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area
China		Xinjiang Tianshan
Japan		Yakushima
United States of America (USA)		Yellowstone National Park

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020

Sites with an improved conservation outlook since 2020*

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025	Values	Threats	Protection and management
Los Katíos National Park	Colombia	Significant concern	Good with some concerns	↗	→	↗
Manú National Park	Peru	Significant concern	Good with some concerns	→	→	↗
Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve	Russian Federation	Significant concern	Good with some concerns	→	↘	→
Pirin National Park	Bulgaria	Significant concern	Good with some concerns	↗	↘	↗
Plitvice Lakes National Park	Croatia	Significant concern	Good with some concerns	↗	→	↗
Virgin Komi Forests	Russian Federation	Significant concern	Good with some concerns	→	↘	↗

Sites with a deteriorated conservation outlook since 2020*

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025	Values	Threats	Protection and management
Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh / Naracoorte)	Australia	Good	Good with some concerns	→	↗	↘
French Austral Lands and Seas	France	Good	Good with some concerns	↘	→	↘
Ischigualasto / Talampaya Natural Parks	Argentina	Good	Good with some concerns	→	→	↘
Lakes of Ounianga	Chad	Good	Good with some concerns	→	→	↘
Los Alerces National Park	Argentina	Good	Good with some concerns	↘	→	↘
Lut Desert	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Good	Good with some concerns	↘	→	↘
Purnululu National Park	Australia	Good	Good with some concerns	↘	→	↘
Wadden Sea	Denmark, Germany, Netherlands	Good	Good with some concerns	→	→	↘
West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord	Norway	Good	Good with some concerns	↘	↗	→

** The columns Values, Threats and Protection and Management show the change in these aspects (arrows) and the 2025 rating (colours).*

Significant concern

If a site's conservation outlook is of "significant concern" its values and underlying attributes are threatened by several current and/or potential threats, with significant additional conservation measures required to preserve the attributes over the medium to long term. The specific threats and protection and management issues vary across sites (see the following chapters). The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* assesses the following 88 sites to have a conservation outlook that is of significant concern.

Country		Site
Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine		Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe
Mexico		Ancient Maya City and Protected Tropical Forests of Calakmul, Campeche
Costa Rica		Area de Conservación Guanacaste
Brazil		Atlantic Forest South-East Reserves
Ethiopia	*	Bale Mountains National Park
Mauritania		Banc d'Arguin National Park
Belize		Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System
Brazil		Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)		Canaima National Park
Sri Lanka		Central Highlands of Sri Lanka
Suriname	▼	Central Suriname Nature Reserve
Colombia	▼	Chiribiquete National Park – "The Maloca of the Jaguar"
Nepal		Chitwan National Park
Mali		Cliff of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons)
Costa Rica		Cocos Island National Park
Panama		Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection
Panama		Darién National Park
Brazil		Discovery Coast Atlantic Forest Reserves
Cameroon	▲	Dja Faunal Reserve
Senegal		Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary
Spain		Doñana National Park
Thailand		Dong Phayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex
Montenegro		Durmitor National Park
Chad		Ennedi Massif: Natural and Cultural Landscape
Ecuador		Galápagos Islands
Spain		Garajonay National Park
Democratic Republic of the Congo	▲	Garamba National Park
Australia		Gondwana Rainforests of Australia

OUTLOOK: SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

Country		Site
Türkiye	▼	Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)		Gough and Inaccessible Islands
Australia		Greater Blue Mountains Area
France	▼	Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve
Viet Nam	▼	Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)		Henderson Island
Peru		Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu
Peru		Huascarán National Park
Iran (Islamic Republic of)		Hyrcanian Forests
Spain		Ibiza: Biodiversity and Culture
Tunisia		Ichkeul National Park
Brazil		Iguaçu National Park
Argentina		Iguazú National Park
Australia		Kakadu National Park
Kenya		Kenya Lake System in the Great Rift Valley
Indonesia		Komodo National Park
Russian Federation		Lake Baikal
Malawi		Lake Malawi National Park
Indonesia		Lorentz National Park
Lesotho, South Africa		Maloti-Drakensberg Park
Zimbabwe		Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas
India		Manas Wildlife Sanctuary
China		Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China
Mexico		Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve
Kenya	▼	Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest
Tanzania (United Republic of)	▼	Ngorongoro Conservation Area
Australia	▼	Ningaloo Coast
Senegal	▲	Niokolo-Koba National Park
Brazil		Pantanal Conservation Area
Argentina	▼	Península Valdés
Kiribati		Phoenix Islands Protected Area
Viet Nam		Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park
Saint Lucia		Pitons Management Area
France		Pitons, cirques and remparts of Reunion Island
Madagascar		Rainforests of the Atsinanana
Nepal		Sagarmatha National Park
Democratic Republic of the Congo	▲	Salonga National Park
Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo		Sangha Trinational
Tanzania (United Republic of)		Serengeti National Park
Australia	▼	Shark Bay, Western Australia
Mexico		Sian Ka'an
Ethiopia	▼	Simien National Park
Sri Lanka		Sinharaja Forest Reserve
Yemen		Socotra Archipelago
India	▼	Sundarbans National Park
Costa Rica, Panama		Talamanca Range-La Amistad Reserves / La Amistad National Park

OUTLOOK: SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

Country		Site
Bangladesh		The Sundarbans
China		Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas
Tajikistan	*	Tugay forests of the Tigrovaya Balka Nature Reserve
Indonesia	▼	Ujung Kulon National Park
France	*	Volcanoes and Forests of Mount Pelée and the Pitons of Northern Martinique
Russian Federation		Volcanoes of Kamchatka
South Africa		Vredefort Dome
Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger		W-Arly-Pendjari Complex
Russian Federation		Western Caucasus
India		Western Ghats
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan		Western Tien-Shan
Australia		Wet Tropics of Queensland
Canada		Wood Buffalo National Park
United States of America (USA)	▼	Yosemite National Park

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020

Sites with an improved conservation outlook since 2020*

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025	Values	Threats	Protection and management
Dja Faunal Reserve	Cameroon	Critical	Significant concern	→	↘	→
Garamba National Park	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Critical	Significant concern	↗	↘	→
Niokolo-Koba National Park	Senegal	Critical	Significant concern	↗	→	→
Salonga National Park	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Critical	Significant concern	→	→	↗

Sites with a deteriorated conservation outlook since 2020*

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025	Values	Threats	Protection and management
Central Suriname Nature Reserve	Suriname	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	↗	↘
Chiribiquete National Park – "The Maloca of the Jaguar"	Colombia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	Data deficient	↗	↘
Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia	Türkiye	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	→	→
Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve	France	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	→	→
Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago	Viet Nam	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	↗	→
Mount Kenya National Park/ Natural Forest	Kenya	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	↗	↘
Ngorongoro Conservation Area	Tanzania (United Republic of)	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	↗	→
Ningaloo Coast	Australia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	→	↘
Península Valdés	Argentina	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	↗	↗
Phoenix Islands Protected Area	Kiribati	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	↗	↘
Shark Bay, Western Australia	Australia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	→	→
Sian Ka'an	Mexico	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	↗	→
Sundarbans National Park	India	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	→	→
Ujung Kulon National Park	Indonesia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	→	→	↘
Yosemite National Park	United States of America (USA)	Good with some concerns	Significant concern	↘	→	→

** The columns Values, Threats and Protection and Management show the change in these aspects (arrows) and the 2025 rating (colours).*

Critical

Sites with a "critical" conservation outlook are highly threatened and require urgent, additional, and large-scale conservation measures, or their values and underlying attributes may be lost. These sites face a range of threats and in several cases have low capacity to address them. Often, however, the issues span national borders, and international collaboration and support is needed to help mitigate significant threats. Many of these sites are included on the List of World Heritage in Danger. They should be the highest priority for conservation action within the World Heritage Convention. While four sites have moved out of a critical outlook since 2020, three new entries are now on the list below. The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* assesses the following 17 sites to have a critical conservation outlook.

Country		Site
Niger		Aïr and Ténéré Natural Reserves
Belarus, Poland	▼	Białowieża Forest
Solomon Islands		East Rennell
United States of America (USA)		Everglades National Park
Australia		Great Barrier Reef
Mexico		Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California
Democratic Republic of the Congo		Kahuzi-Biéga National Park
Kenya		Lake Turkana National Parks
Central African Republic		Manovo-Gounda St Floris National Park
Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea		Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve
Albania, North Macedonia	▼	Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region
Democratic Republic of the Congo		Okapi Wildlife Reserve
Honduras		Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve
Tanzania (United Republic of)		Selous Game Reserve
Iraq	▼	The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities
Indonesia		Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra
Democratic Republic of the Congo		Virunga National Park

▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

Sites with a deteriorated conservation outlook since 2020*

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025	Values	Threats	Protection and management
Białowieża Forest	Belarus, Poland	Significant concern	Critical	→	↗	→
Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region	Albania, North Macedonia	Significant concern	Critical	→	→	↘
The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities	Iraq	Significant concern	Critical	→	↗	→

** The columns Values, Threats and Protection and Management show the change in these aspects (arrows) and the 2025 rating (colours).*

Values

The concept of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is central to the World Heritage Convention. OUV is defined as "cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity" (UNESCO, 2019). The values of sites are therefore at the heart of World Heritage conservation, and it is important to stress that the Conservation Outlook Assessments focus on prospects for maintaining these values and their underlying attributes.

Four out of a total ten criteria that define Outstanding Universal Value, refer to natural values. Criterion (vii) recognises outstanding natural beauty and exceptional phenomena; criterion (viii) focuses on geoheritage; while criteria (ix) and (x) are linked to biodiversity, i.e. ecosystems and species. A site can be inscribed under one or several criteria, including cultural criteria, in which case it is defined as a "mixed" site. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook focusses on the natural values and their underlying attributes. Other important biodiversity values and other important values are also included in site assessments; however, they are not the focus of the overall outlook rating. While cultural values are captured in the Conservation Outlook Assessments, they are not comprehensively assessed through the IUCN World Heritage Outlook methodology currently.

The four natural criteria for World Heritage status

To be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value a site needs to meet one or more of the World Heritage criteria. Criteria (vii)-(x) relate to the natural values:

(vii) Contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.

(viii) Be outstanding examples representing major stages of Earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.

(ix) Be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.

(x) Contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation (UNESCO, 2019).

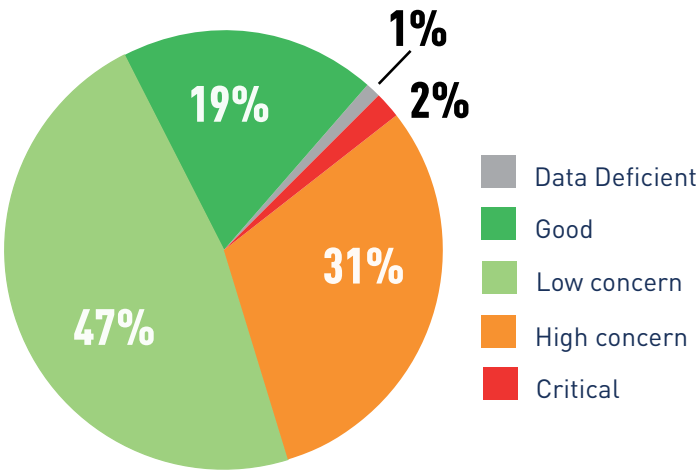
The IUCN World Heritage Outlook identifies and describes one or several values under each criterion for which a site is inscribed (e.g. "endemic mammal species", "the most dramatic known manifestation of the phenomenon of insect migration"). The current state of these values and their underlying attributes is then assessed against four categories: good, low concern, high concern or critical.

Overall, the state of World Heritage values in 66% of sites is good or of low concern, while in 31% the state of values is of high concern and in 2% critical (Figure 5).

Compared with the overall outlook ratings presented in Conservation Outlook Assessments, the assessment of World Heritage values specifically shows slightly better results. In 62 sites values were rated a different level than their overall conservation outlook, and in most cases (47) the values' assessment showed lower concern. The reasons for this differ between sites. In some cases, this could be due to a site having high integrity and therefore the values and underlying attributes remain relatively resilient despite the pressures they are under. In other cases, values may benefit from effective protection and management strategies to mitigate high threats, but those same threats impact the overall conservation outlook rating. Conversely, concerns over insufficient protection and management, which are reflected in the Conservation Outlook Assessment, may not yet have had significant impacts on the values, but could in the future if not

addressed. Finally, the growing and emerging new threats identified in this report, may not yet impact on the values, so there are both opportunities and risks for the future. It is important to recall that Conservation Outlook Assessments offer a forward-looking analysis, projecting into the future the likelihood that sites will retain their OUV. In several cases there will be a lag time between the current situation and a future state.

Figure 5. Overall state of values of all natural World Heritage sites in 2025 (n=271).



Other biodiversity values and other important values

Statements of Outstanding Universal Value for World Heritage sites may not be comprehensive for several reasons. As such, sites may hold additional important biodiversity values beyond those recognised through the World Heritage Convention. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook aims to capture some of these values as they are often interconnected, to produce a more holistic view for nature conservation.

Other important values refer to those that are of overall significance for the site but are not captured in the values sections elsewhere, for example those related to geology or culture for sites inscribed under a biodiversity criterion. The cultural values identified through this section are significant in terms of the site's natural values, highlighting nature-culture interlinkages. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook does not assess the cultural values and attributes for which a site was inscribed under the World Heritage Convention. Therefore, the cultural values captured through the Outlook process do not fully represent the cultural diversity of sites.

Nature-culture interlinkages can be interpreted and communicated in different ways. Box 5 presents an example through art, which can be a powerful vessel to share the complexities and intricacies of natural and cultural systems, to enhance emotional connection, deepen understanding and inspire positive action. There is scope to strengthen nature-culture interlinkages in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook methodology, in collaboration with the relevant cultural Advisory Bodies, as further described in the conclusions and follow-up section.

Cultural values include values that different cultures, religions and groups of people place on natural features of the site that have meaning and importance for them, for example Indigenous Heritage Values. To improve the recognition of Indigenous Heritage Values in World Heritage and in support of the important work done by the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum for World Heritage (IIPFWH), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (described in Box 6), IUCN seeks to invite Indigenous Peoples' voices in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook process. IIPFWH is officially recognised under the World Heritage Convention and is working with IUCN to build towards the inclusion of Indigenous Heritage Values in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook process, including by creating a new and dedicated section of each Conservation Outlook Assessment.

Communicating nature-culture interlinkages through art

By Sabrina Dowling Giudici and Mauricio Alvarez Abel

There are deep connections between people and their natural environments that are difficult to put into words. Yet, this does not diminish the importance of these lived experiences, especially when it comes to inspiring conservation action and improving the outlook of World Heritage sites in the face of global challenges. Art can be a powerful vessel to share the complexities and intricacies of natural and cultural systems, to enhance emotional connection, deepen understanding and inspire positive action through:

- improving the understanding of complex systems;
- bringing places to life and share lived experiences;
- visualising changes over time and natural cycles;
- bringing to life something lost.

Shark Bay World Heritage Area (Western Australia) - Sabrina Dowling Giudici, Glass Creative

Venice Glass Week- Halophila © Sabrina Dowling Giudici

Shark Bay World Heritage Area in Western Australia features the exceptional natural beauty of the world's largest seagrass meadows. Prodigious producers of oxygen and sequesters of carbon dioxide, these seagrasses support an abundance of marine fauna. The resulting productive fisheries in Shark Bay, have spanned thousands of years from the ancient indigenous fish-traps to contemporary sea vessels. *Halophila ovalis* (dugong seagrass or paddleweed) is a small-sized but ecologically vital seagrass species, distinguished by its rounded leaves and crucial role in stabilising seabed sediments in coastal ecosystems. It supports biodiversity, and specifically it sustains endangered species like dugongs and green sea turtles. This glass artwork series by local creative, Sabrina Dowling Giudici, is inspired by Halophila's unique form and its remarkable adaptation: the production of UV-absorbing anthocyanins. These pigments, often seen as purple hues in shallow meadows, act as a natural sunscreen, protecting the plant from intense light and UV stress. Their photoprotective strategies reflect evolutionary brilliance, yet they remain vulnerable to pollution, including harmful chemicals found in human personal products such as sunscreens and body lotions. Using selected botanical characteristics of the Halophila as visual metaphors, this artwork focuses on education about marine toxins including Oxybenzone, Octinoxate, and nano-metals. The photoprotective cell clusters are interpreted as darker glass, and the artwork voids represent the oxygen and carbon dioxide bubbles, in acknowledgement of the formidable gaseous capacity of seagrass.

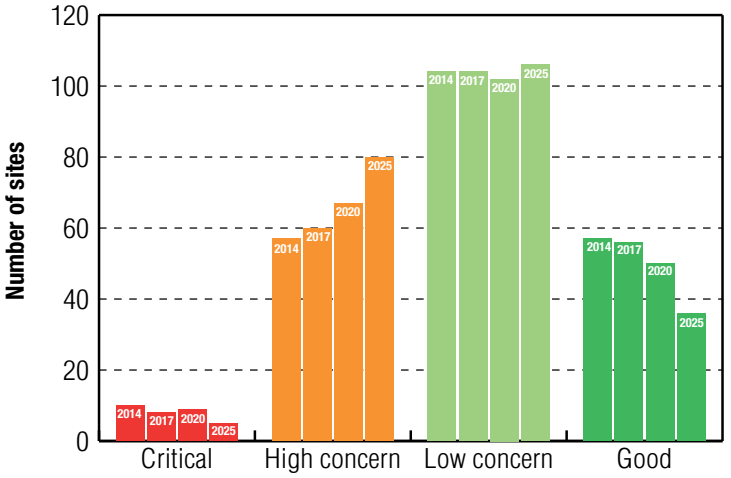
Handmade illustrations - Mauricio Álvarez, artist, scientific illustrator, and designer from southern Chile

Ecosystem and Cultural Customs of Marine Patagonia © Mauricio Alvarez Abel

Illustrations handmade in different painting techniques, that communicate visually in an understandable and educational way can positively connect organizations with urban and local communities. Mauricio works with foundations, institutions, scientific teams, and startups, disseminating information on nature conservation, biodiversity, environmental restoration, science, sustainable development, oceans, flora and fauna, innovations, the relationship between human populations and nature, and more. The depicted image titled "Ecosystem and Cultural Customs of Marine Patagonia" from the Southern Patagonia Program of the Austral University of Chile is a hand-drawn watercolour illustration. It represents the connection between human communities, the customs of Indigenous peoples, and their relationship with ecosystems that have enabled the recovery of their species under sustainable resource management, affected by overfishing and pollution.

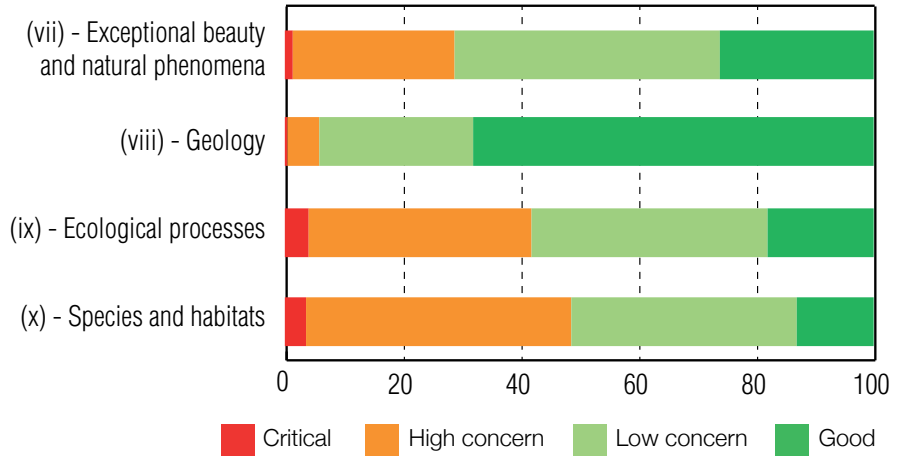
A comparison between 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025 for the 228 sites, for which four datasets are now available, shows a continued decrease in the number of sites whose values are assessed as being in a good state overall (Figure 6). This trend is consistent with the comparison of overall conservation outlook over time, discussed above (and shown in Figure 2). It is cause for concern as this declining trend has continued since 2020, signalling that even the most intact and well-managed sites are not immune to pressures.

Figure 6. Overall state of values of all natural World Heritage sites in 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025.



As seen in previous assessment cycles, the status of biodiversity values is of particular concern, and downwards trends in values are growing (Figure 7). Criteria (ix), referring to ecological processes, and (x) to species and habitats, continue to be more often assessed as of high concern or critical than values related to exceptional natural beauty (criterion vii) and geology (criterion viii). The situation for values recognised for their importance for species under criterion (x) continues to deteriorate significantly, with 52% of values related to species and habitats assessed to be in a good state or of low concern in 2025, compared to 58% in 2020, 62% in 2017 and 71% in 2014.

Figure 7. State of World Heritage values associated with different criteria of all 271 natural World Heritage sites in 2025.



Natural World Heritage sites, particularly those inscribed under criteria (ix) and (x) are highly important for the protection of globally endangered and endemic species. Many of these sites represent the last hope for the preservation of some iconic species of flora and fauna. Biodiversity and ecosystem integrity are also fundamental as they underpin important ecosystem services, which are now more important than ever as the world is facing an unprecedented global environmental crisis.

Box 6. Indigenous Heritage Values

Indigenous Heritage Values

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972), as a state-governed Convention, was not founded with the notion of human rights or participation by custodian communities as a core principle. Though the policies and guidelines for the implementation of the Convention have evolved over the course of its history, constraints remain in allowing a fully participatory approach to the nomination, description and monitoring processes of World Heritage sites. Yet, numerous indigenous territories are located on what are now World Heritage sites.

Acknowledging this lack of a holistic perspective, the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum for World Heritage (IIPFWH), IUCN, the two cultural Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee - International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) - and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre aim to achieve real change in the engagement of Indigenous peoples in the processes of the World Heritage Convention.

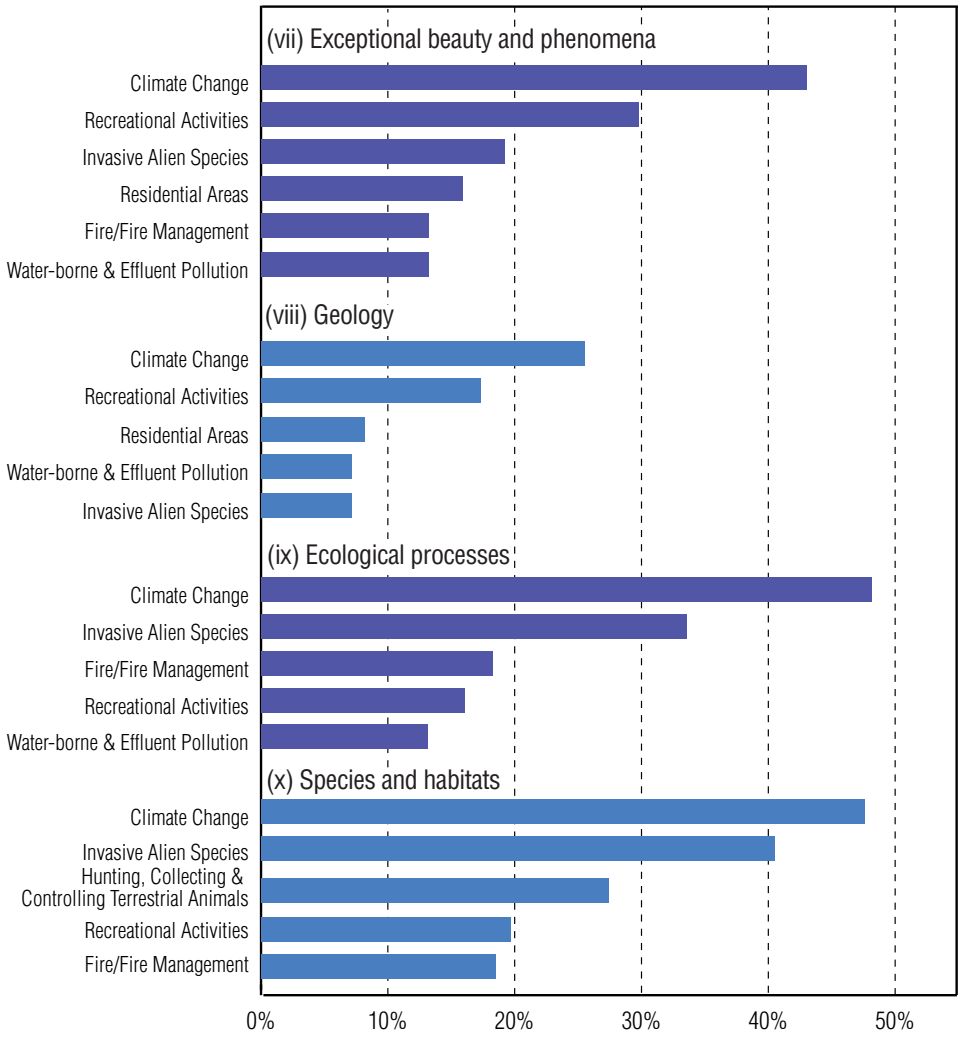
In 2015, the specific reference to the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous peoples was incorporated into the 'Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention' (hereafter the Operational Guidelines) (paragraphs 40 and 123), as well as the adoption of the 'Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Process of the World Heritage Convention', which highlights the recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights. Furthermore, the integration of human rights-based approaches, coupled with the alignment of the Operational Guidelines with UNESCO's 2019 Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples, has further embedded FPIC processes within the World Heritage system. These developments are consistent with international standards and established good practice. Despite these recent changes to the Operational Guidelines regarding the recognition of rights of Indigenous peoples, including their consent, the FPIC process within the World Heritage system remains challenging due to several reasons.

Statements of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) is a document that justifies the exceptional significance of a site to reason its inscription on the World Heritage List. While the concept aims to be inclusive, SOUV does not fully represent all important values and perspectives. One aim of the IUCN World Heritage Outlook is to give recognition to important values beyond the SOUV that are significant for past, present and future generations. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook offers a space for Indigenous peoples to share perspectives of the values of a place to which they are connected to, without being subject to a government filter. By promoting Indigenous Heritage Values in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook, additional qualities of a place can be highlighted, which deserve wider recognition.

Different threats for different values

This report presents an analysis of how the different criteria of World Heritage values face a particular set of threats. The following chapter describes in greater detail results on the threats identified in the Conservation Outlook Assessments. Climate change emerges as the most frequent threat for all types of natural World Heritage values (Figure 8). It is followed by invasive alien species in the case of biodiversity-related values (criteria ix and x). In the case of species and habitats (criterion x), this is followed by hunting, collecting and controlling terrestrial animals and in the case of ecological processes (criterion ix), by fire and fire management. While dams/water management use was a key threat for values under criteria (x) in 2020, this has been overtaken by recreational activities, which now appear in the top five threats. Recreational activities i.e. the impact of visitation is the second most common current threat affecting values under criteria (vii) (exceptional beauty and phenomena) and (viii) (geology). While geological values are generally more robust and have fewer cases of high or very high threat (the figure below represents a percentage of the total number of values affected by threats under each criterion, noting that each criterion has a different number of sites and values associated with it), it is notable that climate change represents such a prominent threat even for these values.

Figure 8. Top five (six in the case of criterion vii) most common threats assessed as high or very high for values under different criteria.



Threats

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook identifies and evaluates current and potential threats affecting natural World Heritage sites. Current threats refer to activities or factors that have an immediately apparent impact affecting key attributes which convey a site's values, such as built infrastructure, invasive alien species, tourism or natural disasters, while potential threats refer to planned activities or evolving trends that could have a future impact if they materialise. Each identified threat is assessed against four possible categories: very low, low, high or very high.

The threats classification used for the IUCN World Heritage Outlook is adapted from the IUCN-Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) threat taxonomy, including updates to the taxonomy in 2024 (Threats Classification Scheme Version 3.3 – IUCN, 2025). This is a classification widely used in the field of nature conservation, including by The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. It features broad categories of threats (e.g. Residential & commercial development), which are divided into further subcategories (e.g. Housing & urban areas, Commercial & industrial areas, Tourism & recreation areas).

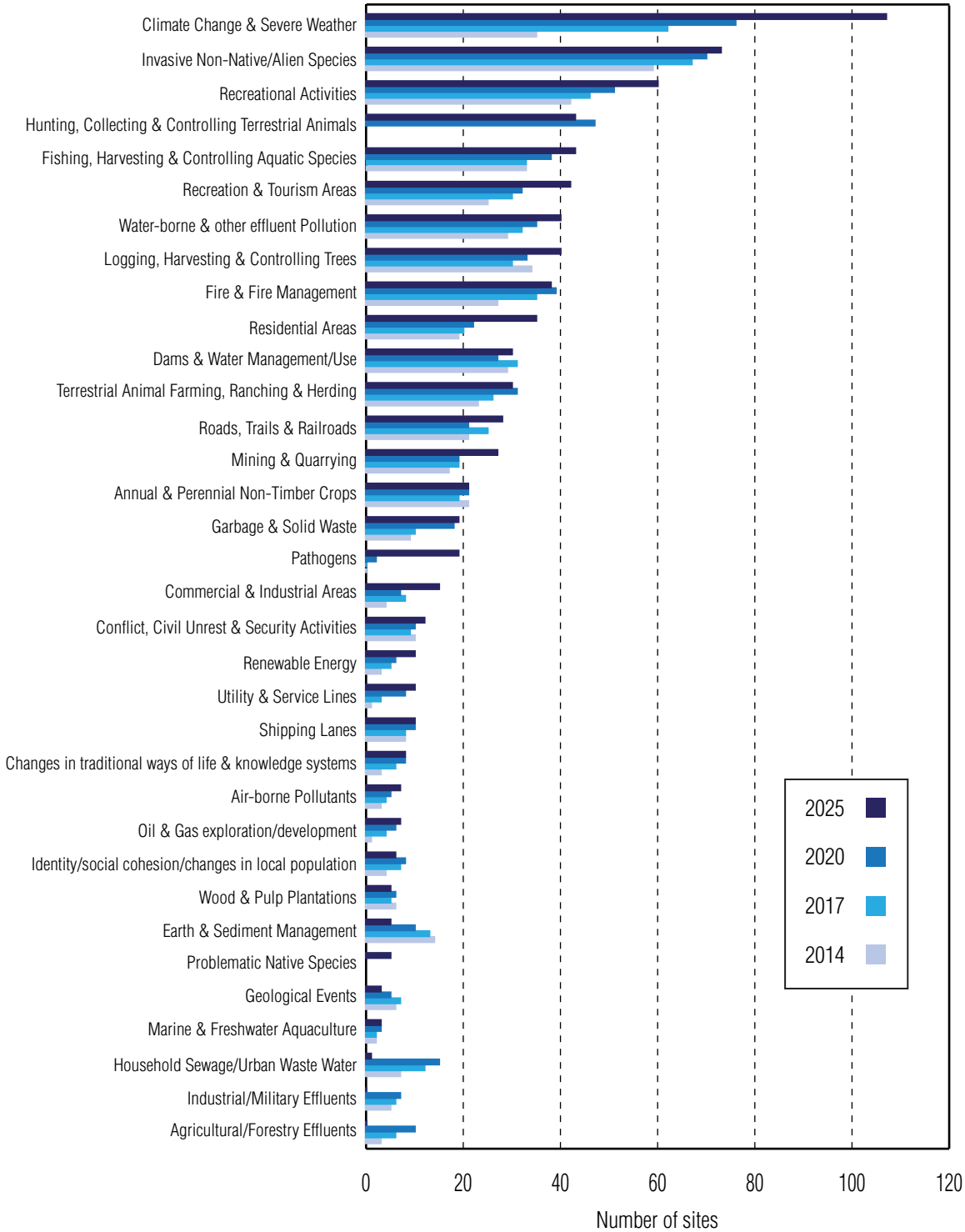
The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* shows that World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values are increasingly facing a wide range of threats and pressures. The two sections below include the current status of threats for all 271 assessed sites and provides a comparison between 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025 assessments of current and potential threats affecting the 228 sites inscribed on the World Heritage List up to 2014. The graphs below (Figures 9 and 10) reflect the number of sites where threats were assessed as high or very high.

Current threats

Climate change remains the most prevalent current threat and continues to impact an increasing number of sites. Overall, changes in physical and chemical regimes, changes in precipitation and hydrological regimes and/or changes in temperature regimes were assessed as high or very high threats in 117 out of 271 sites (43% of all sites). Figure 9 presents comparative results for the 228 sites, for which four datasets are available since 2014, and thus refers to 107 sites affected by climate change. Since 2020, the number of sites where climate change is a high or very high threat has increased by 31 sites.

The impacts of climate change are diverse and often interrelated with other threat categories. Especially the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events and sea and air temperature rise affect World Heritage sites, for example through coral bleaching and the accelerated melting of glaciers. However, the impacts of climate change vary depending on the values for which a site has been inscribed for (Box 7). Some notable examples of World Heritage sites affected by climate change include: Garajonay National Park (Spain), where the exceptional remnants of the Laurel forest are increasingly stressed by severe and prolonged droughts and habitat shifting; The Sundarbans National Park (India), which is threatened by sea level rise and more frequent storm surges which reduce mangrove biodiversity; Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (Philippines), where the pristine coral reefs and associated marine life are affected by marine stress events and more frequent and severe typhoons, reducing hard coral cover; Monarch Butterfly Reserve (Mexico), where the manifestation of the monarch butterfly migration is impacted by severe weather conditions that directly cause mortality of the butterflies but also lead to habitat shifting and alteration affecting the quality of wintering habitats.

Figure 9. Current threats assessed as high or very high in 2025, 2020, 2017 and 2014. Numbers are based on the number of sites where these threats have been registered.



Box 7. Climate change and World Heritage

Climate Change and World Heritage: A Cross-Ecosystem Perspective

By Dan Tormey

Conservation Outlook Assessments do not produce standardized metrics for trend analysis in relation to climate change. This section provides a series of site-based case studies that illustrate with natural World Heritage how climate change manifests differently across ecosystems—from alpine glacial retreat to desertification, coral bleaching, and changing karst hydrology. The examples highlight that there is no single approach to managing climate threats. Solutions must be adapted to local contexts, integrating vulnerability assessments specific to the site and the relevant climate change drivers.

Wetland: Pantanal Conservation Area (Brazil)

The Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetland, is a critical reservoir of biodiversity and an ecological linchpin in South America. Climate change is disrupting the delicate balance of seasonal flooding that defines the region's hydrology and ecology. Increased frequency and severity of droughts, paired with uncontrolled wildfires, are transforming the wetland into drier savanna-like landscapes. These shifts imperil aquatic ecosystems, reduce water availability for wildlife and local communities, and undermine the viability of traditional land-use practices. Effective responses include integrating climate risk into water management frameworks and strengthening cross-border cooperation to preserve the system's hydrological connectivity and ecological function.

Coastal: K'gari (Australia)

K'gari, a place of exceptional coastal geomorphology and cultural significance, hosts the world's largest sand island. Its freshwater perched lakes, dynamic dune systems, and rainforest patches depend on subtle climatic balances. Sea level rise and intensifying storms now threaten to erode dunes and disrupt freshwater lenses that support rare aquatic species. Projected changes in rainfall and storm runoff could also compromise soil stability and vegetation cover. Yet K'gari's vastness and heterogeneity also offer a natural laboratory to study coastal resilience. Nature-based solutions such as restoring native vegetation and respecting Indigenous fire knowledge are key to managing these risks in ways that honour the landscape's OUV.

Coral Reef/Marine: Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (Philippines)

Located in the heart of the Sulu Sea, the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park is one of the world's most pristine coral reef ecosystems. Despite its isolation, it is not immune to the global impacts of climate change. Repeated marine heatwaves have caused bleaching events that weaken coral health and threaten reef structure. Ocean acidification, another byproduct of rising carbon dioxide, further erodes the reef's resilience by impairing calcification. As warming trends continue, the window for coral recovery narrows. Tubbataha exemplifies the need for both local protection—through vigilant enforcement and adaptive zoning—and global action on emissions to preserve the integrity of reef systems.

Tidal/Marine: Wadden Sea (Germany, Denmark, Netherlands)

The Wadden Sea is the largest unbroken intertidal system in the world and a vital stopover for millions of migratory birds. Sea level rise poses a multifaceted threat here: it alters sedimentation dynamics, changes salinity gradients, and reduces the area of exposed mudflats essential for bird feeding. In the long term, faster sea level rise may outpace the natural ability of mudflats to accrete, resulting in habitat loss. This site is emblematic of the need for climate-smart coastal management, where adaptive sediment strategies, dyke relocation, and transboundary cooperation form the cornerstone of resilience. It also serves as a model for participatory governance in the face of ecological change.

Box 7. Climate change and World Heritage (cont.)

Glacier: Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch (Switzerland)

This iconic glaciated landscape offers a dramatic illustration of climate-driven transformation. The Great Aletsch Glacier and surrounding icefields have receded significantly in the past decades, reshaping alpine valleys and forming unstable proglacial lakes. These changes are not only visual but functional—altering seasonal water flows, increasing rockfall and landslide risks, and exposing sensitive high-elevation soils. Climate change thus impacts the site's visual identity and its ecological and hydrological roles. Monitoring programmes and geo-hazard mapping are underway, but long-term adaptation also requires public engagement and scenario planning to balance conservation, tourism, and hazard mitigation.

Forest: Gondwana Rainforests of Australia (Australia)

The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia preserve the last vestiges of an ancient subtropical forest lineage that once covered much of the supercontinent. Today, these relict ecosystems are increasingly stressed by climate change. Shifting rainfall patterns, increased temperatures, and altered fire regimes place pressure on moisture-dependent species with limited adaptive capacity. Rainforest edges are retreating in some areas, and keystone species face range contractions. Invasive alien species and diseases also exploit these climate vulnerabilities. Managing this site under climate change calls for expanded buffer zones, coordinated fire response strategies, and ex situ conservation of particularly vulnerable taxa—an integrated effort to conserve evolutionary memory under environmental duress.

Desert: Cliff of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons) (Mali)

Perched at the edge of the Sahel, the Cliff of Bandiagara represents a fragile intersection of culture, nature, and climate. Increasing desertification and erratic rainfall driven by climate change threaten the dryland agriculture, water resources, and traditional Dogon settlements embedded in this sandstone escarpment. Flash floods and soil erosion also undermine both the cultural architecture and the ecological basis of this unique landscape. Local communities face a dual challenge: adapting to ecological shifts while preserving cultural continuity. This site embodies the importance of linking climate adaptation with cultural resilience, where heritage conservation strategies also support traditional knowledge and livelihoods.

Cave/Karst: Carlsbad Caverns National Park (USA)

Carlsbad Caverns is celebrated for its vast underground chambers, delicate speleothems, and charismatic bat populations. Climate change manifests here through shifts in surface temperature and precipitation patterns that subtly alter the cave's internal microclimate and hydrology. Reduced rainfall changes the chemistry of dripwater that nourishes stalactite and stalagmite formation, while warming conditions may affect the seasonal behaviours and reproductive success of the cave's Mexican free-tailed bats. The twilight bat emergence, a spectacle of motion and memory for generations, is increasingly sensitive to ecological imbalance. Managing Carlsbad Caverns under climate stress highlights the need for microclimate monitoring and habitat protection both inside and outside the cave ecosystem.

The findings from Conservation Outlook Assessments compare with reports related to specific climate change related impacts on natural World Heritage sites. A study by UNESCO and IUCN (2022), concludes that glaciers in a third of the 50 World Heritage sites that are home to glaciers will disappear by 2050. In the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4*, the melting of glaciers has been assessed as impacting on the scenic beauty and the unique ecological complexes in some sites. For example, in Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park (Canada, USA) the melting of glaciers and an increase in summer stream temperatures are predicted to cause local extinctions of some aquatic insects. Changes in invertebrates, trout species and aquatic ecosystems are already evident. Furthermore, the world is currently experiencing its fourth global coral bleaching event, as confirmed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration (NOAA) and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). This is expected to impact 30% of the 29 UNESCO World Heritage-listed coral reef ecosystems (UNESCO, 2024b). According to the Conservation Outlook Assessments, Shark Bay and Ningaloo Coast (both Australia) are subject to a significant heat stress event. While sites like Belize Barrier Reef System (Belize) and Aldabra Atoll (Seychelles) have not suffered from widespread impact, more frequent bleaching events narrow the window for recovery between coral mortality events.

Invasive alien species remain the second most prevalent current threat. This aligns with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) findings, which identify invasive alien species as one of the main direct drivers of biodiversity loss across the world (IPBES 2019; 2023). Invasive alien species pose the greatest threats to island ecosystems like the Galápagos Islands (Ecuador), Lord Howe Island Group (Australia), Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve (Seychelles), Cocos Island National Park (Costa Rica), New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands (New Zealand) and Socotra Archipelago (Yemen). In the Galápagos Islands (Ecuador) invasive alien species are considered one of the main causes of extinctions. So far, 1,575 species (terrestrial and marine) have been introduced and established in the archipelago. Most are not problematic, such as agricultural and ornamental plants. However, 59 introduced species are highly invasive and 83 are potentially invasive, negatively affecting the flora and fauna of the islands. Box 8 presents further information on the action needed to tackle invasive alien species. The IPBES Invasive Alien Species Assessment (IPBES, 2023) provides the evidence base and options to inform immediate and ongoing action to address the major and growing threat of biological invasions.

A notable and in some cases linked concern is that pathogens (causing diseases impacting plants and animals), have seen a significant increase in the number of sites where this was assessed as a high or very high threat, from two sites in 2020, to 19 sites in 2025, when focussing on the 228 sites assessed since 2014. In total, out of the 271 sites assessed in 2025, pathogens were a high or very high threat in 23 sites. Diseases posing a threat to World Heritage values include for example, Ebola virus disease (Virunga National Park, DRC), white-nose syndrome (Mammoth Cave National Park, USA), Chytridiomycosis (Tasmanian Wilderness, Australia), avian influenza (Península Valdés, Argentina), canine distemper (Bale Mountains National Park, Ethiopia) and top-dying disease in mangroves of The Sundarbans (Bangladesh).

Given the evidence that links the spread of invasive alien species and the spread of pathogens with climate change impacts on ecological parameters, a correlation in the impacts between these threats is highly likely. Furthermore, for invasive alien species and pathogens, the cause-and-effect relationship with climate change needs to be better understood and planned for to combat these growing impacts on natural World Heritage sites and human wellbeing. According to Finch et al., (2021), climate-related changes will almost certainly lead to changes in the distribution of invasive alien species as their populations respond to variability and changes in temperature, moisture, and biotic interactions. The IPBES Invasive Alien Species Assessment (IPBES, 2023) states that climate change will further worsen the formation of some invasive alien species and will be a considerable determinant (or factor) of future formation and spread. Climate change interwoven with land and sea-use change is foreseen to thoroughly frame and magnify the future threat from invasive alien species. Predicting how invasive alien species and pathogens will respond under potential climate change scenarios is difficult but essential to developing effective prevention, control, and restoration strategies. The links to human health are an important additional factor to consider in many of these sites, and as part of the growing need for the One Health approach encompassing people, species and ecosystems.

Overall, recreational activities are the third most significant threat globally, followed by hunting, fishing and the development of recreation and tourism areas. Notably tourism-related activities can also cause the spread of invasive alien species and pathogens, especially in island ecosystems, where stringent biosecurity measures are essential. Aside from climate change and pathogens, the threats which have seen significant growth in the number of sites affected since 2020 are infrastructure developments (residential areas, recreation and tourism areas, industrial and commercial areas), recreational activities, and mining and quarrying. This reconfirms the growing threat from various forms of infrastructure development as identified through the monitoring processes under the World Heritage Convention. The harmonisation of management planning and action with broader spatial planning mechanisms is essential, along with the use of best practice impact assessment processes, as described in the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN, 2022).

While the top three global current threats (climate change, invasive alien species and impacts of tourism) have remained the same as in 2017 and 2020, significant regional differences were observed in 2025, which are discussed in the chapters presenting regional results.

Box 8. Invasive Alien Species

Invasive Alien Species

Target 6 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework aims to: Eliminate, minimize, reduce and or mitigate the impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity and ecosystem services by identifying and managing pathways of the introduction of alien species, preventing the introduction and establishment of priority invasive alien species, reducing the rates of introduction and establishment of other known or potential invasive alien species by at least 50 per cent, by 2030, eradicating or controlling invasive alien species especially in priority sites, such as islands.

An invasive alien species toolkit (IAS Toolkit), recently produced, aims to assist Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and other actors, in the implementation of actions towards Target 6 (CBD and IUCN, 2024). The World Heritage Committee, in its Decision 47 COM 7, encouraged States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to utilise this IAS Toolkit and to consider World Heritage as part of their national strategies towards achieving Target 6.

While monitoring and reporting systems for biological invasions in World Heritage sites and other protected areas, are improving (e.g. Shackleton et al., 2020), further efforts are needed to guide and prioritise specific management actions. With World Heritage harbouring some of the most biodiverse areas in the world (UNESCO and IUCN, 2023), and invasive alien species identified as among the top drivers of biodiversity loss and species extinction globally (IPBES, 2019), World Heritage could be considered priority sites under Target 6. Furthermore, predictions that climate change will exacerbate threats from invasive alien species (IPBES, 2023) emphasise the need to integrate IAS into national and site-level action plans.

The Conservation Outlook Assessments of *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* have, for the first time, integrated the species database from the Global Register of Introduced and Invasive Species (GRIIS). These verified country-level species lists will assist site-specific data collection, which will enhance the accuracy of invasive alien species presence data in global databases such as GRIIS.

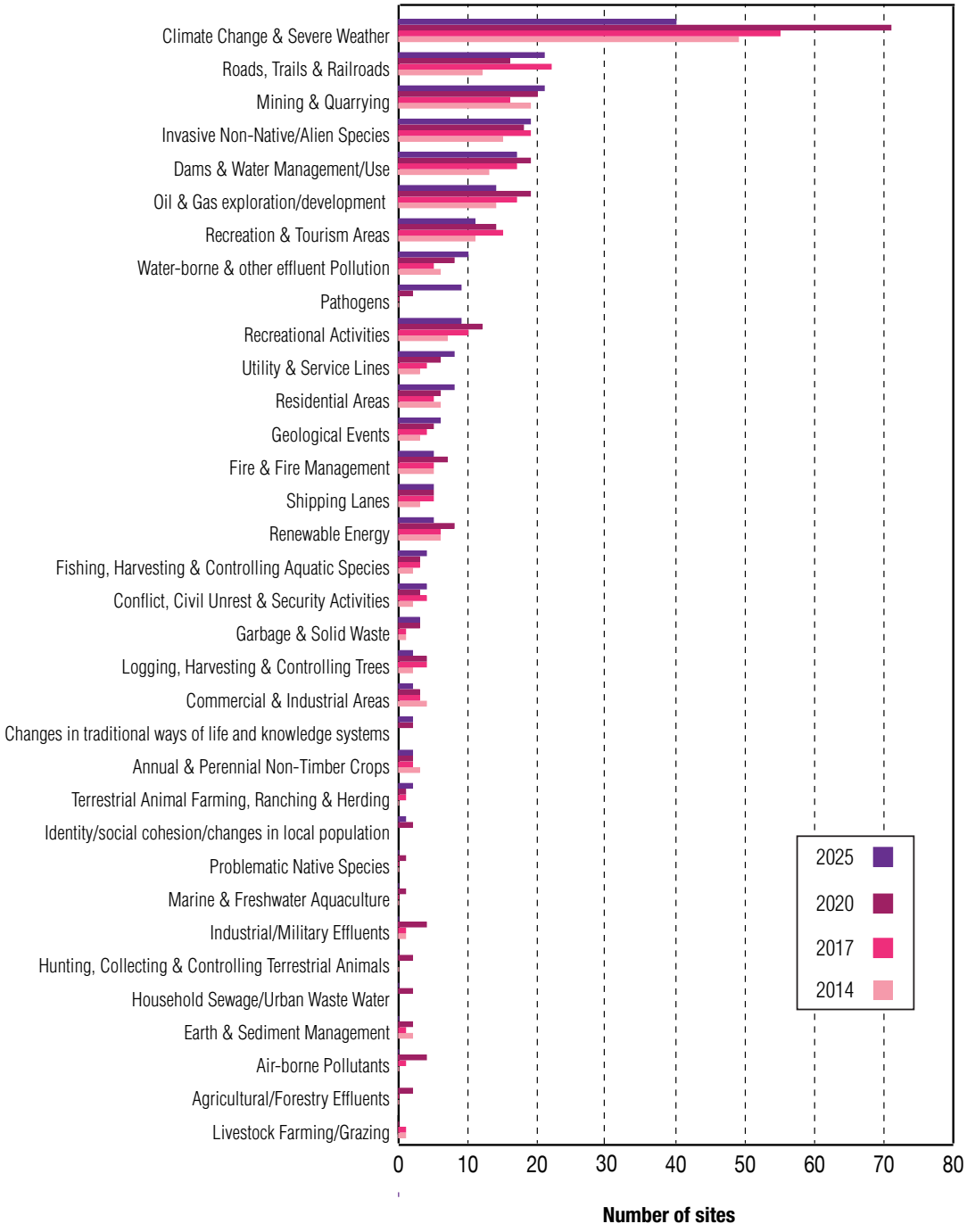
In response to the escalating threat posed by invasive alien species, IUCN has launched the European Invasive Alien Species Rapid Response Fund. Co-funded by the European Union and implemented through IUCN Save Our Species, this €2.1 million initiative will provide targeted grants to support urgent on-the-ground conservation action to prevent the spread and establishment of harmful invasive species across Europe.

Potential threats

Climate change again tops the list of potential threats in 2025, as in the past two cycles, however, there has been a substantial decrease in the total number of sites in which climate change has been listed as a potential high or very high threat from 71 sites in 2020 to 40 sites in 2025 (Figure 10). Pathogens have shown the largest increase in comparison to the previous cycle with 7 more site assessments reporting pathogens as a potential high or very high threat. While potential mining, oil and gas development, and hydropower projects continue to be among the most prominent potential threats assessed as high or very high, it is notable that there has been an increase in the number of sites potentially affected by road and railroad developments, which now represents the second highest potential threat (along with mining and quarrying). Furthermore, invasive alien species represents the fourth most prominent potential threat to the assessed World Heritage sites, although the number of sites potentially affected by this threat has only increased by one site since 2020.

While many infrastructure developments are located outside the boundaries of sites, these projects can nonetheless pose significant threats to the values and attributes within sites.

Figure 10. Potential threats assessed as high or very high in 2025, 2020, 2017 and 2014. Numbers are based on the number of sites where these threats have been registered.

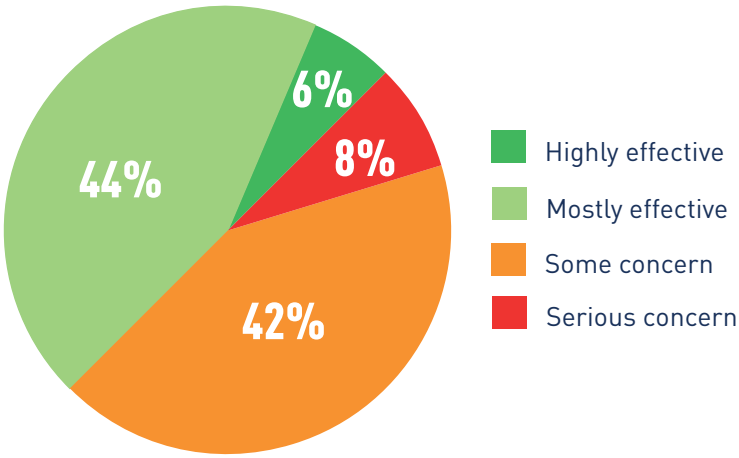


Protection and management

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook evaluates 17 different aspects of protection and management for sites, including management systems, legislative frameworks, site boundaries, relationships with local people, tourism and visitation management and monitoring[2]. The assessments for each of these categories are used to determine the overall assessment of the protection and management effectiveness of each site. The topics reflect the IUCN best-practice guidance on protected area management (IUCN, n.d.) and are harmonised with those used in the Managing Natural World Heritage Resource Manual (UNESCO et al., 2012) and as also reflected in the third cycle of Periodic Reporting. Additionally, the topics have been aligned with the components, criteria and indicators from the IUCN Green List Standard of Protected and Conserved Areas wherever possible.

The 2025 results for all 271 natural World Heritage sites show that 50% of sites have overall effective or highly effective protection and management, whilst this is not the case in the other 50%, including 8% of sites in which protection and management were assessed as of serious concern (Figure 11).

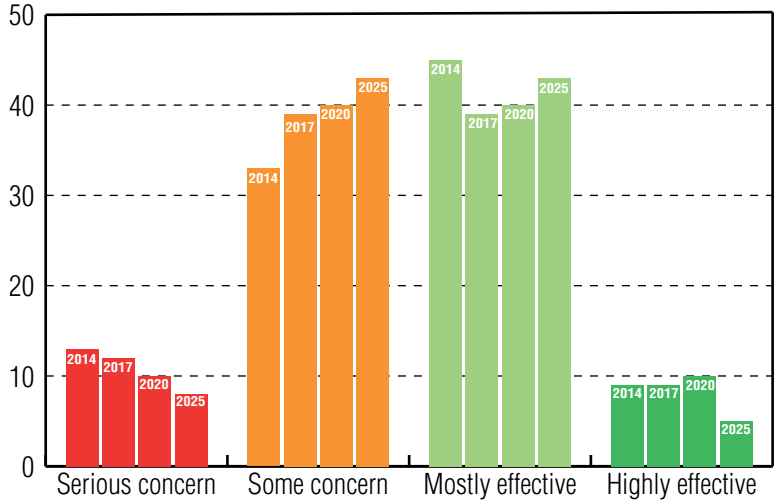
Figure 11. 2025 results for protection and management, % of all sites.



While overall, the proportion of effectively managed sites has not changed substantially, when focussing on the 228 sites for which there are now four datasets available, there has been a continued decrease (since 2014) in the percentage of sites where management is assessed as of serious concern (Figure 12). This indicates that management effectiveness has improved for the most threatened sites. However, since 2020, there has also been a notable decline in the percentage of sites where management is considered highly effective, from 10% in 2020 to 5% in 2025. This relates to a range of different issues across various management requirements but overall is an apparent tendency towards more mediocre management, which needs to be actively addressed. Importantly, the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside World Heritage site boundaries is falling short of what is required. For all sites assessed in 2025, management effectiveness in addressing threats outside site boundaries was of some or serious concern for 62% of sites. This has remained unchanged since 2020. When looking at the 228 sites assessed since 2014, there has been a further decrease in management effectiveness in addressing threats outside site boundaries with concerns in 65% of sites in 2025 compared to 61% in 2020. With several of the greatest threats originating from outside site boundaries, effective site-level management is not sufficient to secure a positive conservation outlook without stronger regional, national and global support.

2 The full list of protection and management categories are: involvement of stakeholders and rightsholders in decision-making processes, legal framework, governance arrangements, integration into local, regional and national planning systems, boundaries, overlapping international designations, implementation of World Heritage Committee decisions, climate action, management system, law enforcement, sustainable finance, staff capacity and training, education and interpretation programmes, tourism and visitation management, sustainable use, monitoring and research.

Figure 12. Comparison between 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025 of overall protection and management in 228 sites inscribed up to 2014.



While the legal framework and research in sites is most frequently assessed as highly effective, it is alarming that critical aspects of protection and management, underpinning other categories, like sustainable financing, law enforcement, the number of staff and staff capacity and general management effectiveness (especially in addressing threats outside the site) remain of serious concern across many natural sites (Figures 13 and 14). Sustainable finance was the management category assessed most frequently as of serious concern in 2017 and 2020, and in 2025 this remains unchanged, with 15% of all sites (40 sites in total) reporting sustainable finance as of serious concern. This signals that more commitment is needed to adequately resource the protection and management of the world's most precious and irreplaceable places. COVID-19 was assessed as a contributing factor negatively affecting sustainable finance. Explicitly COVID-19 was highlighted in 12 site assessments where sustainable finance was rated as of serious or some concern. The impacts of COVID-19 related to the direct reduction in tourism-related income, for example in Aldabra Atoll (Seychelles) and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (Uganda), shifts in Department related funding like in Dong-Phayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex (Thailand) or the reprioritisation of funding priorities in Lake Turkana National Parks (Kenya).

The issue concerning sustainable funding of World Heritage sites was a focus of the Open-ended Working Group established by the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee. The working group highlighted (OEWG, 2025) the necessity to ensure adequate funding as well as the payment obligation of assessed compulsory and voluntary contributions to the World Heritage Fund. It was also proposed to mobilise dedicated funding sources like the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and to strengthen the Advisory Bodies by exploring innovative funding solutions. Prioritization of World Heritage and other designations in existing and new financing mechanisms, including multilateral finance like the GEF, bilateral finance channelled through development cooperation, granting mechanisms, public-private partnerships and philanthropic initiatives present promising opportunities. Some successful examples of utilising such opportunities are presented in Box 9.

Figure 13. Number of sites where specific protection and management aspects were assessed as being highly effective in 2025 (top six categories).

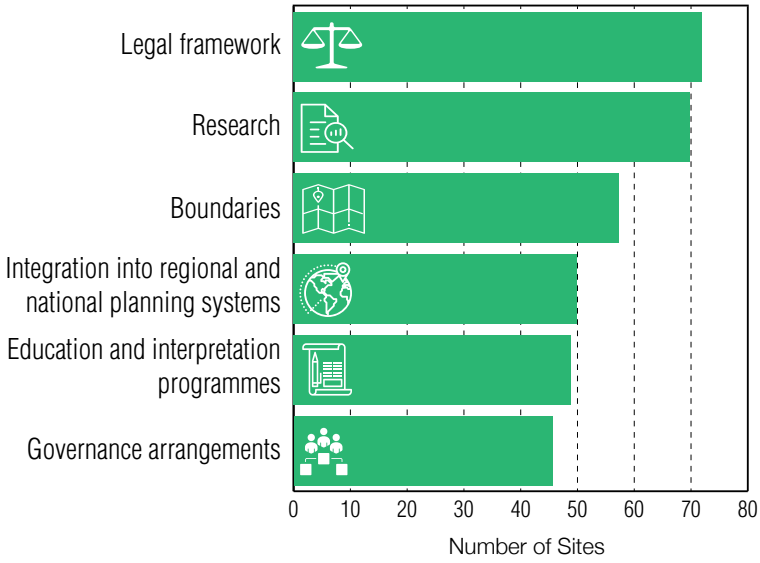
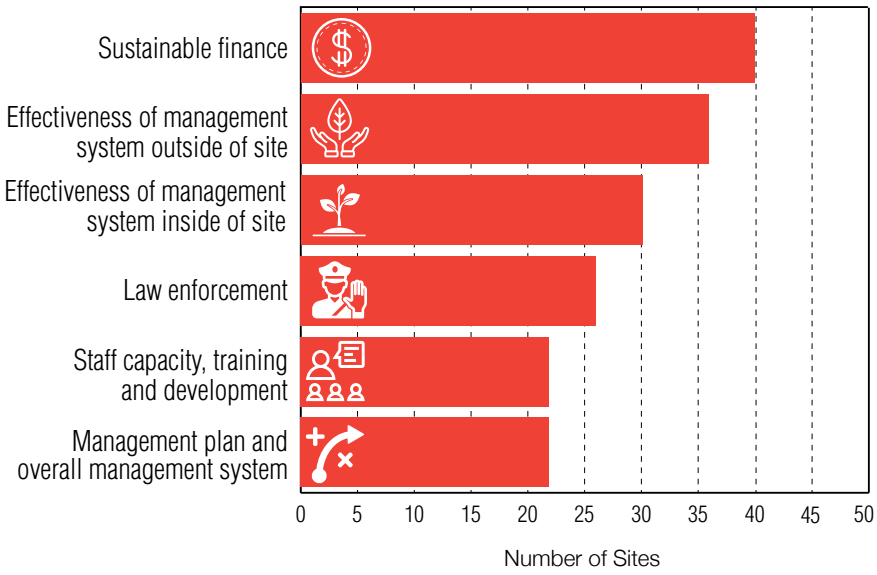


Figure 14. Number of sites where specific protection and management aspects were assessed as being of serious concern in 2025 (top six categories).



Box 9. Successful sustainable finance examples

Successful sustainable finance examples

Okavango Delta (Botswana): The Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT) programme provides conservation grants to civil society organisations for activities that improve biodiversity conservation and promote sustainable livelihoods in World Heritage sites. The programme, run by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the UNDP-led GEF Small Grants Programme, is aimed at strengthening the engagement of Indigenous peoples and local communities in the management of World Heritage sites. In this context, various civil society organisations, academic and research institutions are being supported to enhance the conservation of biological and cultural diversity, sustainable livelihoods, indigenous and local knowledge, or related themes in the Okavango Delta.

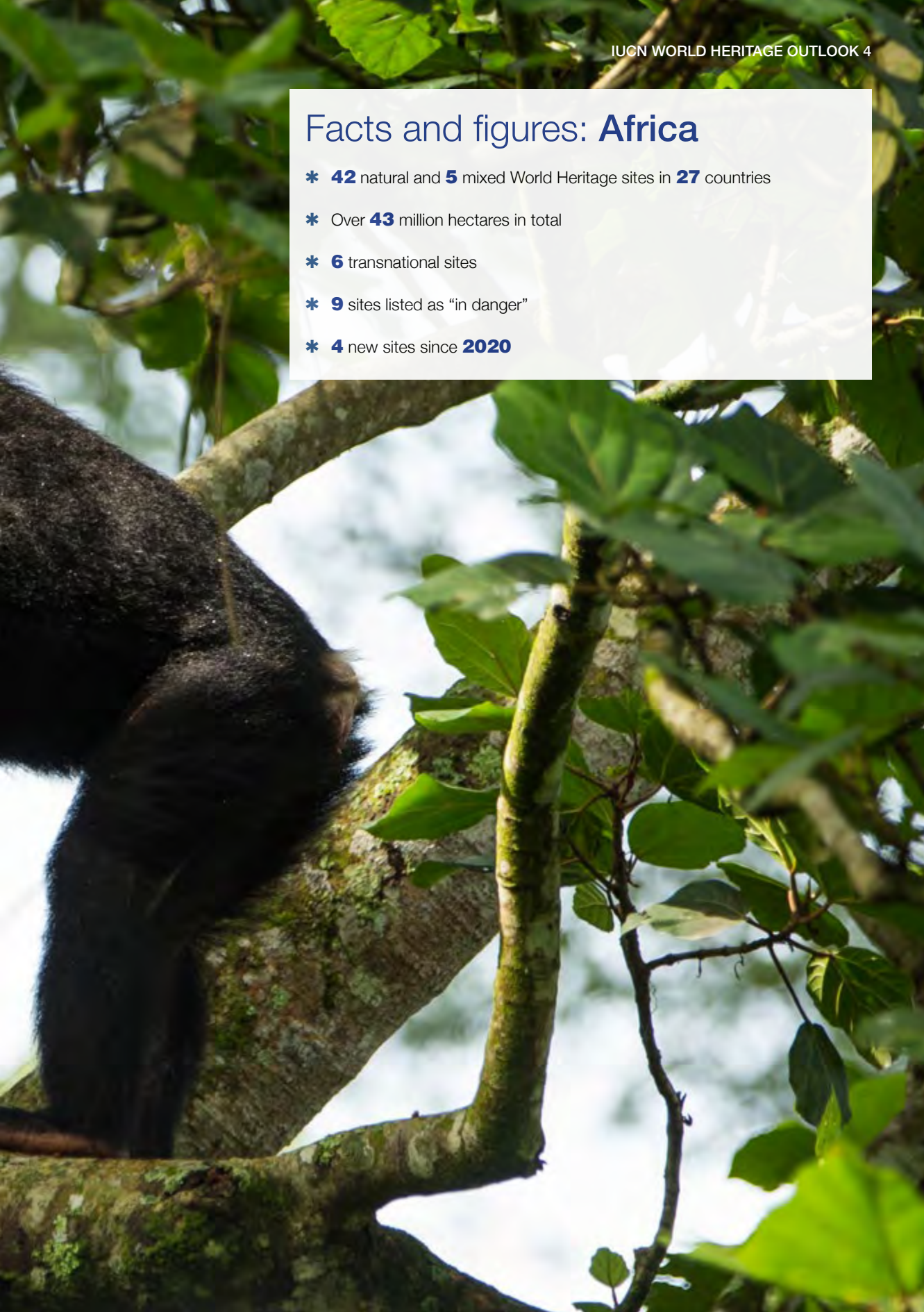
Banc d'Arguin National Park (Mauritania): In 2024, 38% of the management costs of the national park were financially supported by the BACoMaB Trust Fund (Banc d'Arguin and Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Trust Fund). The trust fund was created in 2009 and is managed by professional fund managers (PICTET and Rothschild). Interests from the fund generate recurring annual income to support marine and coastal surveillance, ecological monitoring, governance, local development, scientific research and environmental education. The fund currently holds almost 40 million Euros thanks to contributions over the years from Germany, France, the EU and the now closed MAVA Foundation. Banc d'Arguin has benefitted from almost 4 million Euro in grants between 2014 and 2025, including 630,000 Euro in 2024, providing a sustainable financing mechanism for the conservation of Mauritania's only natural World Heritage site.

Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (Belize): In 2021, IUCN Member, The Nature Conservancy, closed on the Belize Blue Bond Agreement, the largest existing debt conversion for marine conservation at the time. Under the agreement, Belize receives payments when certain jointly agreed measurable milestones are met, including the designation of public lands within the World Heritage site as Mangrove Reserves, and the listing of marine protected areas as IUCN Green List Areas. The World Heritage site and surrounding MPAs now receive 4 million US dollars annually until 2040 to increase biodiversity protection and strengthen the governance frameworks for fisheries.

Regional Outlook: Africa

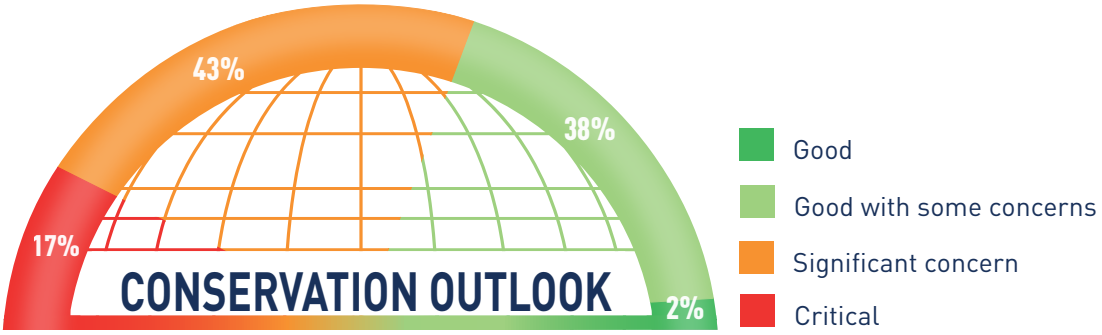
Facts and figures: **Africa**

- **42** natural and **5** mixed World Heritage sites in **27** countries
- Over **43** million hectares in total
- **6** transnational sites
- **9** sites listed as “in danger”
- **4** new sites since **2020**



Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in Africa (total of 47 sites), for 40% the conservation outlook is assessed as either "good" or "good with some concerns", for 43% it is "significant concern" and for 17% the conservation outlook is "critical" (Figure 15). There has been a notable increase in the number of sites assessed as of significant concern compared to 2020 (increase of 13%), while also a decline in the number of sites assessed as critical (decrease of 11%).

Figure 15. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in Africa.



Three new sites were inscribed in Africa since 2020:

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2025	Inscription year
Bale Mountains National Park	Ethiopia	Significant concern	2023
Ivindo National Park	Gabon	Good with some concerns	2021
Nyungwe National Park	Rwanda	Good with some concerns	2023

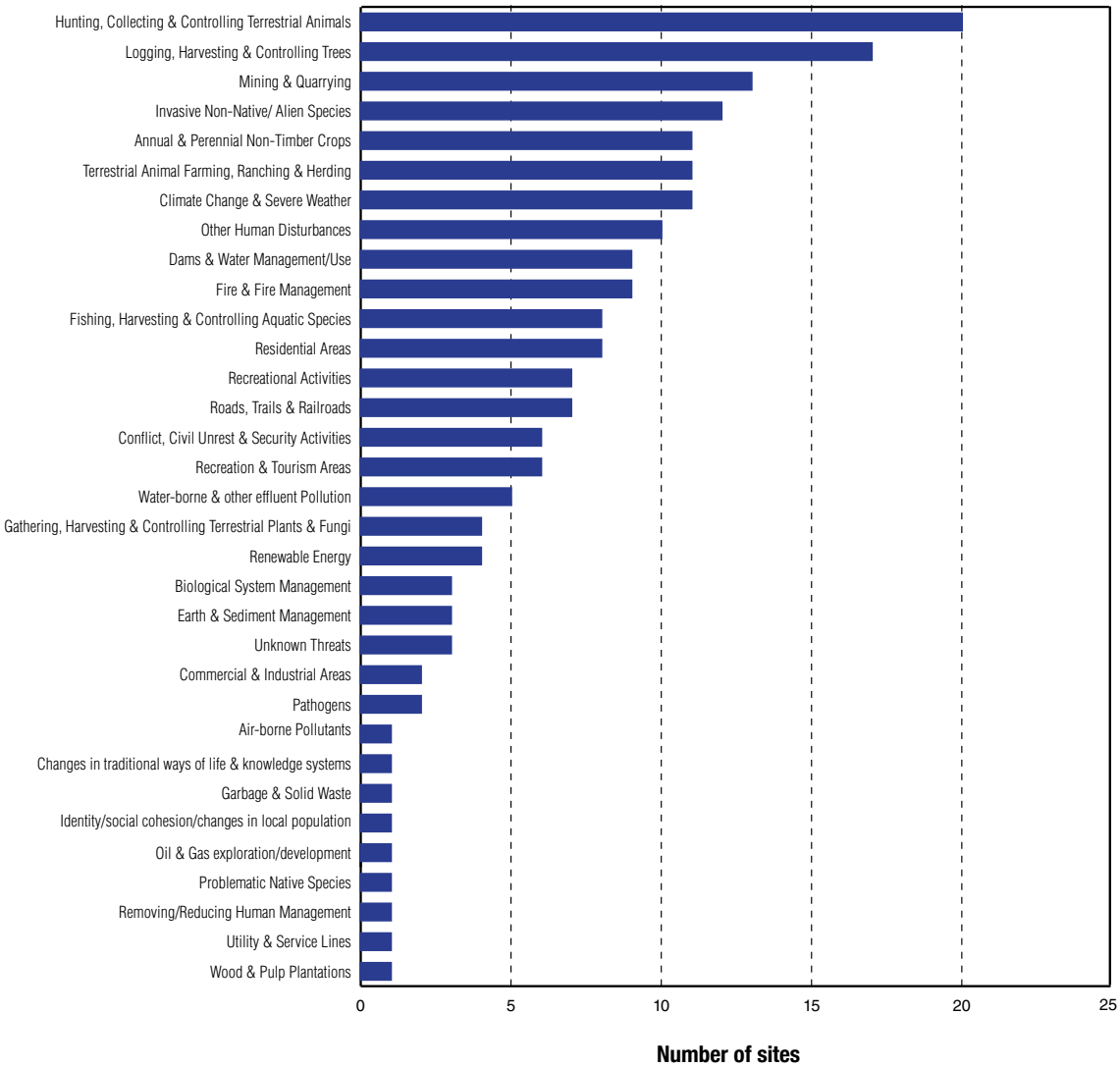
In total, seven sites changed their conservation outlook rating with four sites improving from "critical" to "significant concern" between 2020 and 2025. Two sites declined from "good with some concerns" to significant concern", while one changed from "good" to "good with some concerns".

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
Dja Faunal Reserve	Cameroon	Critical	Significant concern
Garamba National Park	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Critical	Significant concern
Lakes of Ounianga	Chad	Good	Good with some concerns
Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest	Kenya	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Ngorongoro Conservation Area	Tanzania (United Republic of)	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Niokolo-Koba National Park	Senegal	Critical	Significant concern
Salonga National Park	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Critical	Significant concern

Threats

The most prevalent current threats to natural World Heritage sites in Africa are hunting, logging, mining, and invasive alien species (Figure 16). Notably fire is no longer among the top threats. Instead, mining has become a greater threat, moving from the ninth to the third highest threat between 2020 and 2025. However, it is also important to note that some threats are more significant in specific subregions, for example, conflict presents a significant challenge for site managers in West and Central Africa, directly threatening animal populations, while this is not a widespread factor in East and Southern Africa (see Box 10). According to the African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP) 2023-2030 (African Union, 2023) and the IPBES Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Africa (IPBES, 2018) human-induced drivers increasingly threaten biodiversity in Africa. Unplanned urbanisation, habitat loss due to land use change, unsustainable uses and overexploitation of natural resources, poaching and illegal trade in wild species, pollution, and invasive alien species have been identified as the main drivers of ecosystem change. Africa's current population of 1.46 billion is likely to double by 2050, putting severe pressure on the continent's biodiversity and nature's contributions to people, unless appropriate policies and strategies are adopted and effectively implemented. The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* results reflect these broader findings, as four out of the five greatest threats in the assessed sites are human-induced. Although residential areas are not among the top ten greatest current threats for the region's natural World Heritage sites, the increasing pressures associated with urban development on the peripheries of sites has been noted across Conservation Outlook Assessments, as reflected in other threat categories related to natural resource uses e.g. hunting and logging. Therefore, urban development can be considered an underlying contributor of various other threat categories.

Figure 16. Current threats in Africa assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Box 10. Strengthening the Safeguarding of World Heritage in Conflict-Affected Areas

Strengthening the Safeguarding of World Heritage in Conflict-Affected Areas: Challenges and Tailored Responses

By Florence Palla, Youssouph Diedhiou and Paul Ngafack

World Heritage properties located in conflict-affected regions of Central and West Africa face critical and often protracted threats to their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), governance systems, and the safety and well-being of local communities and conservation professionals. In the Great Lakes region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), all five natural World Heritage sites—most notably Virunga National Park, the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, and Kahuzi-Biéga National Park—continue to suffer from chronic instability, exacerbated by the presence of armed groups, illegal mining activities, and land-related conflicts.

In West Africa, the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel is also having severe impacts on both natural and mixed heritage sites, such as the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex (shared by Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger) and the Cliff of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons) in Mali. Insecurity severely restricts access to these sites, threatens local populations and heritage professionals, and impedes the effective implementation of management plans.

Moreover, such conflict dynamics have undermined the traditional role of protected areas in regulating social and economic interactions, sometimes fuelling local distrust toward conservation efforts.

These ongoing and overlapping crises have profound consequences on biodiversity, socio-cultural and socio-ecological systems, intensifying pressure on already scarce natural resources. Forced displacements, intercommunal tensions, militarization of park surroundings, and unregulated exploitation of strategic resources (e.g. gold, coltan, precious timber) contribute to the erosion of the historic relationship between local communities and protected ecosystems.

This situation underscores the limitations of site-level interventions alone and highlights the urgent need for regional and solidarity-based approaches. In line with Articles 3 and 4 of the World Heritage Convention, while States Parties hold primary responsibility for the protection of their heritage, the international community is called upon to act when national capacities are overwhelmed by crisis.

In response to this pressing reality, the World Heritage Committee, through its Decisions 45 COM 7A.8 and 46 COM 7A.50, recommended the organization of a regional workshop in the DRC, in collaboration with UNESCO and its partners, to address the specific challenges of managing World Heritage sites in conflict zones. The workshop aims to bring together States Parties, site managers, researchers, security experts, and international partners to share experiences and develop practical tools for adaptive management, risk-informed planning, and resilience building for both sites and local populations.

It is also essential to promote South-South cooperation to facilitate exchanges among countries facing similar challenges, by valuing local best practices, indigenous knowledge systems, and community-based conflict resolution mechanisms.

The 2025 peace agreement between the DRC and Rwanda represents a breakthrough, offering hope for easing regional tensions and relaunching cross-border conservation initiatives—particularly in shared landscapes such as the Virunga Massif.

Such initiatives reaffirm the essential role of the World Heritage Convention as not only a legal framework, but also a catalyst for international cooperation. In times of crisis, the Convention provides a unified platform to mobilize technical expertise, resources, diplomacy, and political will in the collective mission of safeguarding humanity's most exceptional natural and cultural heritage for present and future generations.

Box 10. Strengthening the Safeguarding of World Heritage in Conflict-Affected Areas (cont.)

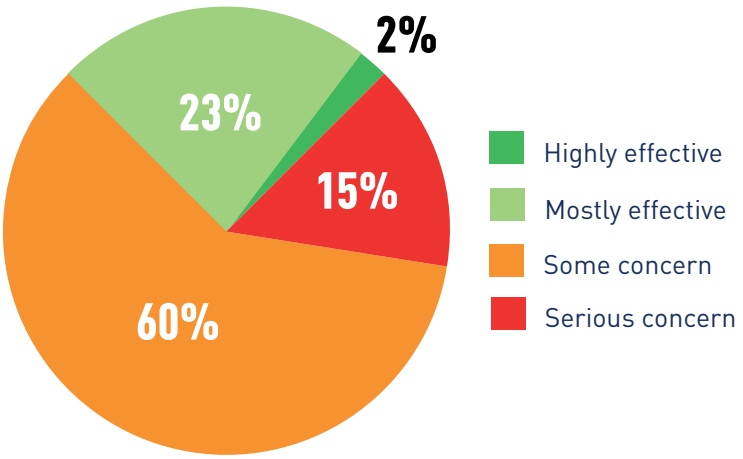
Key Recommendations:

1. Enhance early warning and risk analysis mechanisms related to the security of World Heritage sites.
2. Strengthen community participation in the governance of protected areas, through participatory co-management and mediation mechanisms.
3. Build the capacity of site managers and staff to deal with emergencies (e.g. training in security, first aid, and crisis response).
4. Establish a regional emergency fund for World Heritage sites in danger, supported by international and regional partners.
5. Include protected areas in peace agreements and post-conflict stabilization policies, recognizing them as potential pillars for territorial reconstruction, restoration and social cohesion.

Protection and management

A quarter of sites in Africa are assessed as effectively protected and managed with 2% and 23% considered as highly or mostly effective respectively. Protection and management of 60% of African World Heritage sites are found to be of some concern, while 15% are of serious concern in this regard (Figure 17). Since 2020 there has been a decline in management effectiveness and an increase in the proportion of sites where management is of some concern (increase from 47% in 2020 to 60% in 2025).

Figure 17. 2025 results for protection and management in Africa, as a percentage of all sites in the region.



Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) assessments have been undertaken and/or published for only a small proportion of protected and conserved areas in the region, making it difficult to compare the results from the Conservation Outlook Assessments to other databases. For example, according to the Global Database on Protected Area Management Effectiveness (GD-PAME), PAME assessments had been undertaken in only about 14% (795) of the 5,519 protected and conserved areas in eastern and southern Africa by the end of 2023. Furthermore, incomplete reporting on assessments, the variability in methods used and the reluctance to report on the results, means that information on whether management effectiveness itself (as opposed to the number of assessments) is improving in the region is lacking (IUCN ESARO, 2024). Therefore, Conservation Outlook Assessments can be utilised to fill knowledge gaps and inform improvements in management effectiveness. This is also the case for other regions included in this report.

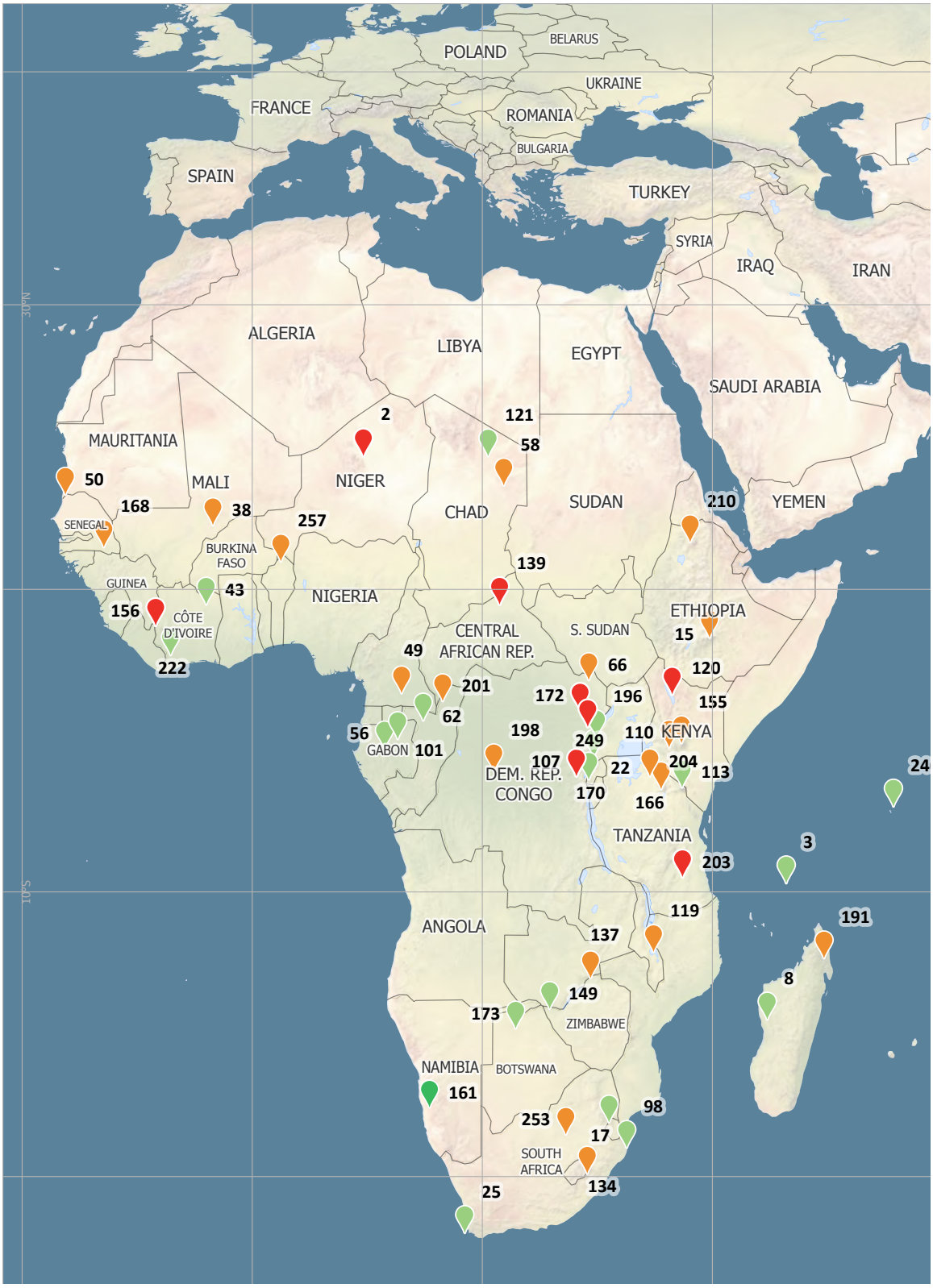
According to IUCN ESARO (2024) there are ongoing endeavours in the eastern and southern African region to recognize and integrate the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples and local communities in conservation activities, improve regional and transboundary collaboration, utilise technological advancements and improve sustainable financing. The management categories integration into local, regional and national planning systems, legal framework and education and interpretation programmes were those most frequently assessed as being mostly or highly effective in African natural World Heritage sites. In comparison, the effectiveness of management system in addressing threats inside and outside the site, sustainable finance and law enforcement were assessed most frequently to be of some or serious concern. This aligns to some extent with the findings from IUCN ESARO for protected and conserved areas in eastern and southern Africa, which identifies challenges in enforcement, financing, climate adaptation, and developing formal governance arrangements to benefit local communities. Especially the complexity of laws and policies governing protected areas in eastern and southern Africa has been noted as an issue for management effectiveness, along with outdated laws that fail to address contemporary conservation issues. It is therefore interesting that the Conservation Outlook Assessments highlight the legal framework of World Heritage sites in Africa to be more effective. This may be in part due to the additional structure and support offered by the World Heritage Convention. Furthermore, an effective legal framework may not directly result in effective implementation of such a framework, as shown by the concerns around law enforcement. Additionally, COVID-19 has significantly impacted sustainable financing for nature conservation in Africa (Waithaka et al., 2021).

Overall, strengthening and effectively implementing policies related to law enforcement, funding, and resource allocation are essential for overcoming these challenges and ensuring the sustainable management and conservation of protected and conserved areas in Africa (IUCN ESARO, 2024).

Map marker		Site
GOOD		
161		Namib Sand Sea, Namibia
GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS		
3		Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles
8		Andrefana Dry Forests, Madagascar
17		Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains, South Africa
22		Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda
25		Cape Floral Region Protected Areas, South Africa
43		Comoé National Park, Côte d'Ivoire
56		Ecosystem and Relict Cultural Landscape of Lopé-Okanda, Gabon
62	*	Forest Massif of Odzala-Kokoua, Congo
98		iSimangaliso Wetland Park – Maputo National Park, Mozambique, South Africa
101	*	Ivindo National Park, Gabon
113		Kilimanjaro National Park, United Republic of Tanzania
121	▼	Lakes of Ounianga, Chad
149		Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls, Zambia, Zimbabwe
170	*	Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda
173		Okavango Delta, Botswana
196		Rwenzori Mountains National Park, Uganda
222		Taï National Park, Côte d'Ivoire
246		Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve, Seychelles
SIGNIFICANT CONCERN		
15	*	Bale Mountains National Park, Ethiopia
38		Cliff of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons), Mali
49	▲	Dja Faunal Reserve, Cameroon
50		Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary, Senegal
58		Ennedi Massif: Natural and Cultural Landscape, Chad
66	▲	Garamba National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo
110		Kenya Lake System in the Great Rift Valley, Kenya
119		Lake Malawi National Park, Malawi
134		Maloti-Drakensberg Park, Lesotho, South Africa
137		Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas, Zimbabwe
155	▼	Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest, Kenya
166	▼	Ngorongoro Conservation Area, United Republic of Tanzania
168	▲	Niokolo-Koba National Park, Senegal
191		Rainforests of the Atsinanana, Madagascar
198	▲	Salonga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo
201		Sangha Trinational, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo
204		Serengeti National Park, United Republic of Tanzania
210		Simien National Park, Ethiopia
253		Vredefort Dome, South Africa
257		W-Arly-Pendjari Complex, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger
CRITICAL		
2		Aïr and Ténéré Natural Reserves, Niger
107		Kahuzi-Biéga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo
120		Lake Turkana National Parks, Kenya
139		Manovo-Gounda St Floris National Park, Central African Republic
156		Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea
172		Okapi Wildlife Reserve, Democratic Republic of the Congo
203		Selous Game Reserve, United Republic of Tanzania
249		Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020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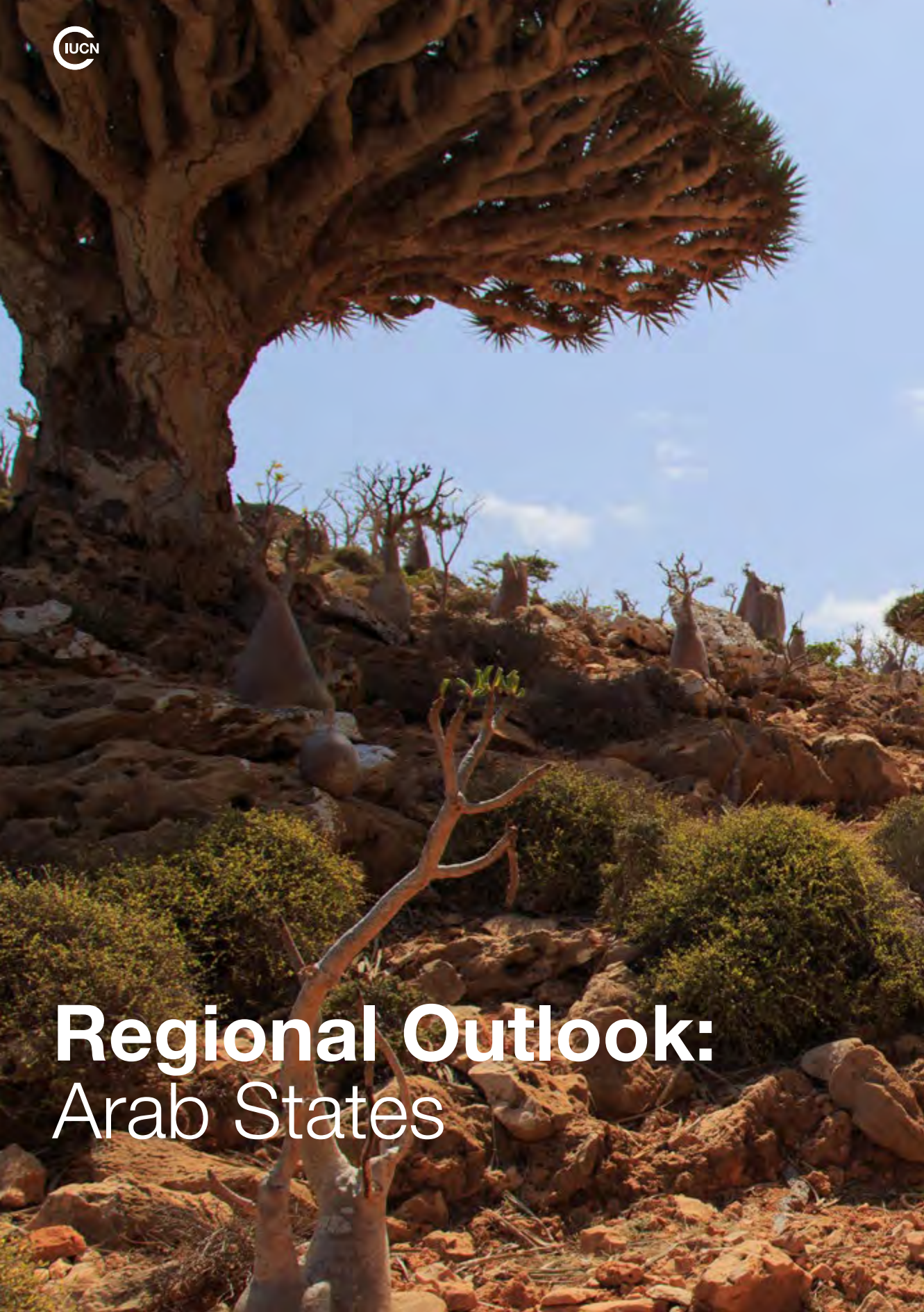
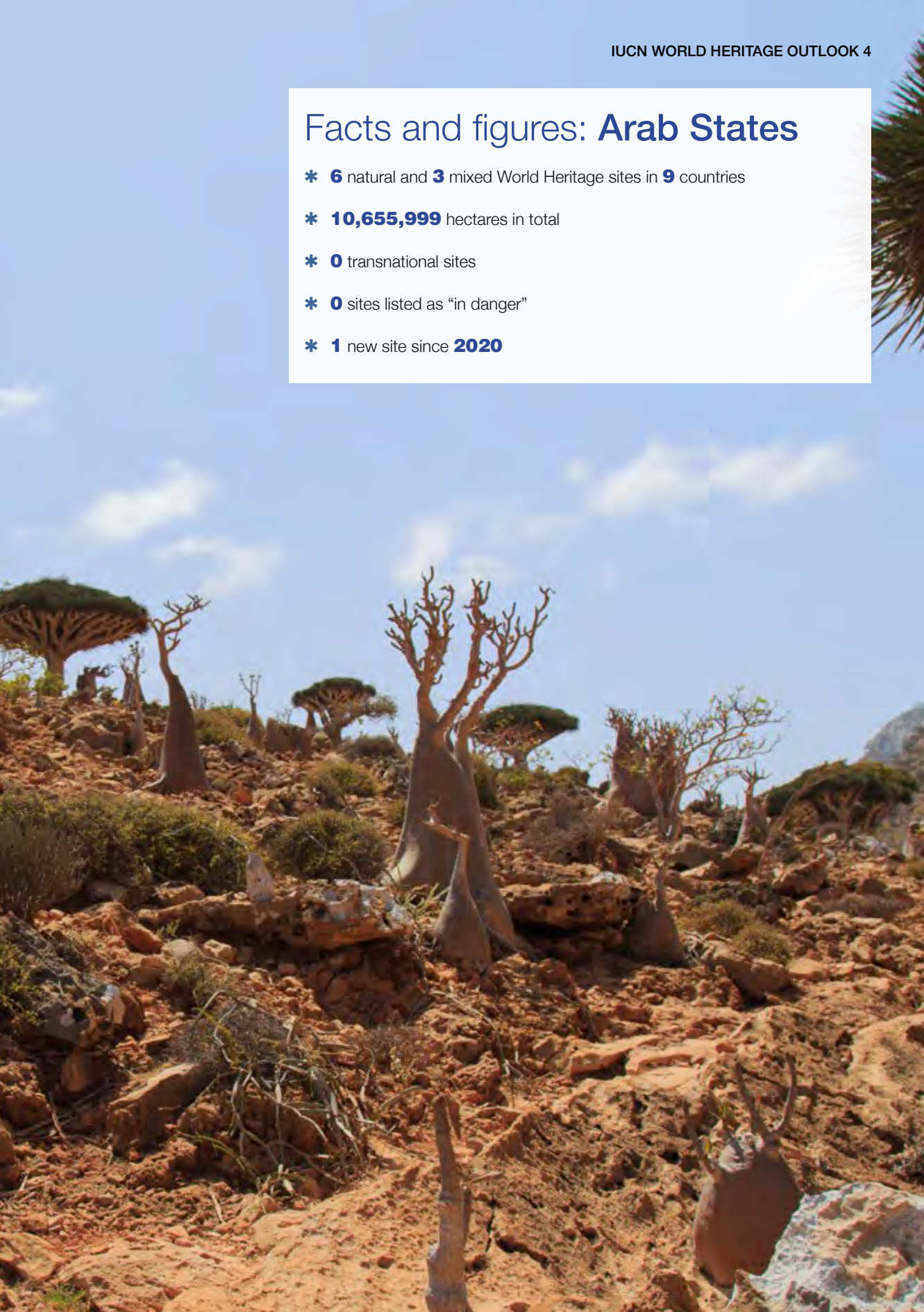


Regional Outlook:
Arab States

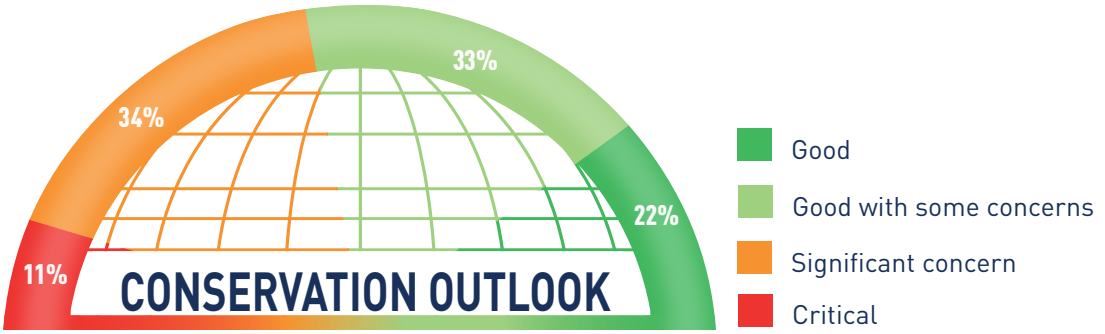
Facts and figures: **Arab States**

- **6** natural and **3** mixed World Heritage sites in **9** countries
- **10,655,999** hectares in total
- **0** transnational sites
- **0** sites listed as “in danger”
- **1** new site since **2020**



Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in the Arab States (total of 9 sites), for 55% the conservation outlook is assessed as either "good" or "good with some concerns", for 34% it is "significant concern" and for one site (11%) the conservation outlook is "critical" (Figure 18). The proportion of sites with a positive outlook has not changed significantly since the last cycle.

Figure 18. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in the Arab States.



One site has been inscribed in the Arab States since 2020:

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2025	Inscription year
'Uruq Bani Ma'arid	Saudi Arabia	Good	2023

Of the sites that were inscribed in 2020 or earlier, and therefore already assessed in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2020, one site changed its conservation outlook rating. The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities has changed from "significant concern" to "critical" due to the very high threat from oil exploration activities.

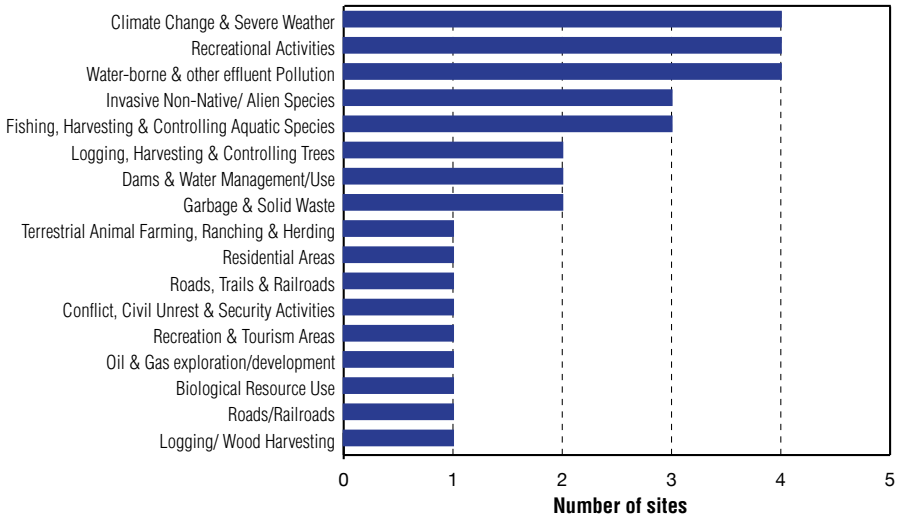
Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities	Iraq	Significant concern	Critical

Threats

Water-borne and effluent pollution, tourism activities (e.g. vandalism of geological features, offroad driving, disturbance of breeding birds) and climate change are the most prevalent current threats to natural World Heritage in the Arab States (Figure 19). In four sites, these three threats were rated as high or very high, followed by fishing and invasive alien species. In comparison to 2020, where solid waste was the most prevalent threat along with climate change, solid waste and garbage is not among the top five greatest threats in 2025.

The identified threats align with those identified by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA, 2023) as being key drivers and pressures for biodiversity loss and land degradation in the region. Limited solid waste and wastewater management, along with climate change are mentioned as main drivers in three of the four subregions. Interestingly, although various human activities like overgrazing and infrastructure developments are highlighted, increasing impacts from tourism have not been noted as a high threat for natural ecosystems in the Arab States, as shown by the Conservation Outlook Assessments.

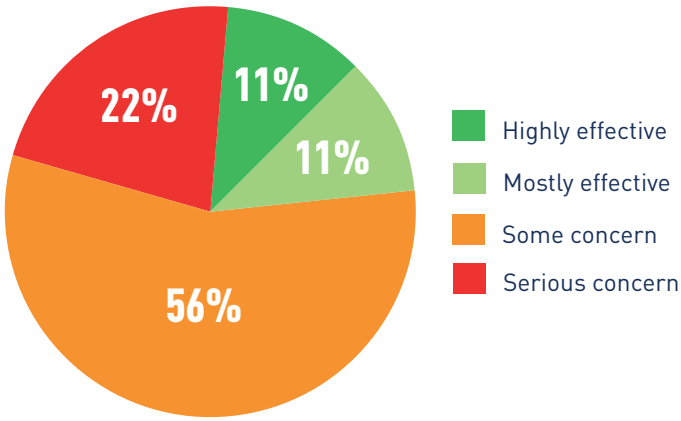
Figure 19. Current threats in the Arab States assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Protection and management

Two sites in the Arab States are assessed as having highly or mostly effective protection and management: Wadi Al-Hitan (Whale Valley) (Egypt) and the recently inscribed 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid (Saudi Arabia), representing 22% of the nine sites in the region. In 56% of sites, protection and management was assessed as of some concern, while in two sites (22%), Socotra Archipelago (Yemen) and The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities (Iraq) protection and management was assessed of serious concern (Figure 20). The outstanding finalisation of key management plans and insufficient capacity to fully and effectively address threats remain issues in both sites.

Figure 20. 2025 results for protection and management in the Arab States, % of all sites in the region.



Overall, the key issues related to protection and management relate to the general effectiveness of the management system in addressing threats inside and outside the site boundaries, staff capacity, law enforcement, governance arrangements, involvement of stakeholders and rightsholders, integration into national and regional planning systems, tourism and visitation management and monitoring. As mentioned in other regional chapters, with recreational activities being a top threat, the weaknesses in tourism management need to be urgently addressed to avoid negative impacts from visitation. On the other hand, sustainable finance, boundaries, legal framework and education and interpretation programmes were the categories most frequently assessed as being mostly or highly effective. Considering that sustainable finance is a serious issue across several other regions, this may present opportunities for interregional learning and support.

Map marker		Site	
1	*	Uruq Bani Ma'arid, Saudi Arabia	GOOD
255		Wadi Al-Hitan (Whale Valley), Egypt	
199		Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dungonab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park, Sudan	GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS
226		Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria	
256		Wadi Rum Protected Area, Jordan	
16		Banc d'Arguin National Park, Mauritania	SIGNIFICANT CONCERN
93		Ichkeul National Park, Tunisia	
213		Socotra Archipelago, Yemen	
231	▼	The Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities, Iraq	CRITICAL

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020


FRANCE
ROMANIA
BULGARIA
SPAIN
93
TURKEY
SYRIA
255
IRAQ
IRAN
256
231
ALGERIA
226
LIBYA
EGYPT
SAUDI ARABIA
199
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16
MAURITANIA
MALI
NIGER
CHAD
SUDAN
YEMEN
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SENEGAL
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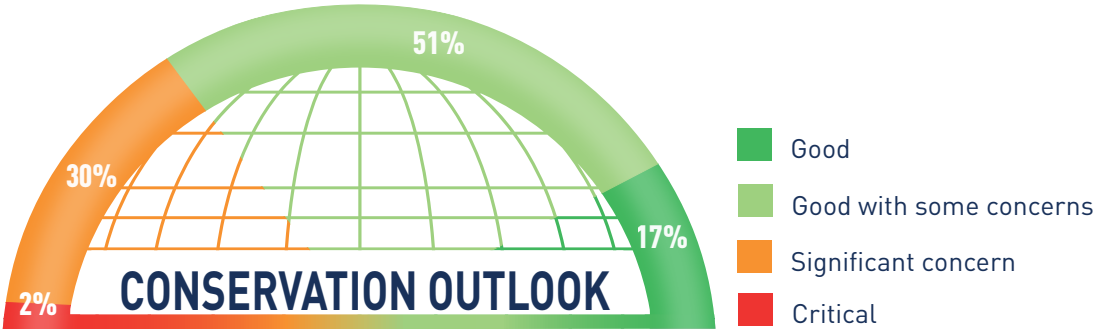
Regional Outlook:
Asia

Facts and figures: **Asia**

- **57** natural and **6** mixed World Heritage sites in **19** countries
- Over **27** million hectares in total
- **5** transnational sites
- **1** site listed as “in danger”
- **6** new sites since **2020**

Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in Asia (total of 63 sites), the conservation outlook is "good" for 17%, and "good with some concerns" for a further 51%. For 30% of sites, the conservation outlook is of "significant concern", and for one site (2%) the conservation outlook is assessed as "critical" (Figure 21). There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of sites with a "good" (decrease of 1%) and "good with some concerns" (decrease of 3%) conservation outlook, and an increase in the proportion of sites with a conservation outlook of "significant concern" (increase of 4%).

Figure 21. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in Asia.



Six new sites have been inscribed in Asia since 2020:

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2025	Inscription year
Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, Northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island	Japan	Good with some concerns	2021
Badain Jaran Desert - Towers of Sand and Lakes	China	Good	2024
Cold Winter Deserts of Turan	Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Good with some concerns	2023
Getbol, Korean Tidal Flats	Republic of Korea (South Korea)	Good with some concerns	2021
Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex	Thailand	Good with some concerns	2021
Tugay forests of the Tigrovaya Balka Nature Reserve	Tajikistan	Significant concern	2023

Of the sites that were inscribed in 2020 or earlier, and therefore already assessed in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2020, five have changed conservation outlook since 2020. One site has an improved its conservation outlook, while for four sites the conservation outlook has declined.

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago	Viet Nam	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Lut Desert	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Good	Good with some concerns
Mount Wuyi	China	Good with some concerns	Good
Sundarbans National Park	India	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Ujung Kulon National Park	Indonesia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern

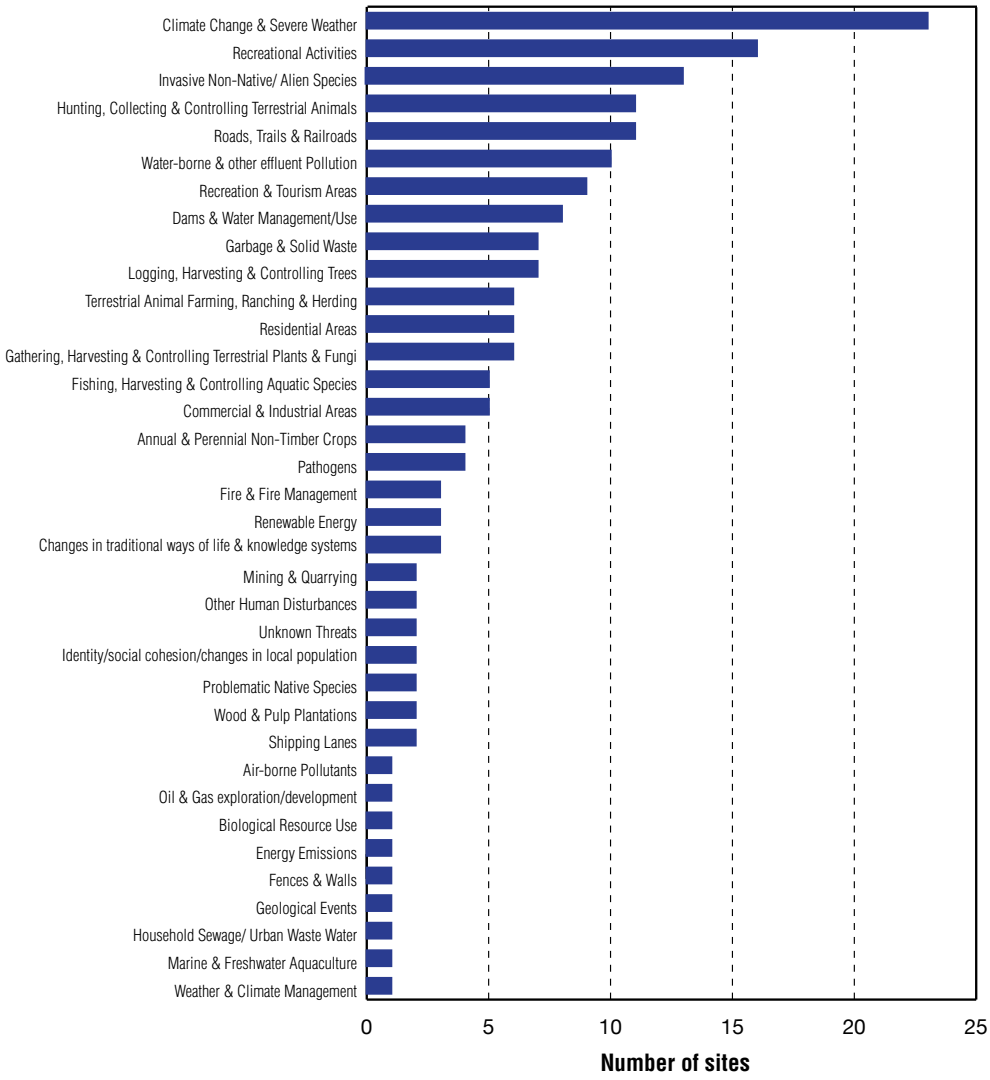
Threats

In 2025 climate change is the most prevalent current threat for natural World Heritage in Asia, while in 2020 it was hunting. Tourism activities remain the second greatest threat, as in 2020. However, invasive alien species are now the third highest threat, while in 2020, this was not ranked among the top three greatest threats (Figure 22). It is also notable that roads and railroads are now among the top five greatest threats to natural World Heritage in Asia, while in 2020 this was not the case. According to Chowdhury et al. (2022) protected areas in South Asia are exposed to a broad range of anthropogenic threats. High demand for land has resulted in rapid habitat clearance and land use changes. Forest fires, hunting, roadkill, waste disposal, encroachment, illegal logging, road construction and other development activities are causing habitat alteration and biodiversity loss, even within legally protected areas. In both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, major roads have opened areas of forest to settlement and resource extraction, mostly in the tropics. Road development has also been associated with rising tourism pressure. In Asia overall, agricultural and urban expansion have been attributed as main drivers of habitat loss (Rafiei et al., 2025). However, according to the Conservation Outlook Assessments, residential areas, annual and perennial non-timber crops, terrestrial animal farming and logging are not among the top five threats for natural World Heritage in the region.

Overlaying anthropogenic pressures, climate change has accelerated biodiversity loss in Asia through alteration of ecosystems, coral bleaching, and melting of Himalayan glaciers threatening freshwater ecosystems (Rafiei et al., 2025). This is well reflected in the Conservation Outlook Assessments.

While some of these broader threats to protected areas in the region are mirrored in the Conservation Outlook Assessments, not all the identified factors pose a high or very high threat to the specific World Heritage values and underlying attributes each site was inscribed for.

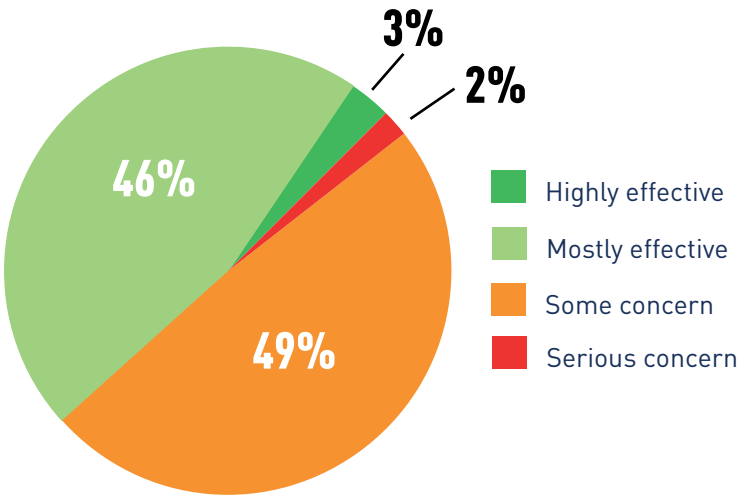
Figure 22. Current threats in Asia assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Protection and management

About half the assessed World Heritage sites in Asia have highly or mostly effective protection and management with 3% under highly effective and a further 46% under mostly effective protection and management (Figure 23). This is a slight decline from 2020, where 5% were under highly effective and 48% were under mostly effective protection and management. In 49% of sites in Asia, protection and management are of some concern and in 2% of serious concern. Although there has been a decrease in the number of sites where protection and management were assessed as of serious concern, there has been an increase in the number of sites where protection and management are of some concern, compared to 2020 (difference of 6%).

Figure 23. 2025 results for protection and management in Asia, % of all sites in the region.



The management categories assessed most frequently as mostly or highly effective were education and interpretation programmes, research and legal framework, while the effectiveness of the management system in addressing threats outside the site, tourism and visitation management and staff capacity were assessed most frequently to be of some or serious concern. Considering that recreational activities appear to be the second greatest threat to the assessed World Heritage sites in Asia, it is important that the identified weaknesses in tourism and visitation management are addressed as a matter of priority.

While other studies have highlighted issues regarding sustainable use, relationships with local communities and conservation awareness (e.g. Chowdhury et al., 2022), these are not reflected in the Conservation Outlook Assessments for the region. Especially regarding education and awareness raising, World Heritage sites in Asia offer good practice examples of how to engage younger generations, visitors and local communities in conservation through educational programmes. For example, in Mount Wuyi (China) there are several cultural and natural museums, and in 2023 and 2024, UNESCO hosted two Youth into Forest programs there. The park has established science exhibition halls and organized events like the Ecological Culture Festival and Nature Observation Festival to promote ecological awareness. Recently, it has built multiple ecological education bases, including a national youth green camp, providing venues for students and the public. It integrates school education with nature education through activities such as ecological expeditions and science classes in schools, enhancing its brand image. These efforts have made ecological protection a societal trend, fostering widespread participation in conservation. In Sinharaja Forest Reserve (Sri Lanka), the Sinharaja Forest Landscape Management Plan specifically identifies the provision of a world-class education and awareness experience to visitors of the World Heritage site as a strategic sub-objective, indicating the commitment of the management agency to this issue.

Map	Marker	Site
14	*	Badain Jaran Desert - Towers of Sand and Lakes, China
34		Chengjiang Fossil Site, China
35		China Danxia, China
102		Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes, Republic of Korea
112		Khangchendzonga National Park, India
151		Mount Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area, China
153		Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary, Philippines
154		Mount Huangshan, China
157		Mount Sanqingshan National Park, China
159	▲	Mount Wuyi, China
206		Shirakami-Sanchi, Japan

GOOD

5	*	Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, Northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island, Japan
42	*	Cold Winter Deserts of Turan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
61		Fanjingshan, China
67	*	Getbol, Korean Tidal Flats, Republic of Korea
75		Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, India
80		Gunung Mulu National Park, Malaysia
88		Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area, China
90		Hubei Shennongjia, China
103		Jiuzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area, China
106	*	Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex, Thailand
109		Kaziranga National Park, India
111		Keoladeo National Park, India
114		Kinabalu Park, Malaysia
122		Landscapes of Dauria, Mongolia, Russian Federation
132	▼	Lut Desert, Iran (Islamic Republic of)
158		Mount Taishan, China
162		Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, India
171		Ogasawara Islands, Japan
186		Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park, Philippines
190		Qinghai Hoh Xil, China
202		Saryarka – Steppe and Lakes of Northern Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan
207		Shiretoko, Japan
209		Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries - Wolong, Mt Siguniang and Jiajin Mountains, China
214		South China Karst, China
223		Tajik National Park (Mountains of the Pamirs), Tajikistan
236		Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries, Thailand
239		Trang An Landscape Complex, Viet Nam
241		Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, Philippines
245		Uvs Nuur Basin, Mongolia, Russian Federation
267		Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area, China
268		Xinjiang Tianshan, China
269		Yakushima, Japan

GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

29		Central Highlands of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
37		Chitwan National Park, Nepal
52		Dong Phayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex, Thailand
81	▼	Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago, Viet Nam
91		Hyrcanian Forests, Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of)
116		Komodo National Park, Indonesia
128		Lorentz National Park, Indonesia
138		Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, India
143		Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China, China
180		Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park and Hin Nam No National Park, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam
197		Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal
211		Sinharaja Forest Reserve, Sri Lanka
218	▼	Sundarbans National Park, India
234		The Sundarbans, Bangladesh
235		Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas, China
242	*	Tugay forests of the Tigrovaya Balka Nature Reserve, Tajikistan
243	▼	Ujung Kulon National Park, Indonesia
261		Western Ghats, India
262		Western Tien-Shan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan

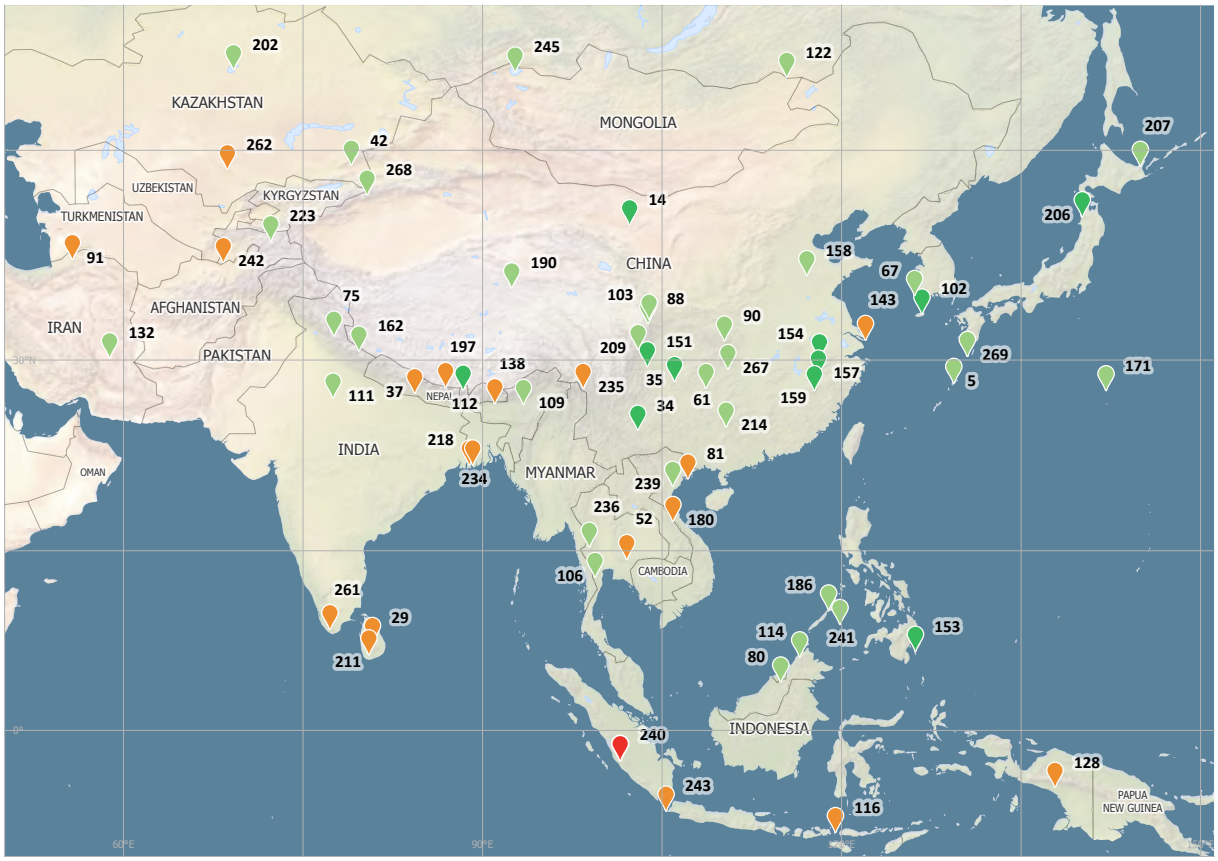
SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

240		Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra, Indonesia

CRITICAL

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020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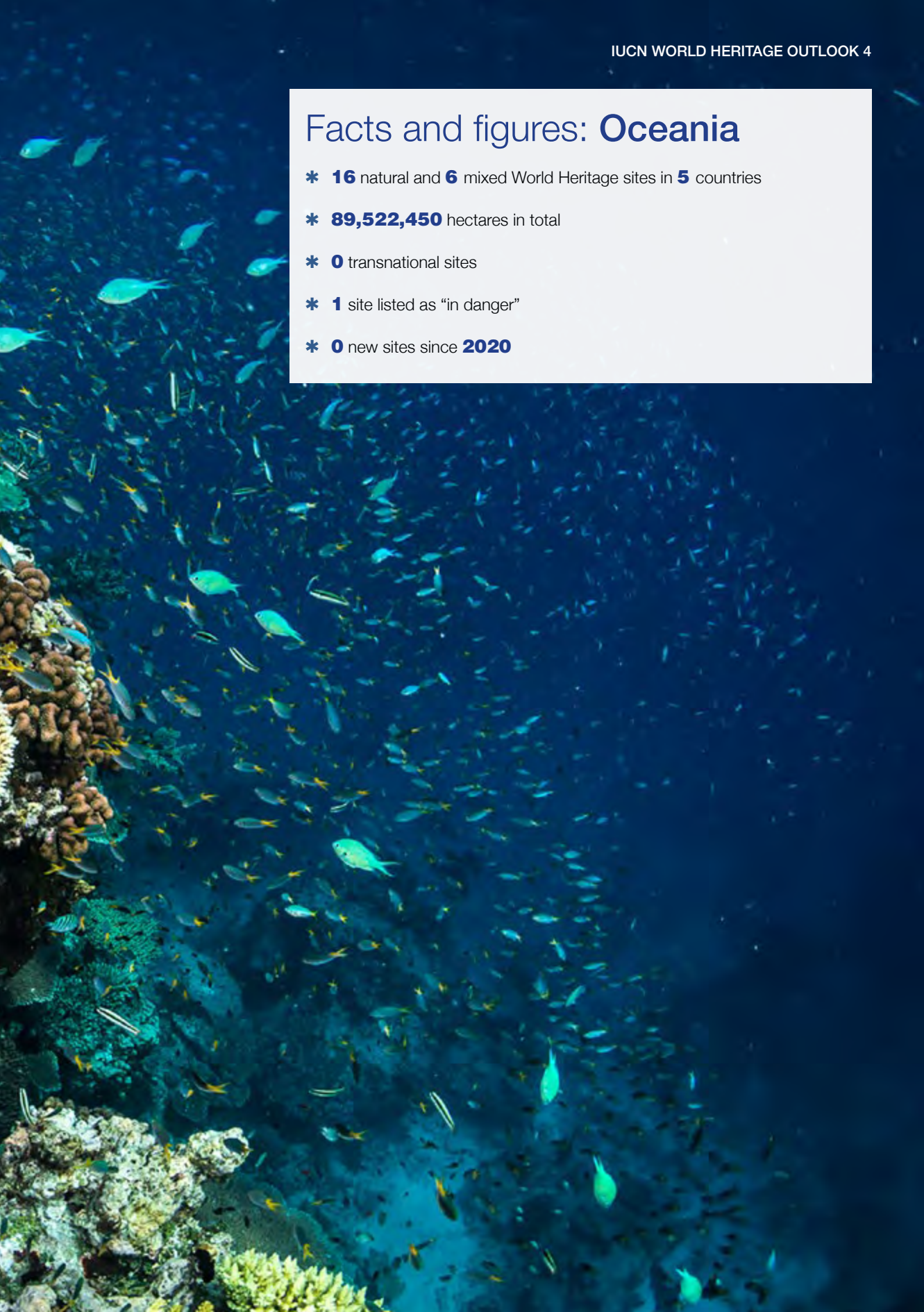
Regional Outlook: Oceania

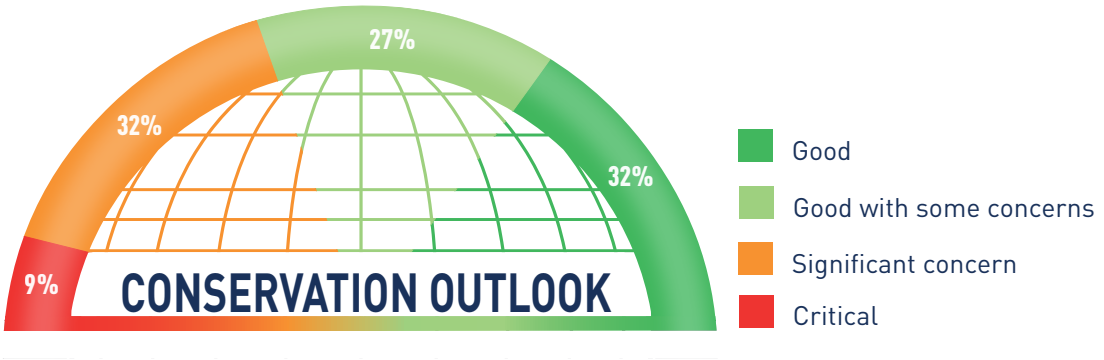


Facts and figures: **Oceania**

* **16** natural and **6** mixed World Heritage sites in **5** countries
* **89,522,450** hectares in total
* **0** transnational sites
* **1** site listed as “in danger”
* **0** new sites since **2020**

Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in Oceania (total of 22 sites), the conservation outlook is "good" for 32%, and "good with some concerns" for a further 27%. For 32% of sites, the conservation outlook is of "significant concern", and for two sites (9%) the conservation outlook is assessed as "critical" (Figure 24). This is a marked change since the last cycle with a 14% increase in the percentage of sites assessed as "significant concern". For several, this is due to the impacts of marine stress events on coral reef ecosystems and coral-reef dependent communities and species. For other sites, issues in protection and management have led to a change in the overall outlook rating.

Figure 24. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in Oceania.



No new sites were inscribed in Oceania since 2020.

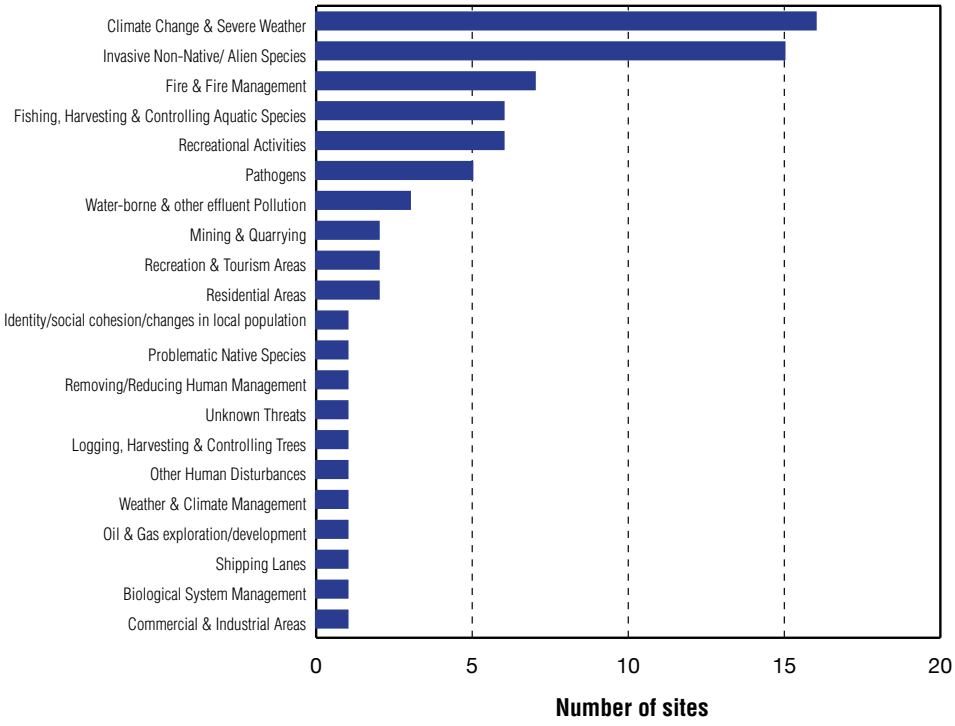
Of the sites that were inscribed in 2020 or earlier, and therefore already assessed in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2020, five sites declined: two from "good" to "good with some concerns"and three from "good with some concerns" to "significant concern. One site has an improved conservation outlook since 2020: Macquarie Island (Australia) has changed from "good with some concerns" to "good", in part due to the effective measures to eradicate invasive alien species (see Box 4).

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh / Naracoorte)	Australia	Good	Good with some concerns
Macquarie Island	Australia	Good with some concerns	Good
Ningaloo Coast	Australia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Phoenix Islands Protected Area	Kiribati	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Purnululu National Park	Australia	Good	Good with some concerns
Shark Bay, Western Australia	Australia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern

Threats

In Oceania, by far the most prevalent current threats to natural World Heritage sites are climate change and invasive alien species which affect a disproportionately large number of sites (Figure 25). This remains consistent with the findings in 2020, however climate change is now the greatest current threat, while in 2020 this was invasive alien species. As mentioned previously, these threats are likely linked. Climate change is assessed as a high or very high threat for 16 out of the total 22 sites in Oceania, therefore significantly affecting 73% of the assessed sites in the region. Alongside climate change and invasive alien species the State of Protected and Conserved Areas in Oceania report (Nimwegen et al., 2022) also highlights habitat loss and degradation, overexploitation, pollution and loss of traditional knowledge practice and belief systems as key threats. However, these threats did not rate among the top three threats for natural World Heritage sites in the region, according to the Conservation Outlook Assessments.

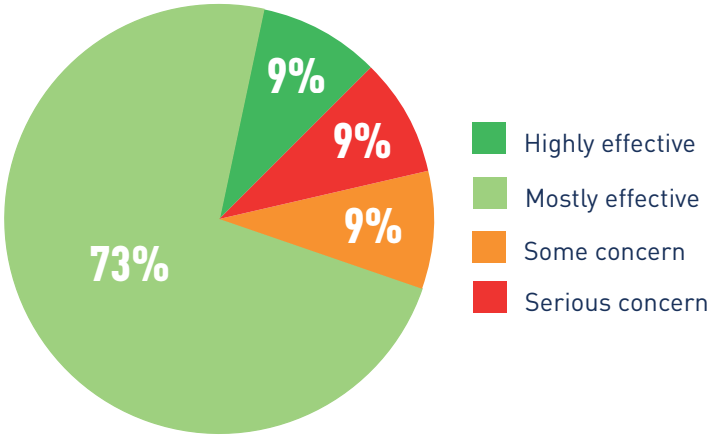
Figure 25. Current threats in Oceania assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Protection and management

Overall, most World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values in Oceania benefit from effective protection and management with 9% of sites assessed as highly effective and 73% of sites assessed as mostly effective. However, in two sites, representing 9% of the total sites in Oceania, protection and management are of serious concern (Figure 26). As in 2017 and 2020, protection and management in East Rennell (Solomon Islands) continues to face several issues. There is still no legal mechanism that protects the site from commercial logging and mining, that clarifies management arrangements or recognizes how customary practices provide protection. However, due to the traditional / customary management in place, the site's isolation, and through the general goodwill of the communities of East Rennell, most of the key values and associated attributes remain intact. The other site where protection and management are of serious concern is Phoenix Islands Protected Area (Kiribati), where the dissolution of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) Trust and the Government of Kiribati's decision to lift the closure of the area as a no-take zone and to introduce a Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) for the sustainable use of marine resources within the World Heritage site, raises serious concerns.

Figure 26. 2025 results for protection and management in Oceania, % of all sites in the region.



The management categories most frequently assessed to be mostly or highly effective were governance arrangements, law enforcement, legal framework, involvement of stakeholders and rightsholders in decision-making processes and integration into local, regional and national planning systems. Monitoring, sustainable finance and overall management plan and system were most often assessed to be of some or serious concern. The IUCN gap study on natural World Heritage in Oceania (Sheppard et al., 2025) and the State of Protected and Conserved Areas in Oceania report (Nimwegen et al., 2022) also highlight that inadequate funding is a key constraint to the effective implementation of natural World Heritage sites.

Most protected and conserved areas in Oceania have a long history of interaction between ecosystems and people, meaning that they can be considered as cultural landscapes and seascapes. It is therefore very positive that good governance and involvement of stakeholders and rightsholders, in decision-making processes are rated highly for the region. This indicates that efforts are successful in meaningfully engaging with Indigenous peoples and implementing formal mechanisms for their involvement in World Heritage management.

Map marker		Site
83		Heard and McDonald Islands, Australia
127		Lord Howe Island Group, Australia
133	▲	Macquarie Island, Australia
165		New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands, New Zealand
238		Tongariro National Park, New Zealand
244		Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park, Australia
265		Willandra Lakes Region, Australia

GOOD

13	▼	Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh / Naracoorte), Australia
105		K'gari, Australia
187	▼	Purnululu National Park, Australia
195		Rock Islands Southern Lagoon, Palau
225		Tasmanian Wilderness, Australia
228		Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand, New Zealand

GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

70		Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, Australia
77		Greater Blue Mountains Area, Australia
108		Kakadu National Park, Australia
167	▼	Ningaloo Coast, Australia
179	▼	Phoenix Islands Protected Area, Kiribati
205	▼	Shark Bay, Western Australia, Australia
263		Wet Tropics of Queensland, Australia

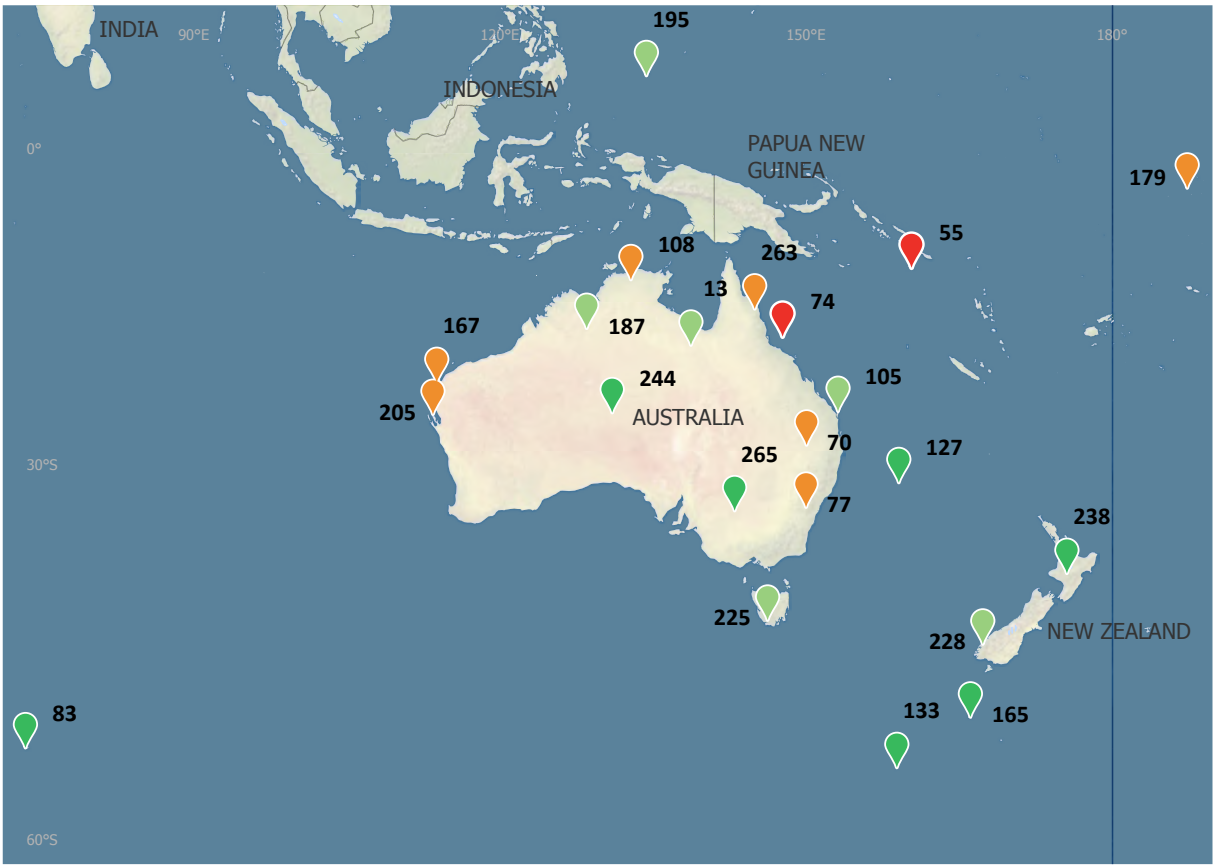
SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

55		East Rennell, Solomon Islands
74		Great Barrier Reef, Australia

CRITICAL

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020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AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALAND
195
179
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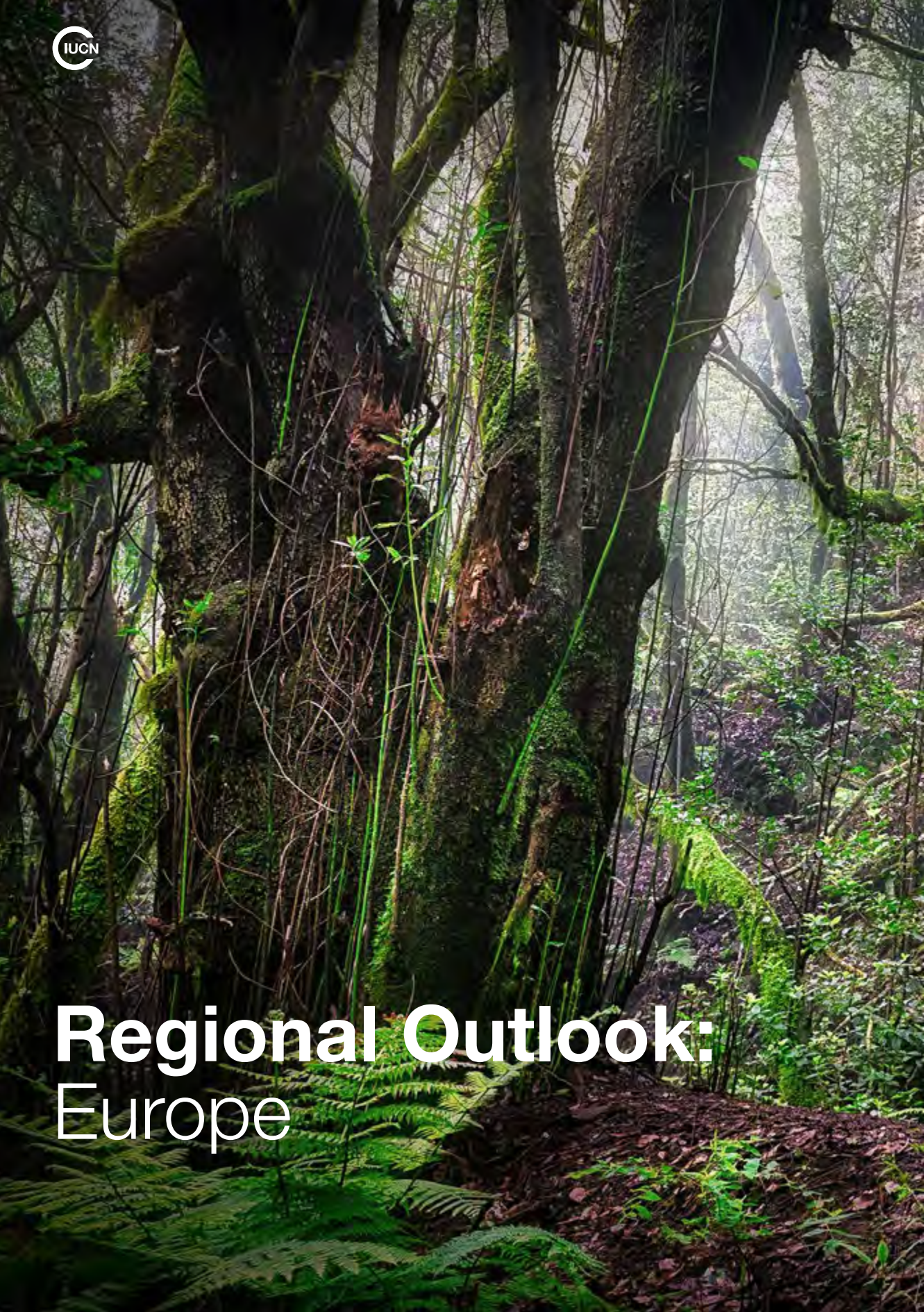
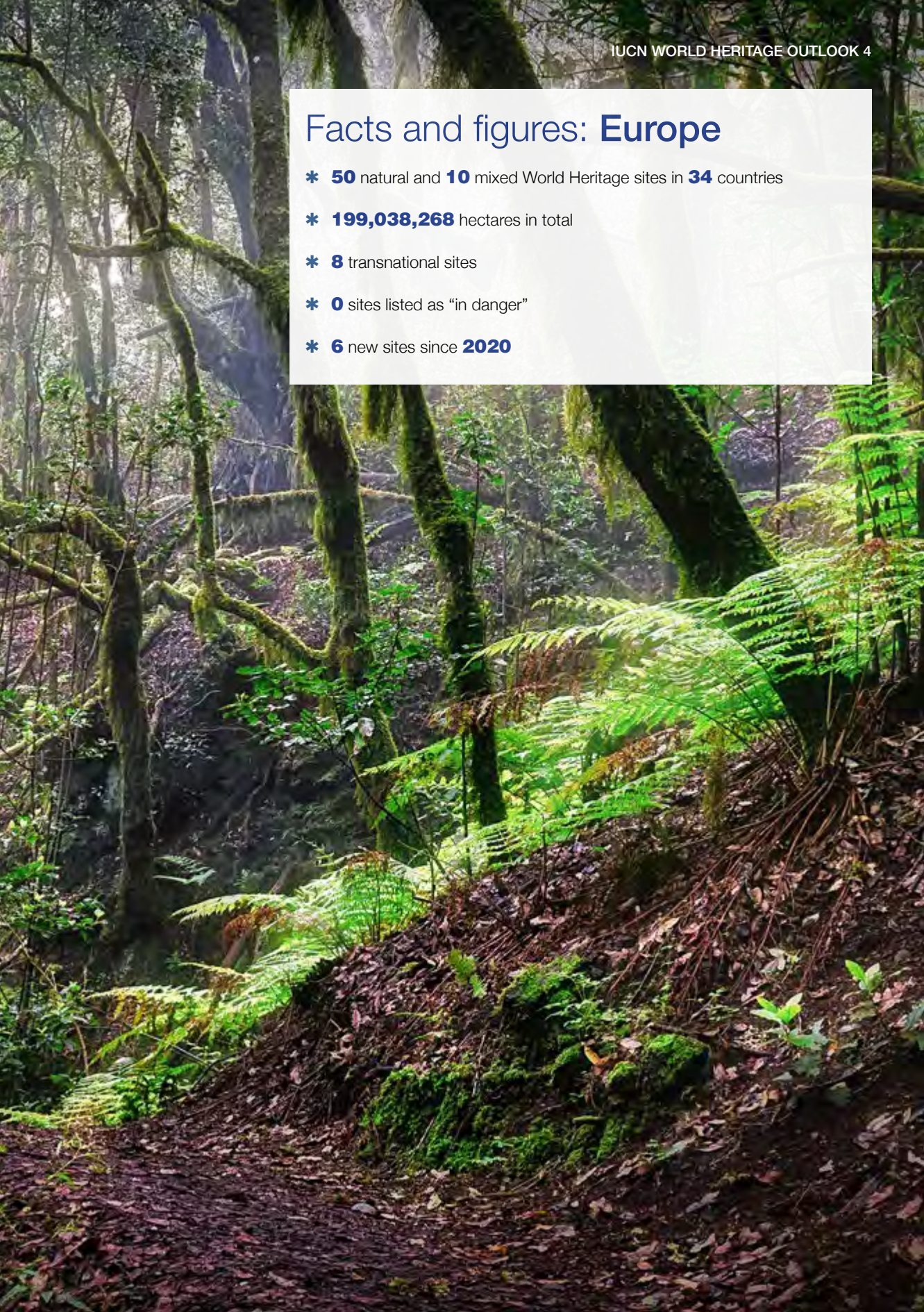


Regional Outlook: Europe

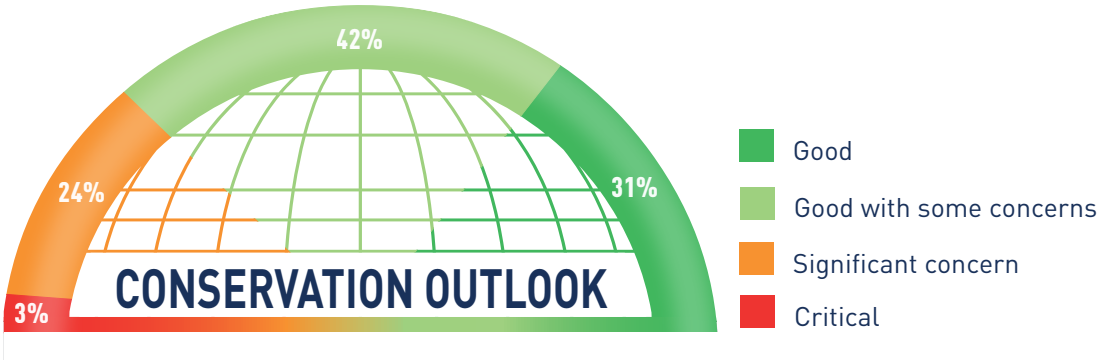


Facts and figures: **Europe**

- **50** natural and **10** mixed World Heritage sites in **34** countries
- **199,038,268** hectares in total
- **8** transnational sites
- **0** sites listed as “in danger”
- **6** new sites since **2020**

Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in Europe (total of 60 sites), for almost two thirds (63%) the conservation outlook is "good" (31%) or "good with some concerns" (42%). For 24% the conservation outlook is assessed as "significant concern" and there are two sites (3%) for which the conservation outlook is assessed as "critical" (Figure 27). 1% is "data deficient" due to there not being sufficient information available to assess the conservation outlook of Lena Pillars Nature Park (Russian Federation). Since 2020 there has been a decline in the percentage of sites assessed as "good" or "good with some concerns" and an increase in the percentage assessed as "significant concern". Furthermore, Białowieża Forest (Belarus, Poland) and Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region (Albania, North Macedonia) are now rated as "critical".

Figure 27. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in Europe.



Six new sites have been inscribed in Europe since 2020:

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2025	Inscription year
Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands	Georgia	Good	2021
Evaporitic Karst and Caves of Northern Apennines	Italy	Good with some concerns	2023
Te Henua Enata – The Marquesas Islands	France	Good with some concerns	2024
The Flow Country	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)	Good	2024
Vjetrenica Cave, Ravno	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Good	2024
Volcanoes and Forests of Mount Pelée and the Pitons of Northern Martinique	France	Significant concern	2023

Of the sites that were inscribed in 2020 or earlier, and therefore already assessed in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2020, five sites improved their conservation outlook. Chaîne des Puys - Limagne fault tectonic arena improved its conservation outlook from "good with some concerns" to "good", while Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve (Russian Federation), Pirin National Park (Bulgaria), Plitvice Lakes National Park (Croatia), and Virgin Komi Forests (Russian Federation) improved their conservation outlook from "significant concern" to "good with some concerns". On the other hand, seven sites declined in their conservation outlook with Białowieża Forest (Belarus, Poland) and Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region (Albania, North Macedonia) assessed as "critical" in 2025 and the French Austral Lands

and Seas (France), Wadden Sea (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands) and West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord (Norway) deteriorating from "good" to "good with some concerns". In Białowieża Forest border infrastructure and security operations are affecting ecological connectivity and processes, while in the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region uncontrolled coastal development, wetland loss, pollution, and invasive alien species are degrading key habitats and driving declines in endemic species such as the Ohrid trout, as well as in wintering waterbird populations. The conservation outlook of Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia (Türkiye) has been assessed as "significant concern", while in 2020 this was still rated as "good with some concerns". Rapidly increasing tourism, leading to high visitor and vehicle densities (exceeding carrying capacities), and uncertainties in the current legislative framework are key factors for this change. Due to a lack of sufficient information, the conservation outlook of Lena Pillars Nature Park (Russian Federation) could not be reliably assessed resulting in a "data deficient" rating.

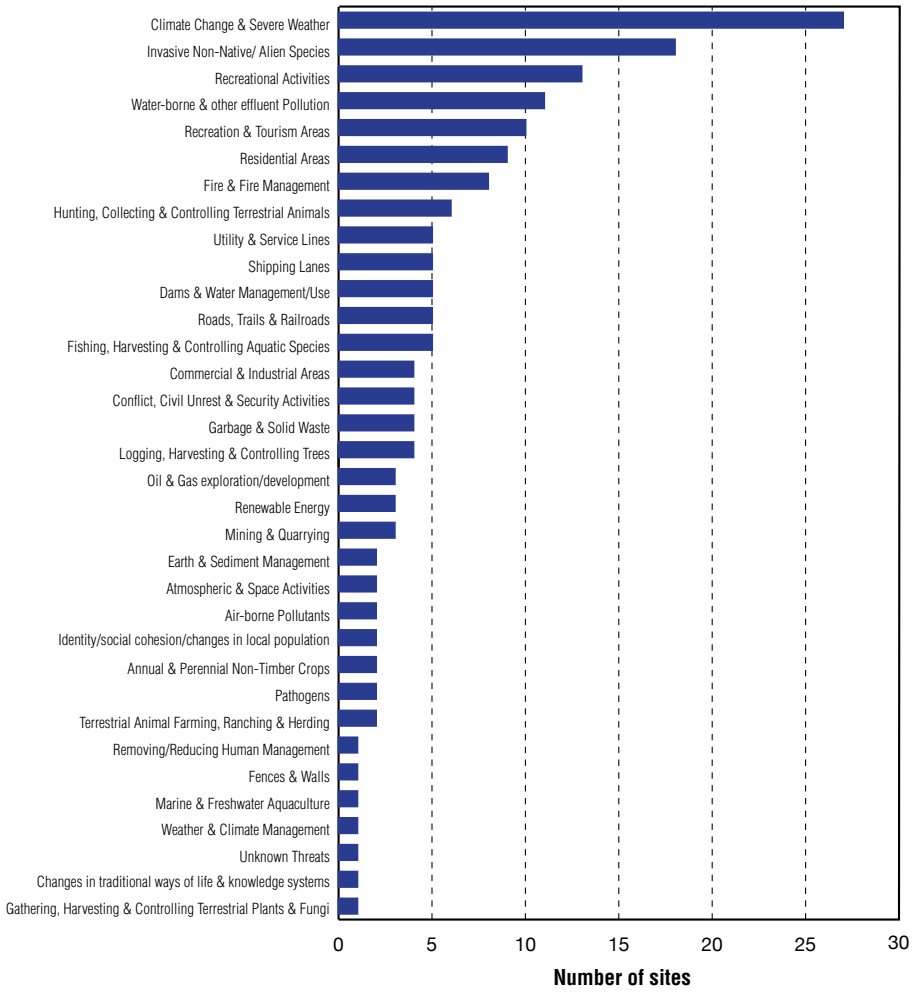
Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
Białowieża Forest	Belarus, Poland	Significant concern	Critical
Chaîne des Puys - Limagne fault tectonic arena	France	Good with some concerns	Good
French Austral Lands and Seas	France	Good	Good with some concerns
Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia	Türkiye	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve	France	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Lena Pillars Nature Park	Russian Federation	Good	Data deficient
Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region	Albania, North Macedonia	Significant concern	Critical
Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve	Russian Federation	Significant concern	Good with some concerns
Pirin National Park	Bulgaria	Significant concern	Good with some concerns
Plitvice Lakes National Park	Croatia	Significant concern	Good with some concerns
Virgin Komi Forests	Russian Federation	Significant concern	Good with some concerns
Wadden Sea	Denmark, Germany, Netherlands	Good	Good with some concerns
West Norwegian Fjords – Geirang-erfjord and Nærøyfjord	Norway	Good	Good with some concerns

Threats

The most prevalent current threats to European World Heritage sites are climate change, invasive alien species and impacts from recreational activities (Figure 28). These top three threats have not changed since 2020, although invasive alien species are now rated as the second greatest threat, while in 2020 this was tourism visitation. According to the State of Nature report by the European Environment Agency (EEA, 2020), relevant for World Heritage sites in European Union (EU) countries, climate change is an increasing threat for habitats and species. Many European species already considered vulnerable to climate change are confined to regions likely to face abrupt climatic shifts. Cimatti et al. (2025) underscores that climate change has not been sufficiently integrated into the process of protected area designation, which could undermine their long-term effectiveness as conservation refugia for biodiversity. Climate change is accelerating faster than expected, and the risk within European protected areas is as high as outside them. Large spatial differences in climate change exposure across Europe have also been observed, with a faster pace and farther species shifts in the Boreal, Steppic, and Pannonian regions. In marine protected areas, the Baltic Sea and Black Sea are most threatened (Predragovic et al., 2024). In this context, identifying the most vulnerable areas is essential to guide conservation efforts that include climate adaptation measures, including increasing ecological connectivity and ecological restoration efforts.

Targeted efforts are also needed to address the growing threat from invasive alien species. In 18 sites invasive alien species are reported as a high or very high threat. To prioritise sites for eradication efforts it can be useful to align with other methodologies that quantify the greatest opportunities from invasive alien species management. The Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) metric (explained in more detail in Box 11) has been applied to identify and quantify opportunities to reduce species extinction risk in the EU by managing invasive alien species, focusing specifically on its threat abatement component (STAR-t) (Jiménez et al., 2025). Using data from the European Red List on extinction risk, threats and distribution for terrestrial and freshwater species groups (both animals and plants) threatened by invasive alien species, the study identified key geographic areas and species for intervention. This methodology could support the prioritisation of World Heritage sites for eradication measures, where invasive alien species also present a high threat for the World Heritage values and underlying attributes. For example, the region Madeira in Portugal was identified by Jiménez et al. (2025) as providing a large opportunity to contribute towards reducing EU species extinction risk through managing invasive alien species. The Conservation Outlook Assessment for Laurisilva of Madeira (Portugal) also shows that invasive alien plant species present a high threat to the laurel forest, a key value of the site. Therefore, prioritising the management of invasive alien species in the Laurisilva of Madeira could improve the site's conservation outlook while contributing towards reducing EU species extinction risk.

Figure 28. Current threats in Europe assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Box 11. The Species Threat Abatement and Restoration metric

The Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) metric

By Randall Jiménez Quirós

The IUCN Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) metric is a global biodiversity tool developed using data from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, which quantifies the potential reduction in global species extinction risk that can be achieved by acting through threat abatement or restoration in a specific area. It includes two components: threat abatement (STAR-t), which identifies where reducing threats, such as habitat loss, overexploitation, or invasive alien species, can have the greatest global impact; and restoration (STAR-r), which estimates the benefits of restoring suitable habitats where species once occurred but are now absent. Both components use the information of species assessed as Near Threatened or Threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, such as their extinction risk category, the proportion of their global distribution within the area, and the intensity of threats impacting them. In simple words, STAR helps translate complex biodiversity data into actionable insights, identifying where and how we can most effectively help reduce global species extinction risk.

The STAR metric highlights that natural World Heritage sites offer more than 4% of the total potential opportunity for reducing global species' extinction risk, despite only covering around 1% of terrestrial land area.

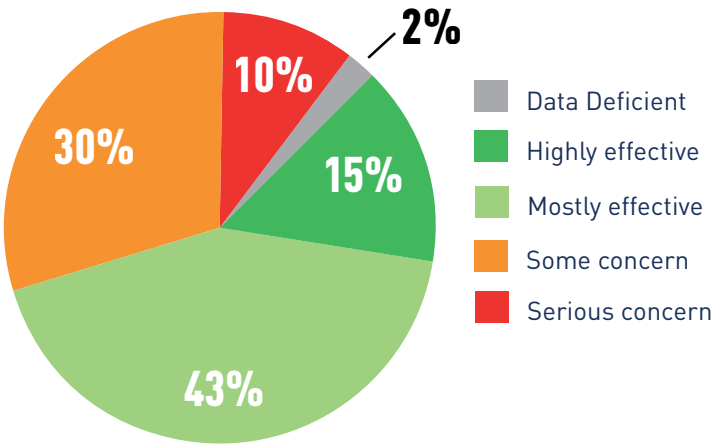
STAR quantifies how much specific conservation actions in a World Heritage site could contribute to reducing global species extinction risk, demonstrating their relevance not only in preserving cultural and natural heritage, but also as key drivers of progress toward global biodiversity targets. For example, the STAR metric has been applied to four project sites in the Bangui region of the Central African Republic, including Sangha-Mbaéré, part of Sangha Trinational World Heritage site (Schneck et al., 2024). The total STAR-t score was 65.8 for threat abatement through conservation across the project sites and for Sangha-Mbaéré alone, the STAR-t value was 31.1. STAR scores can be broken down according to their relative contribution to species decline at the project site, using specific information in the IUCN Red List on the scope and severity of threats affecting listed species. In Sangha-Mbaéré the highest contribution to the total STAR is associated with hunting and collecting terrestrial animals. This demonstrates that actions to address hunting are likely to be of the greatest value to global biodiversity conservation efforts.

Therefore, the STAR metric is valuable in demonstrating which threats increase the extinction risk at each site the most and support the prioritisation of conservation and restoration efforts, orienting threat reduction measures to the species that are affected the most by these threats.

Protection and management

Overall, 15% of natural World Heritage sites in Europe are highly effective in their protection and management and 43% are mostly effective, while in 30% protection and management are assessed as of some concern and in 10% of serious concern (Figure 29). This represents an improvement compared to the results from 2020, with the percentage of sites assessed as having mostly effective protection and management increasing from 39% to 43% and a decrease in the percentage of sites assessed as having some concern in their protection and management from 35% to 30%. Protection and management were already improving between 2017 and 2020 and this continued increase in the percentage of sites with mostly effective management is promising. However, considering the number of sites declining in their conservation outlook, this may also demonstrate that although site-level protection and management is effective, stronger collaboration and support at broader governance levels is required, to effectively address the most serious threats.

Figure 29. 2025 results for protection and management in Europe, % of all sites in the region.



Map marker		Site
27		Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst, Hungary, Slovakia
33	▲	Chaîne des Puys - Limagne fault tectonic arena, France
41	✶	Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands, Georgia
53		Dorset and East Devon Coast, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
86		High Coast / Kvarken Archipelago, Finland, Sweden
123		Laponian Area, Sweden
141		Messel Pit Fossil Site, Germany
147		Monte San Giorgio, Italy, Switzerland
152		Mount Etna, Italy
188		Putorana Plateau, Russian Federation
216		St Kilda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
217		Stevns Klint, Denmark
219		Surtsey, Iceland
221		Swiss Tectonic Arena Sardona, Switzerland
230		Teide National Park, Spain
233	✶	The Flow Country, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
247		Vatnajökull National Park - Dynamic Nature of Fire and Ice, Iceland
250	✶	Vjetrenica Cave, Ravno, Bosnia and Herzegovina

GOOD

30		Central Sikhote-Alin, Russian Federation
44		Danube Delta, Romania
59	✶	Evaporitic Karst and Caves of Northern Apennines, Italy
63	▼	French Austral Lands and Seas, France
68		Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
69		Golden Mountains of Altai, Russian Federation
85		Hierapolis-Pamukkale, Türkiye
96		Ilulissat Icefjord, Denmark
100		Isole Eolie (Aeolian Islands), Italy
117		Lagoons of New Caledonia: Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems, France
124		Laurisilva of Madeira, Portugal
142		Meteora, Greece
150		Mount Athos, Greece
164	▲	Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve, Russian Federation
182	▲	Pirin National Park, Bulgaria
185	▲	Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia
189		Pyrénées - Mont Perdu, France, Spain
212		Škocjan Caves, Slovenia
215		Srebarna Nature Reserve, Bulgaria
220		Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch, Switzerland
227	✶	Te Henua Enata – The Marquesas Islands, France
232		The Dolomites, Italy
248	▲	Virgin Komi Forests, Russian Federation
254	▼	Wadden Sea, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands (Kingdom of the)
259	▼	West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord, Norway

GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

6		Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine
51		Doñana National Park, Spain
54		Durmitor National Park, Montenegro
65		Garajonay National Park, Spain
71	▼	Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia, Türkiye
72		Gough and Inaccessible Islands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
79	▼	Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve, France
84		Henderson Island, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
92		Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture, Spain
118		Lake Baikal, Russian Federation
184		Pitons, cirques and remparts of Reunion Island, France
251	✶	Volcanoes and Forests of Mount Pelée and the Pitons of Northern Martinique, France
252		Volcanoes of Kamchatka, Russian Federation
260		Western Caucasus, Russian Federation

SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

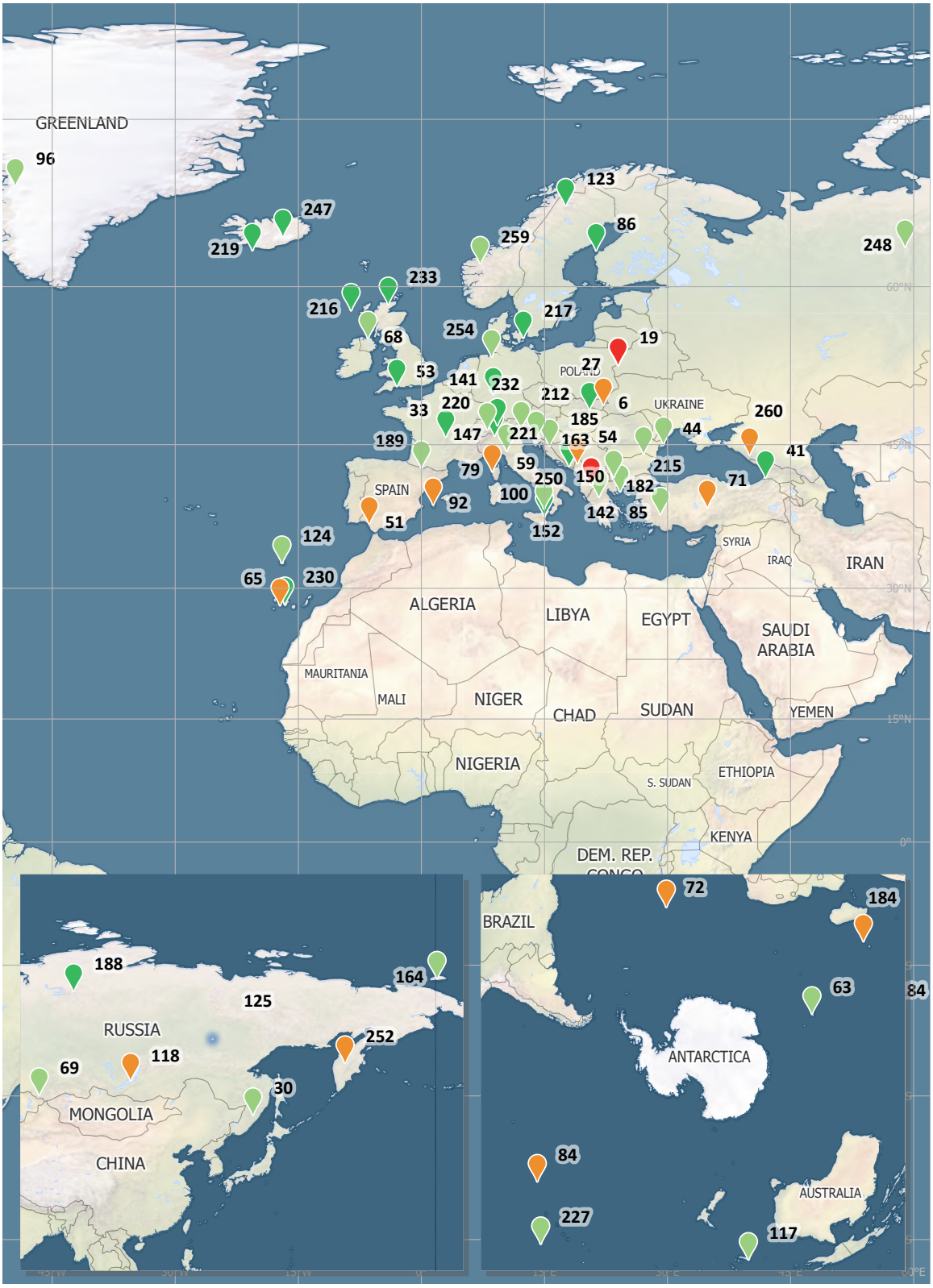
19	▼	Białowieża Forest, Belarus, Poland
163	▼	Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region, Albania, North Macedonia

CRITICAL

125 Lena Pillars Nature Park, Russian Federation (Data Deficient)

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

✶ New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020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YEMEN
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ETHIOPIA
S. SUDAN
KENYA
DEM. REP.
188
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RUSSIA
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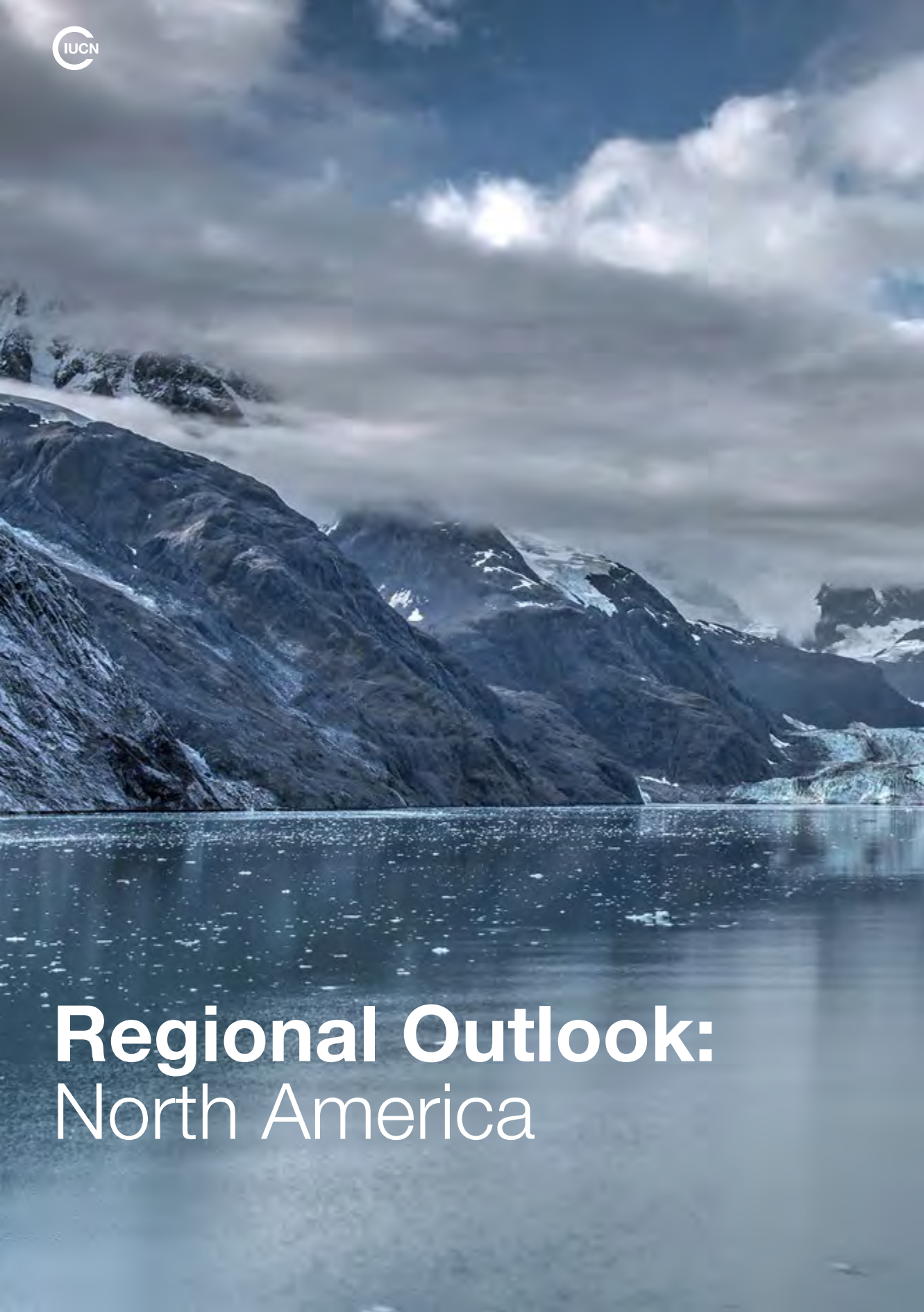
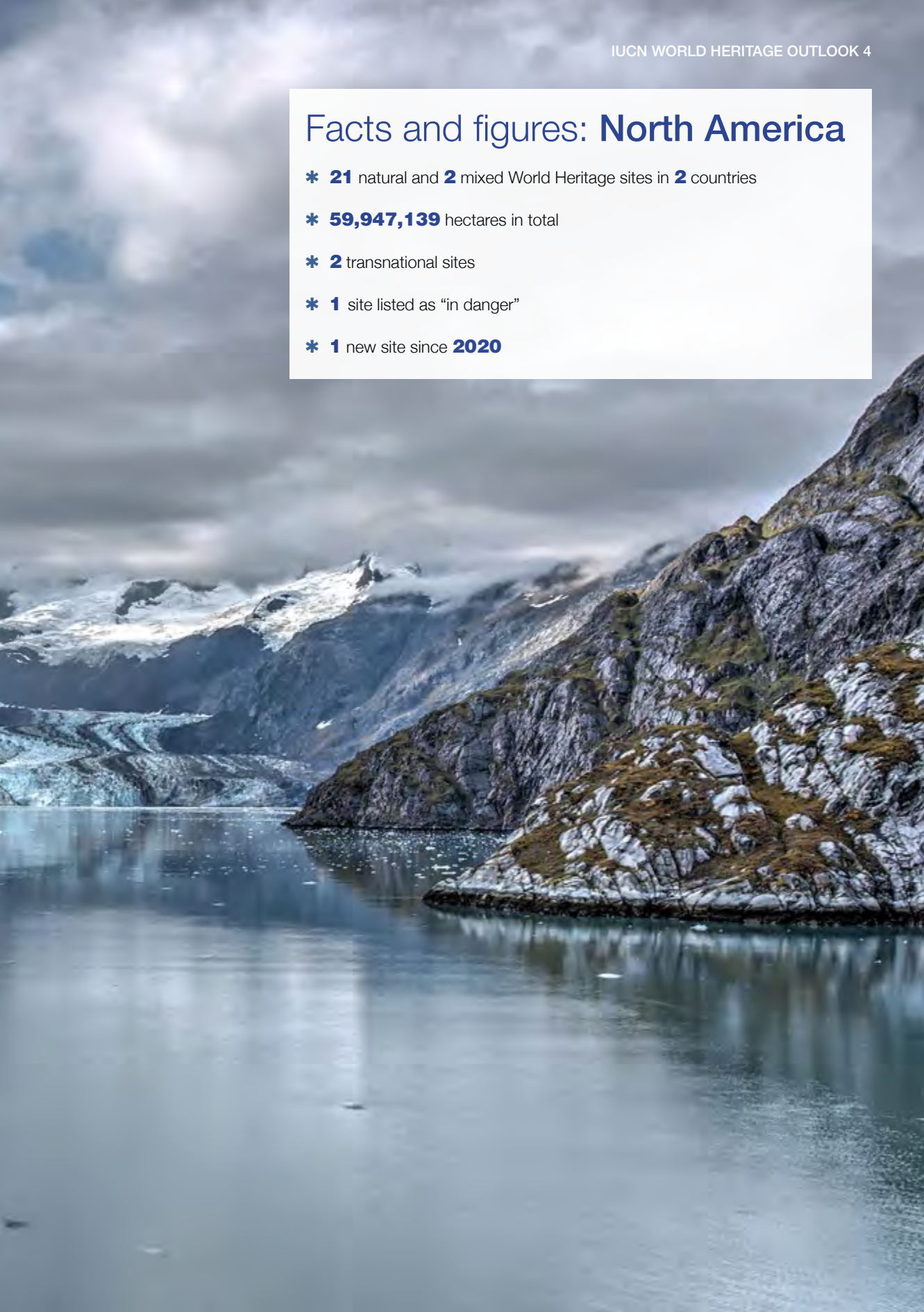


Regional Outlook: North America

Facts and figures: **North America**

- **21** natural and **2** mixed World Heritage sites in **2** countries
- **59,947,139** hectares in total
- **2** transnational sites
- **1** site listed as “in danger”
- **1** new site since **2020**



Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in North America (total of 23 sites), the conservation outlook is "good" for 30%, and "good with some concerns" for a further 57%. The conservation outlook of two sites (9%) is "significant concern", and "critical" for one further site (4%) (Figure 30). There has been a decrease in the percentage of sites assessed as "good with some concerns" (difference of 6%) and an increase in the percentage of sites assessed as "good" (from 27% to 30%) and "significant concern" (from 4.5% to 9%), showing a mixed picture for the region overall.

Figure 30. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in North America.

One new site was inscribed in North America since 2020:

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2025	Inscription year
Anticosti	Canada	Good	2023

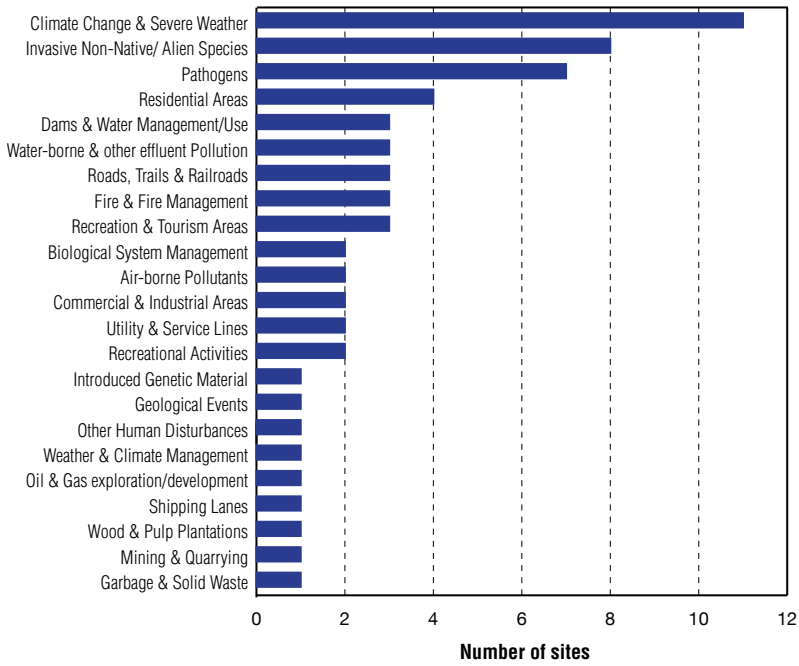
Of the sites that were inscribed in 2020 or earlier, and therefore already assessed in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2020, Yosemite National Park deteriorated from a "good with some concerns" conservation outlook to "significant concern". This is in part due to the exceptional natural beauty of the site being impacted by air pollution. With overcrowding and climate change causing an increase in the frequency and severity of wildfires, air quality and aesthetics will likely continue to suffer and threaten tracts of natural vegetation, including giant sequoias, which could also seriously degrade the natural scenery.

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
Yosemite National Park	USA	Good with some concerns	Significant concern

Threats

Climate change, invasive alien species and pathogens are the most prevalent current threats assessed as high or very high across the assessed World Heritage sites in North America (Figure 31). This is unchanged since 2020. While the increasing vulnerability, particularly of forests, to fires in the region has been noted, fire and fire management does not currently present a very high threat to natural World Heritage in North America as a whole. This may be because less than half the World Heritage sites in North America are inscribed under the biodiversity criteria (ix, x), which have the highest vulnerability to fire. In comparison the criteria associated with natural beauty and geological processes and features are more robust to fire, though specific elements can be sensitive to high temperatures. Similarly, although high visitor numbers have been noted as a significant threat for some protected areas, which are also World Heritage sites, e.g. Yosemite National Park (Falk and Hagsten, 2023), this is not the case for the whole region, indicating that the threats and their severity in North America are localised and can differ substantially between sites.

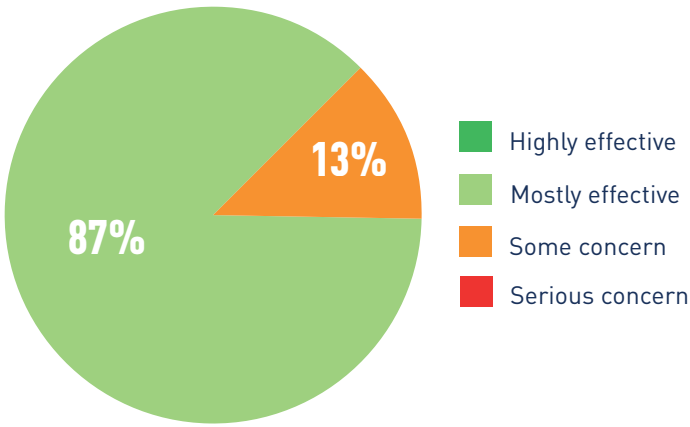
Figure 31. Current threats in North America assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Protection and management

Over three-quarters of North American natural World Heritage sites are under effective protection and management, with 87% assessed as mostly effective (Figure 32). No site was assessed as having highly effective protection and management, in comparison to 2020, where 23% were assessed as highly effective. A further 13% of sites in the region are of some concern regarding protection and management, however, no sites in North America are assessed as serious concern. Regarding the individual management categories, boundaries, research and education and interpretation programmes were most frequently assessed as mostly or highly effective. Sustainable finance, staff capacity and effectiveness of the management system in addressing threats outside the site boundaries were most frequently assessed to be of some or serious concern in the region's natural World Heritage sites. National parks in the United States of America are facing challenges from government changes which impact staff numbers and funding for operational and management needs. Further enhanced by increasing climate change impacts, this creates uncertainty regarding the medium-term impact on sustainable finance for essential management activities.

Figure 32. 2025 results for protection and management in North America, % of all sites in the region.

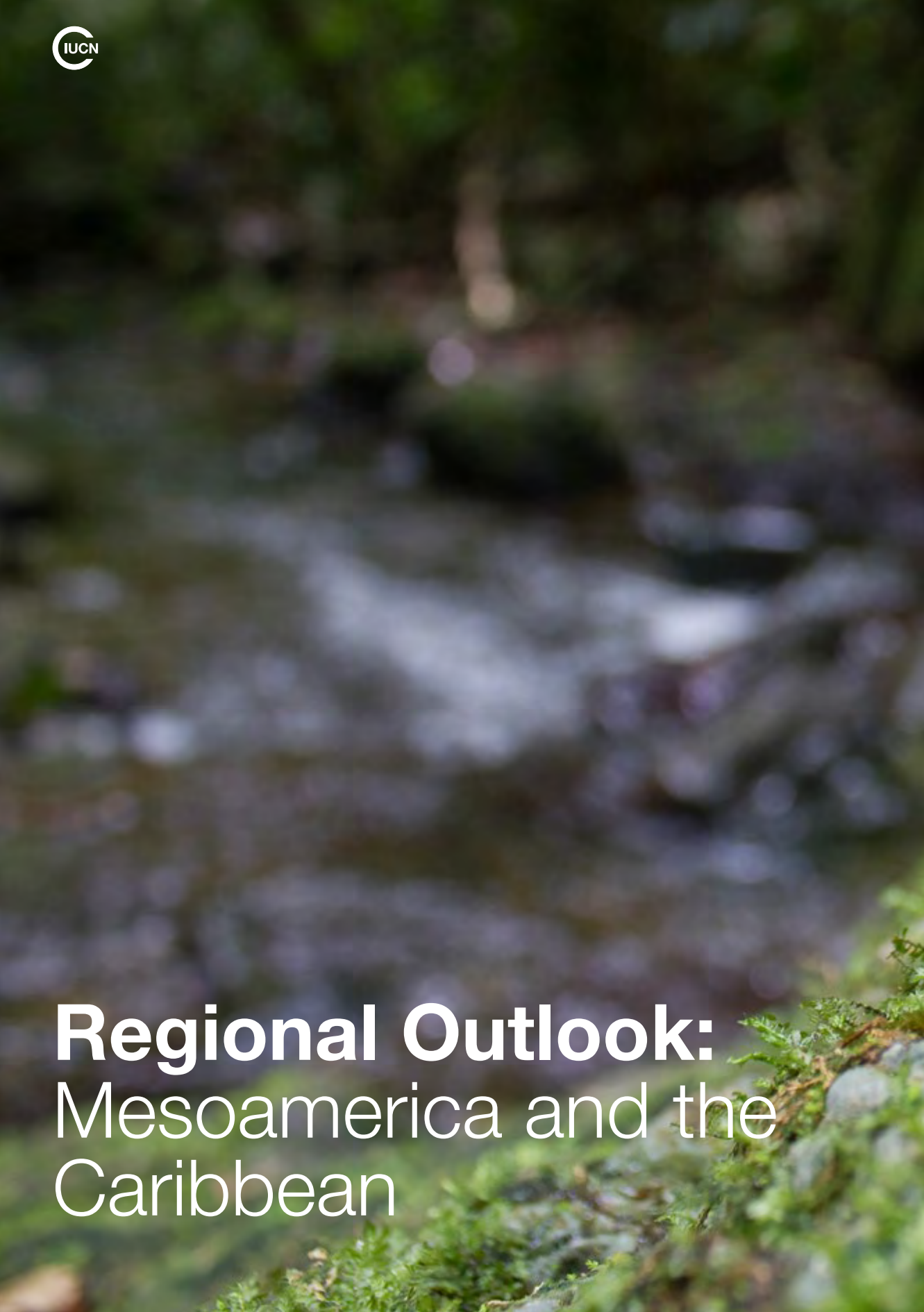


Map marker		Site
GOOD		
9	*	Anticosti, Canada
47		Dinosaur Provincial Park, Canada
82		Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, United States of America
104		Joggins Fossil Cliffs, Canada
144		Miguasha National Park, Canada
145		Mistaken Point, Canada
181		Pimachiowin Aki, Canada
GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS		
23		Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, Canada
26		Carlsbad Caverns National Park, United States of America
73		Grand Canyon National Park, United States of America
76		Great Smoky Mountains National Park, United States of America
78		Gros Morne National Park, Canada
115		Kluane / Wrangell-St. Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek, Canada, United States of America
136		Mammoth Cave National Park, United States of America
160		Nahanni National Park, Canada
174		Olympic National Park, United States of America
176		Papahānaumokuākea, United States of America
192		Redwood National and State Parks, United States of America
258		Waterton Glacier International Peace Park, Canada, United States of America
270		Yellowstone National Park, United States of America
SIGNIFICANT CONCERN		
266		Wood Buffalo National Park, Canada
271	▼	Yosemite National Park, United States of America
CRITICAL		
60		Everglades National Park, United States of America

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020

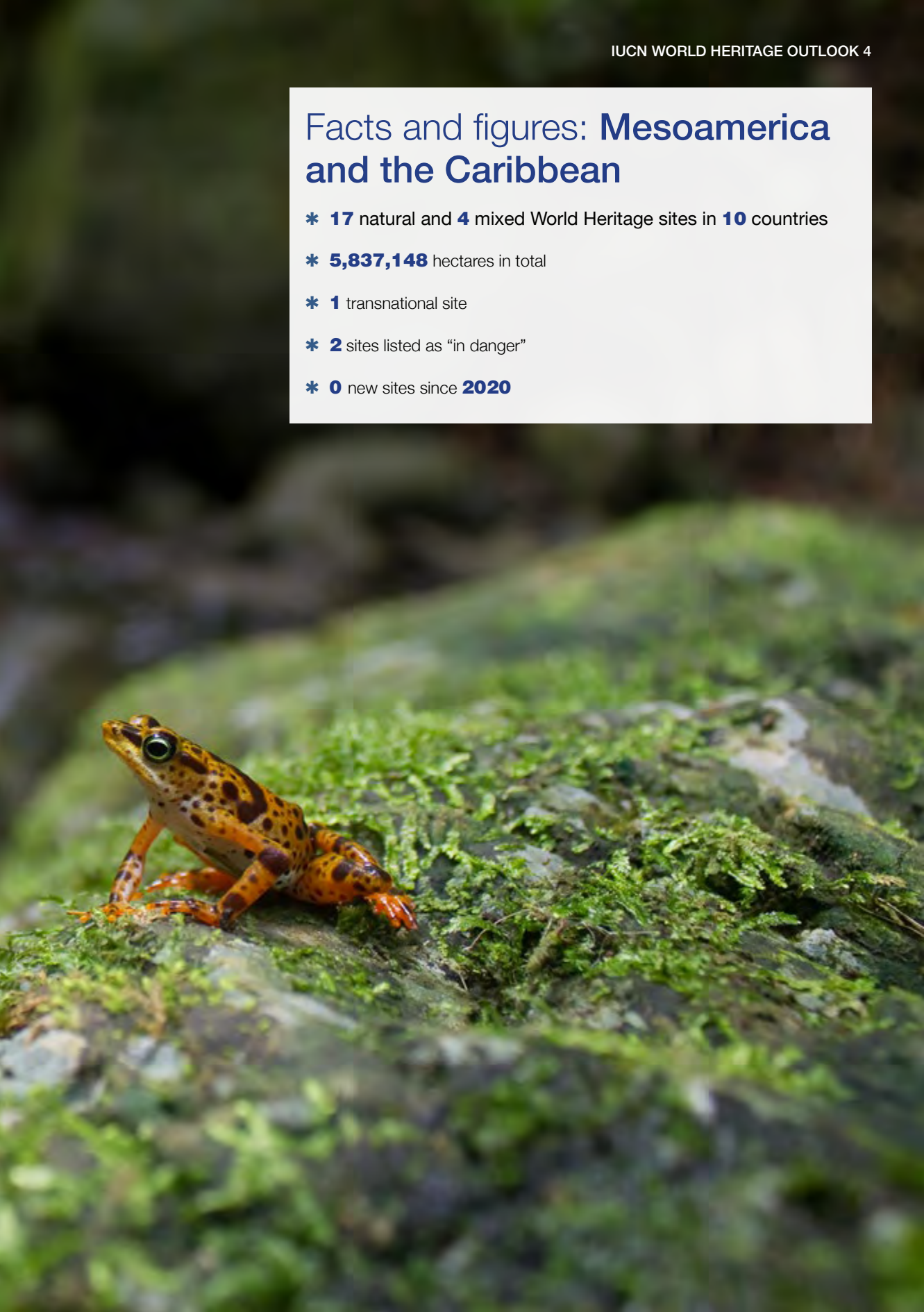

115
160
266
CANADA
23
47
181
174
258
270
9
78
144
104
145
192
271
73
UNITED STATES
136
76
26
60
MEXICO
176
82
VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA
BRAZIL
BOLIVIA
75°N
60°N
45°N
30°N
15°N
0°
15°S



Regional Outlook: Mesoamerica and the Caribbean

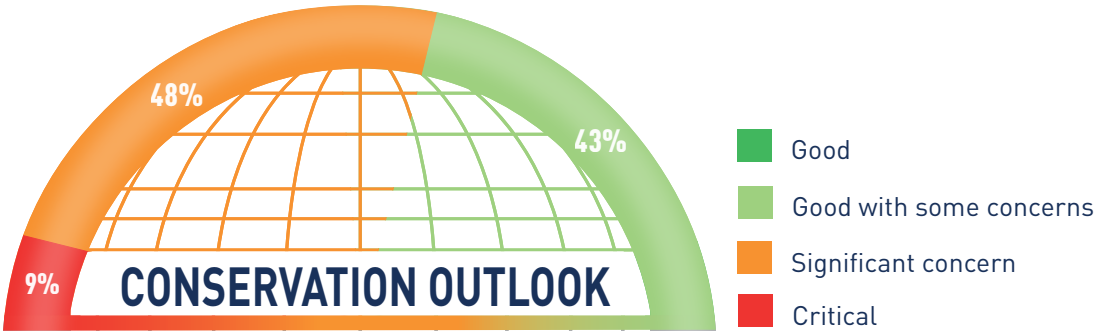
Facts and figures: **Mesoamerica and the Caribbean**

* **17** natural and **4** mixed World Heritage sites in **10** countries
* **5,837,148** hectares in total
* **1** transnational site
* **2** sites listed as “in danger”
* **0** new sites since **2020**



Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean (total of 21 sites), the conservation outlook is "good with some concerns" for 43%, with no sites assessed as having a "good" conservation outlook. For 48% of sites, the conservation outlook is of "significant concern", and for two sites (9%) the conservation outlook is assessed as "critical" (Figure 33). These results are consistent with the ratings from 2020 with a slight decrease in the percentage of sites assessed as "good with some concerns" (difference of 5%) and an increase in those assessed as "significant concern" (difference of 5%).

Figure 33. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean.



No new sites were inscribed in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean since 2020.

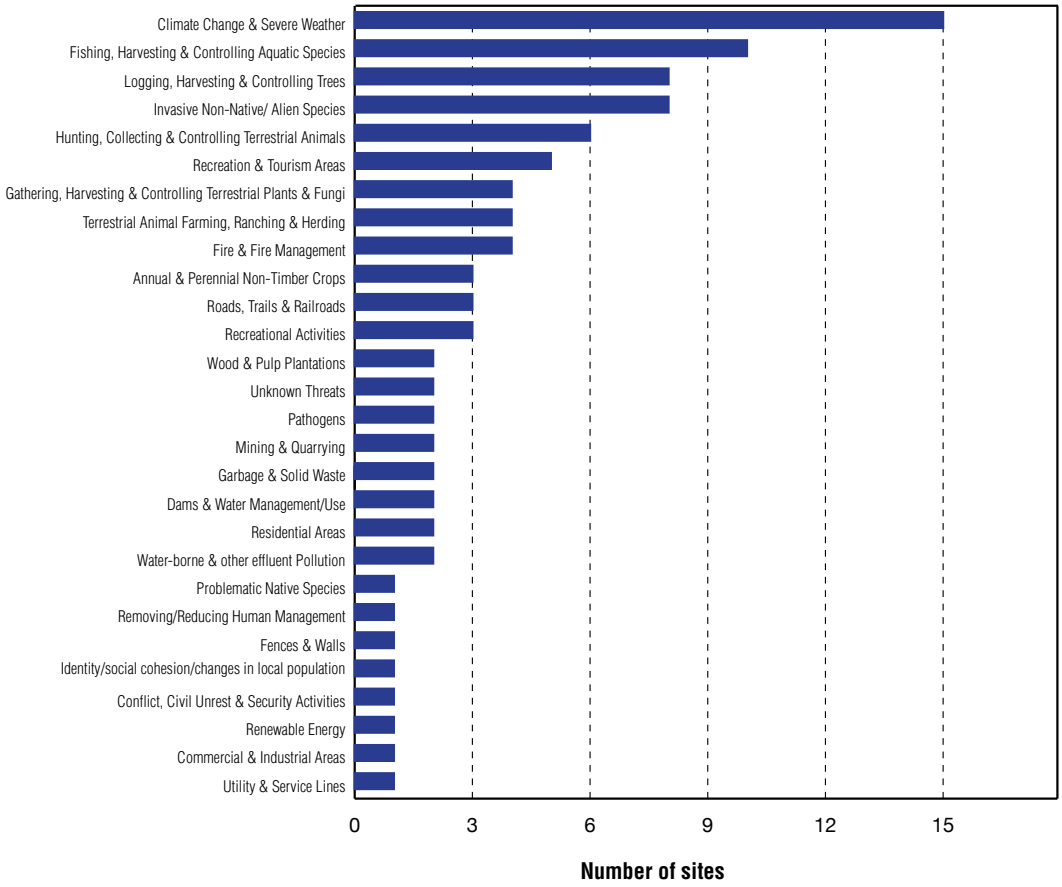
Of the sites that were inscribed in 2020 or earlier, and therefore already assessed in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2020, one site, Sian Ka'an (Mexico), deteriorated from "good with some concerns" to "significant concern". The direct and indirect impacts of mass tourism development, such as infrastructure, excessive freshwater use, contamination and waste are affecting key attributes. The new large-scale tourism infrastructure projects in the site's immediate vicinity are likely to exacerbate existing pressures on the ecosystem's integrity.

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
Sian Ka'an	Mexico	Good with some concerns	Significant concern

Threats

The most prevalent current threats to natural World Heritage sites in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean are climate change and fishing, followed by invasive alien species (Figure 34). These top threats have remained the same since 2020. The Living Planet Report confirms that climate change was the most cited driver of biodiversity loss in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with land conversion, overexploitation of species and invasive alien species (WWF, 2024). It is likely that COVID-19 also led to an increase in illegal fishing in some sites, as reported by Waithaka et al. (2021).

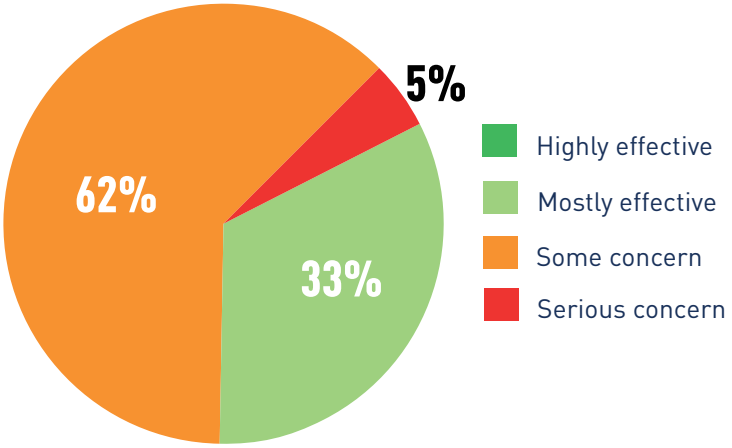
Figure 34. Current threats in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Protection and management

A third of sites (33%) are found to be mostly effective in their protection and management in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, with none highly effective. In 62% of all sites, protection and management are assessed as of some concern and in one site (5%) as of serious concern (Figure 35). These results present a slight improvement in comparison to 2020 where the protection and management of 28% and 67% of sites were assessed as mostly effective and of some concern respectively.

Figure 35. 2025 results for protection and management in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, % of all sites in the region.



Most frequently assessed to be of some or serious concern were the management categories sustainable finance, staff capacity and the effectiveness of the management system in addressing threats outside the site. Conversely the categories most frequently assessed as mostly or highly effective were legal framework, research and education and interpretation programmes.

COVID-19 may have negatively impacted sustainable finance and staff capacities, although not consistently mentioned in the Conservation Outlook Assessments. Studies on protected areas in the region differ in their assessments: while some report that the pandemic appears to have had an impact on nature conservation budget availability in the region due to the redistribution of state budgets, decline in tax revenues, and decline in tourism (Thanoo et al., 2023; KfW, 2021), others note that only a few sites faced immediate reductions in funding and staff numbers (Waithaka et al., 2021).

Map marker		Site
		No Sites

GOOD

Map marker		Site
4		Alejandro de Humboldt, Cuba
10		Archipiélago de Revillagigedo, Mexico
20		Blue and John Crow Mountains, Jamaica
46		Desembarco del Granma National Park, Cuba
57		El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve, Mexico
148		Morne Trois Pitons National Park, Dominica
229		Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica, Mexico
237		Tikal National Park, Guatemala
264		Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino, Mexico

GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

Map marker		Site
7		Ancient Maya City and Protected Tropical Forests of Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico
11		Area de Conservación Guanacaste, Costa Rica
18		Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, Belize
39		Cocos Island National Park, Costa Rica
40		Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection, Panama
45		Darien National Park, Panama
146		Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, Mexico
183		Pitons Management Area, Saint Lucia
208	▼	Sian Ka'an, Mexico
224		Talamanca Range-La Amistad Reserves / La Amistad National Park, Costa Rica, Panama

SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

Map marker		Site
99		Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California, Mexico
194		Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve, Honduras

CRITICAL

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

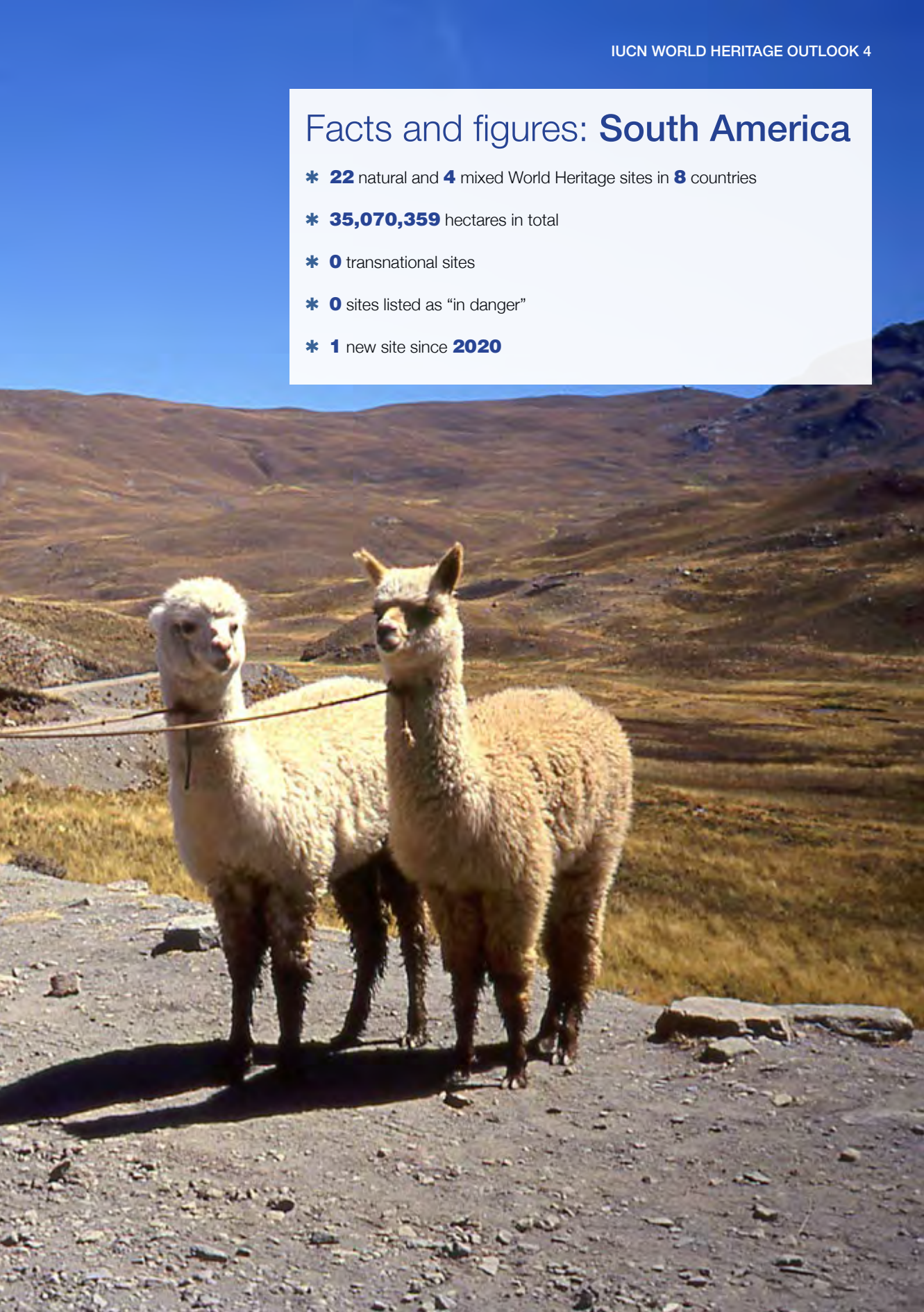
⁎ New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020


57
99
264
10
146
229
7
208
237
18
194
46
4
20
148
183
11
224
40
45
39
UNITED STATES
MEXICO
VENEZUELA
GUYANA
COLOMBIA
ECUADOR
PERU
BRAZIL
30°N
15°N
0°
105°W
90°W
75°W
60°W

Regional Outlook:
South America

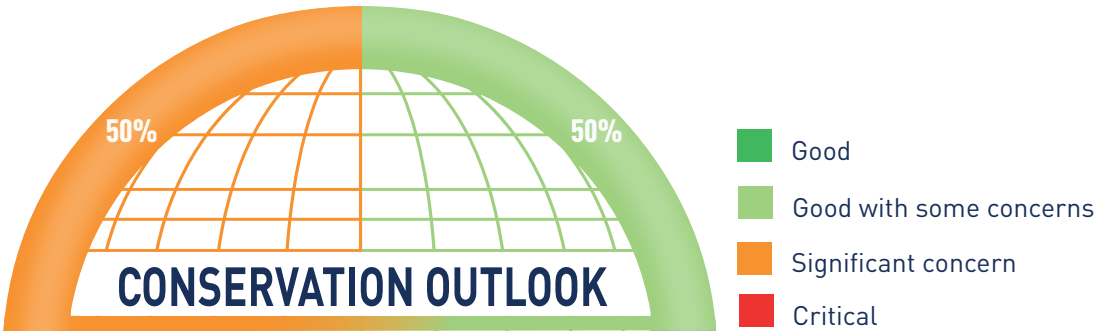
Facts and figures: **South America**

* **22** natural and **4** mixed World Heritage sites in **8** countries
* **35,070,359** hectares in total
* **0** transnational sites
* **0** sites listed as “in danger”
* **1** new site since **2020**



Results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* show that, of all natural World Heritage sites in South America (total of 26 sites), for half the sites the conservation outlook is "good with some concerns" while for the other half the conservation outlook is of "significant concern" (Figure 36). There are no sites in the region with a conservation outlook assessed as "good" or "critical". This is different from 2020, where two sites (8%) had a "good" conservation outlook.

Figure 36. Conservation outlook 2025 for natural World Heritage sites in South America.



One new site was inscribed in South America since 2020:

Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2025	Inscription year
Lençóis Maranhenses National Park	Brazil	Good with some concerns	2024

Of the sites that were inscribed in 2020 or earlier, and therefore already assessed in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 3, seven sites changed their conservation outlook, with two improving from "significant concern" to "good with some concerns": Los Katíos National Park (Colombia) and Manú National Park (Peru). Meanwhile, five sites deteriorated overall. Three deteriorated from "good with some concerns" to "significant concern": Central Suriname Nature Reserve (Suriname), Chiribiquete National Park – "The Maloca of the Jaguar" (Colombia) and Península Valdés (Argentina). Two deteriorated from "good" to "good with some concerns": Ischigualasto / Talampaya Natural Parks (Argentina) and Los Alerces National Park (Argentina). Península Valdés (Argentina) has changed outlook rating in each cycle since 2020, moving from "significant concern" to "good with some concerns" in 2020 and now back to "significant concern". This is attributed to the renewed concern of unusual southern right whale mortality and impacts from avian influenza A/H5N1 on marine fauna and birds, causing a mass mortality event of southern elephant seals. Notably two sites in Argentina deteriorated in their conservation outlook since 2020. In both this is due to inadequate human and financial resources raising some concerns in the protection and management. The two sites with improved conservation outlook ratings in Peru and Colombia also have better ratings for their protection and management. In Los Katíos National Park (Colombia) the relationships between stakeholders and mechanisms for engagement have been strengthened alongside an improved legal framework. The site was also admitted to the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas in 2024. In Manú National Park (Peru) there have been positive developments in sustainable finance, community engagement and better coordination between the World Heritage site and the overlapping UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This has led to a reduction in human-wildlife conflict for example.

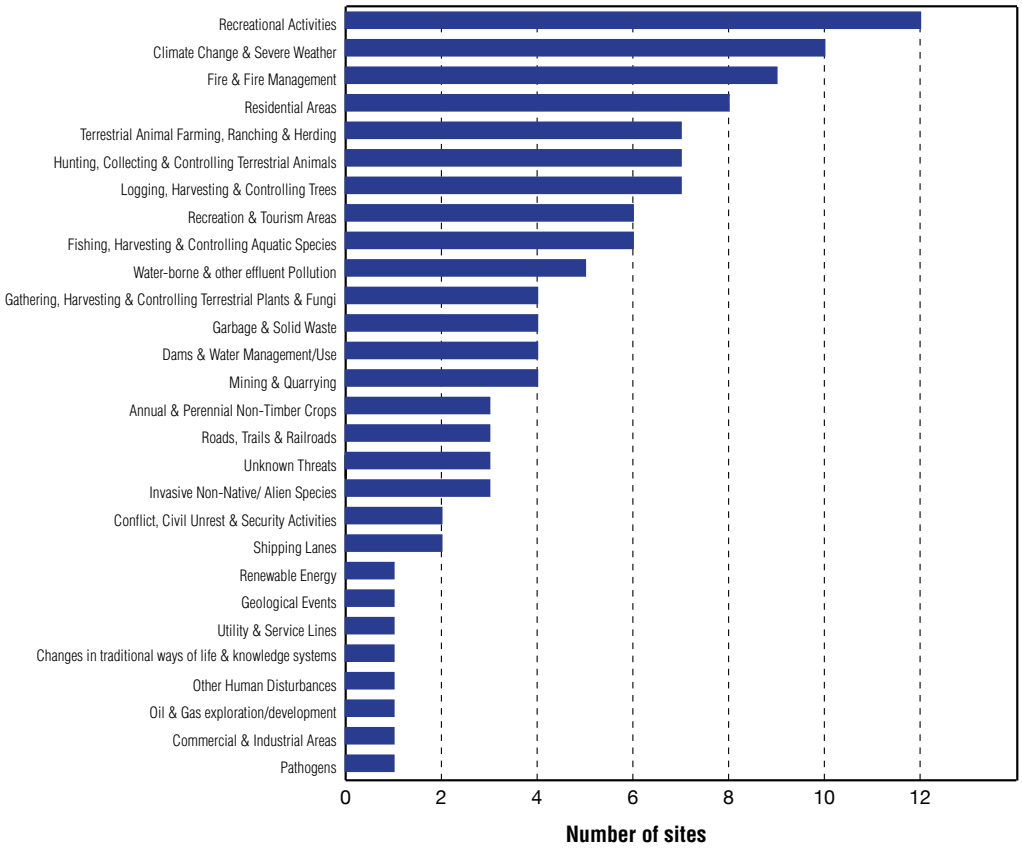
Site	Country	Conservation Outlook 2020	Conservation Outlook 2025
Central Suriname Nature Reserve	Suriname	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Chiribiquete National Park – "The Maloca of the Jaguar"	Colombia	Good with some concerns	Significant concern
Ischigualasto / Talampaya Natural Parks	Argentina	Good	Good with some concerns
Los Alerces National Park	Argentina	Good	Good with some concerns
Los Katíos National Park	Colombia	Significant concern	Good with some concerns
Manú National Park	Peru	Significant concern	Good with some concerns
Península Valdés	Argentina	Good with some concerns	Significant concern

Threats

There has been a shift in the most prevalent current threats affecting South American natural World Heritage sites. While in 2020 livestock grazing was the greatest threat, this is no longer among the top five threats in the region. Instead, recreational activities i.e. tourism-associated activities are now the most prevalent threat for South American natural World Heritage sites (Figure 37). This reflects the increased focus on tourism development in the region, which has led to significant growth in tourist arrivals, especially in Argentina, Brazil and Peru (Navarro-Drazich et al., 2023) and a relatively rapid recovery of visitation following the global pandemic (Martínez and Poveda, 2024).

As in 2020, climate change is the second greatest threat and as expected, due to the increasing effect of climate change, fire and fire management has increased in significance and has been reported as the third greatest current threat. According to Delgado et al. (2022) an increase in air temperature mainly in tropical regions, will accelerate the physical processes of evaporation and transpiration in vegetation, in addition to increasing the probability of mega-fires during the dry season. This highlights the importance of developing effective fire prevention strategies. Among the ten biomes in South America, savannas, tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests were assessed as most vulnerable to climate change.

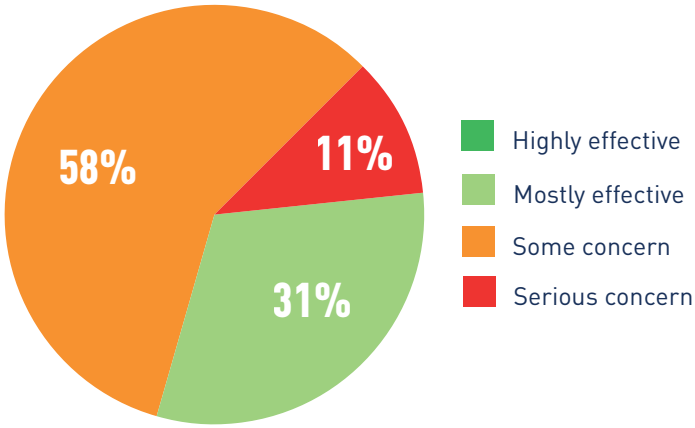
Figure 37. Current threats in South America assessed as high or very high in 2025. Figures are based on the number of sites where these threats occur.



Protection and management

31% of the assessed World Heritage sites in South America have mostly effective protection and management in place. No sites are found to be highly effective. For 58% of sites, protection and management are assessed as of some concern and of serious concern for three sites (11%) (Figure 38). This is consistent to the results from 2020. Although protection and management improved in some sites, it also became less effective in others meaning the percentages of sites across the categories remains stable overall.

Figure 38. 2025 results for protection and management in South America, % of all sites in the region.



Regarding the individual management categories, legal framework, research and education and interpretation programmes were most frequently assessed as mostly or highly effective. Staff capacity, law enforcement and effectiveness of the management system in addressing threats inside the site were most frequently assessed to be of some or serious concern in the region's World Heritage sites.

Map marker		Site
		No sites

GOOD

28		Central Amazon Conservation Complex, Brazil
32		Cerrado Protected Areas: Chapada dos Veadeiros and Emas National Parks, Brazil
97	▼	Ischigualasto / Talampaya Natural Parks, Argentina
126	*	Lençóis Maranhenses National Park, Brazil
129	▼	Los Alerces National Park, Argentina
130		Los Glaciares National Park, Argentina
131	▲	Los Katíos National Park, Colombia
135		Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary, Colombia
140	▲	Manú National Park, Peru
169		Noel Kempff Mercado National Park, Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
177		Paraty and Ilha Grande – Culture and Biodiversity, Brazil
193		Río Abiseo National Park, Peru
200		Sangay National Park, Ecuador

GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

12		Atlantic Forest South-East Reserves, Brazil
21		Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves, Brazil
24		Canaima National Park, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
31	▼	Central Suriname Nature Reserve, Suriname
36	▼	Chiribiquete National Park – "The Maloca of the Jaguar", Colombia
48		Discovery Coast Atlantic Forest Reserves, Brazil
64		Galápagos Islands, Ecuador
87		Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu, Peru
89		Huascarán National Park, Peru
94		Iguaçu National Park, Brazil
95		Iguazú National Park, Argentina
175		Pantanal Conservation Area, Brazil
178	▼	Península Valdés, Argentina

SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

		No sites

CRITICAL

▲ The conservation outlook improved since 2020 ▼ The conservation outlook deteriorated since 2020

* New site inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2020


90°W
75°W
60°W
45°W
30°W
0°
30°S
VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA
PERU
BRAZIL
BOLIVIA
PARAGUAY
URUGUAY
ARGENTINA
131
135
64
200
36
24
31
28
126
21
193
89
140
87
169
32
48
175
177
95
12
94
97
129
178
130

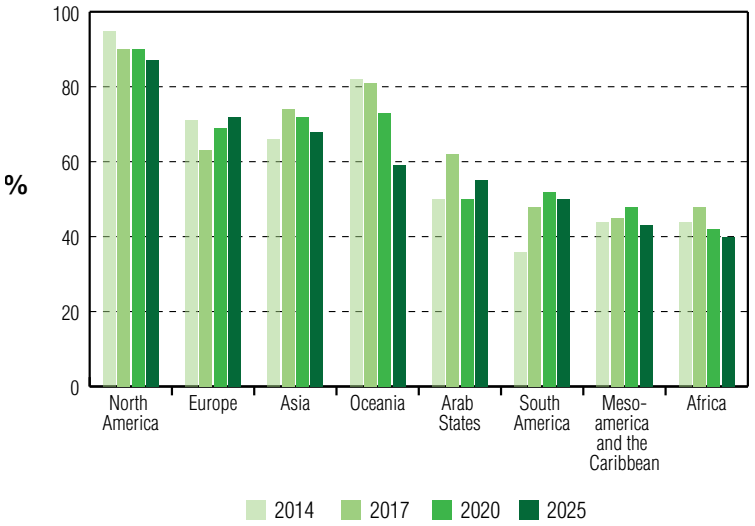
Regional comparison

The IUCN World Heritage Outlook enables trends in the conservation outlook of natural World Heritage sites to be explored across regions, including through the identification of key similarities and differences among and between regions.

When comparing the results over the past decade, patterns start to emerge. Overall, in 2025, the region with the highest percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook is North America (87%), which is consistent with the previous cycles. The region is followed by Europe (72%) and Asia (68%). This presents a difference to 2020, 2017 and 2014, where Oceania was the region with the second greatest percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook. The persistent decline in the conservation outlook of sites in Oceania (82% in 2014, 81% in 2017, 73% in 2020, 59% in 2025) can be in part attributed to the increasing impacts of climate change, especially on coral reef ecosystems, affecting the state and trend of values and their underlying attributes.

While North America remains the region with the most positive conservation outlook, there has been a slight decline in the percentage of sites assessed as "good" or "good with some concerns" from 95% in 2014 to 90% in 2017 and 2020 and now 87% in 2025. In both Asia and Africa, the percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook has been decreasing since 2017 (Figure 39). In comparison, the percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook since 2017 has been increasing in Europe, while for South America, the Arab States and Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, no clear trend has emerged.

Figure 39. Percentage of sites assessed overall as "good" or "good with some concerns" in 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025 across all regions.



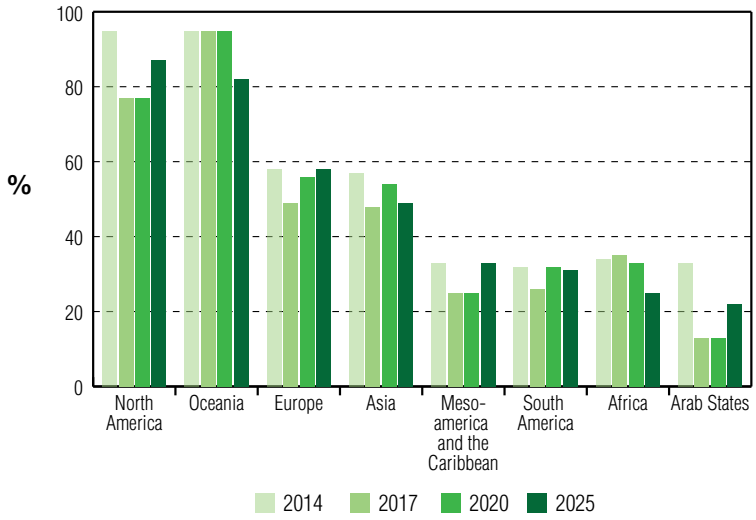
Differences are also observed at the level of the three main elements of the IUCN World Heritage Outlook: values, threats and protection and management. North America is now the region with the highest percentage of effectively managed sites (87% of sites assessed as having "highly effective" or "mostly effective" management overall), followed by Oceania (82%). Europe (58%) lies just above the global average, while the other regions are below it: Asia (49%), Mesoamerica and the Caribbean (33%), South America (31%), Africa (25%) and the Arab States (22%) (Figure 40). There is no notable trend in management effectiveness in specific regions when including data from 2014. However, when looking at the data since 2017, an increase in sites with overall effective protection and

management has been observed in North America, Europe, Mesoamerica and the Caribbean and the Arab States, while the effectiveness of protection and management has decreased in Africa and Oceania. It is also interesting that the three regions with the highest proportion of sites assessed as having effective management, were also reported to have been least affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Waithaka et al., 2021).

One should note that in the regions with fewer sites, percentage changes look greater compared to other regions due to the proportionate increase/decrease in the percentage from the rating change of one or two sites.

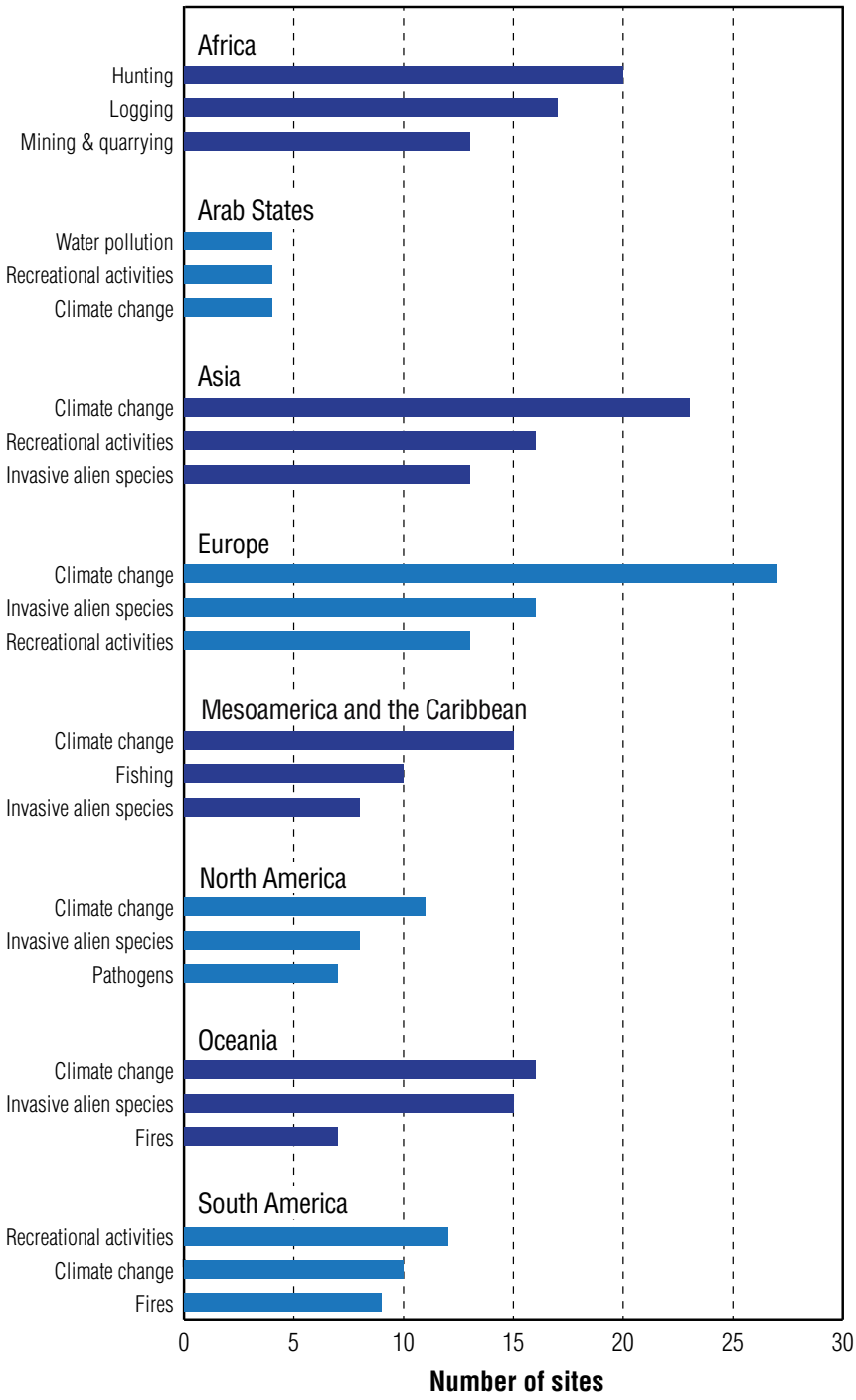
For almost two thirds of all sites (62%) the effectiveness of protection and management outside the site is of some or serious concern. This highlights that many threats are beyond the capacity of site managers and require increasing support at regional, national and international levels. This is especially true for Oceania, where there has a been a decrease in the percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook, while the effectiveness of protection and management remains high. Therefore, it is positive that integration into local, regional and national planning systems (including sea/landscape connectivity) has been rated among the most effective protection and management categories across the regions, however more efforts are needed to address transboundary issues like climate change and the spread of invasive alien species and pathogens. With the increasingly challenging geopolitical context globally and in several countries, utilising opportunities to apply new tools and diversify funding and partnerships has become ever more important.

Figure 40. Percentage of sites assessed overall as having "highly effective" or "mostly effective" protection and management in 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2025 across all regions.



While in 2017 all regions identified invasive alien species, climate change and impacts of tourism as the top three current threats, in 2020 some regional differences were observed. Direct resource use (hunting and/or fishing) was one of the most prominent high or very high threats in Africa, Asia and Mesoamerica and the Caribbean. Solid waste moved to the top three current high threats in the Arab States and livestock grazing moved to the top three threats in South America. In 2025 direct resource use – hunting and logging – remain the top threats in Africa, however mining has increased in significance. In the Arab States, although solid waste is no longer a top threat, water pollution is now a concern. Climate change is the top threat in Asia, Europe, Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, North America and Oceania. The threat from recreational activities has now become the main threat to World Heritage sites in South America, rated more frequently as a high or very high threat than climate change. Fires are also among the top three threats in South America and while fires were a top threat in North America in 2020, pathogens have replaced fires as the third greatest threat facing natural World Heritage sites in the region (Figure 41).

Figure 41. The top current threats assessed as high or very high in 2025 in different regions.



Key conclusions and next steps

At a time of continued uncertainty, securing the future of World Heritage sites inscribed for their natural values is needed more than ever. Overall, the World Heritage Convention makes a unique and substantial contribution to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and it is relevant to almost all the 23 global targets of the KM-GBF. Therefore, the conservation outlook of these sites is an indication of our progress in achieving the 2030 KM-GBF targets.

As observed from IUCN World Heritage Outlook data, the percentage of sites with a positive conservation outlook has for the first time decreased when focussing on the 228 sites assessed since 2014. Yet natural World Heritage sites, particularly those inscribed under biodiversity criteria (ix) and (x), are critical for the protection of globally endangered and endemic species. The continued impact of threats and ineffective protection and management on many biodiversity sites is resulting in a poorer conservation outlook relative to other non-biodiversity criteria. This emphasises the need to focus on improving these sites' capacity to realise the contribution natural World Heritage sites can make to global goals, particularly to Target 3 of the KM-GBF. If natural World Heritage sites are a litmus test for conservation, the global community remains short of the goal to achieve a positive future for these places and to achieve broader climate, biodiversity and sustainability targets by 2030.

Many natural World Heritage sites offer examples of effective management for species conservation and solutions that can be replicated elsewhere. The IUCN World Heritage Outlook reinforces the importance of such sites, to inspire action across the protected and conserved area estate facing similar challenges. In addition to protecting global biodiversity and geodiversity, natural World Heritage sites offer vital avenues to connect with people and their cultural values, and to adopt an inclusive, landscape-level approach to conservation. These places demonstrate the benefits resulting from enhancing synergies across global conventions and programmes at the site level. Looking ahead, sustained and enhanced efforts will be needed globally, regionally, and at the site level to continue contributing to this important effort for people and the planet.

To build on the results presented in this report, IUCN considers that the following next steps could be explored:

- The crosswalk analysis assessing alignment between the IUCN World Heritage Outlook and the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard needs to be further developed. An in-depth analysis of the Conservation Outlook Assessment results for protection and management is required to determine to what extent they align with the associated Green List criteria. This would strengthen synergies between the two methodologies, while highlighting important differences that make the approaches unique.
- Transnational and serial sites present a unique setting for conservation with valuable opportunities but also challenges associated with cross-border collaboration, integrated management and different legal systems. Carrying out a more focussed evaluation of the Conservation Outlook Assessments for these sites is needed to develop more targeted support to improve their conservation outlook. Furthermore, these findings could inform the nomination process for potential future transnational and serial World Heritage sites.
- There are important nature-culture interlinkages in World Heritage sites that are not fully captured in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook. Nevertheless, enhancing recognition and understanding of such interlinkages is critical to ensure conservation action fully encompasses a site's values and that management actions are appropriate. While natural World Heritage sites have substantial cultural values, these are beyond the scope of the Conservation Outlook Assessments. Furthermore, cultural World Heritage sites may also harbour important natural values. Therefore, there are opportunities to build on the results of the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* to explore recognition and integration of knowledge on wider natural and cultural values in World Heritage sites and their protection and management systems.

- The process of recognising Indigenous Heritage Values through the IUCN World Heritage Outlook, marks an important step on which IUCN will continue to build its dialogue with Indigenous peoples. It will be important to review the lessons learned with the IIPFWH and as well as other partners to further ensure the meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples, in the further development of work, including follow up of findings.
- As in the last IUCN World Heritage Outlook, climate change is the highest and fastest growing threat for natural World Heritage. However, further analyses of the Conservation Outlook Assessments are necessary to more comprehensively understand the impacts of climate change on natural values and their underlying attributes. For example, a cluster analysis of the different climate change impacts could demonstrate how they specifically affect the state and trend of values. The analysis could evaluate to what extent climate action in the respective sites and at the regional levels is considered sufficient to address these impacts. These findings could inform more tailored climate change action and commitment both at the site and national levels and within the World Heritage Convention.
- The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* shows that a large proportion of World Heritage sites are vulnerable to threats that derive from outside site boundaries. Highly effective site management is therefore not solely sufficient in securing a positive conservation outlook. It highlights the essential need to take a landscape-level approach to conservation through multi-stakeholder engagement. Focussing on the greatest threats from outside site boundaries across the Conservation Outlook Assessments and aligning these with examples of highly effective management in addressing these threats, is needed to develop more concrete recommendations to improve the conservation outlook of sites facing significant threats from outside their boundaries. This can inform impact assessment processes and strengthen the accountability of States Parties under the Convention.
- Tourism as another growing threat to natural World Heritage sites also deserves a more-in depth evaluation. While the *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4* has identified the growing threat and the regions most affected, the Conservation Outlook Assessments offer more detailed information on the type of impacts from recreational activities on key attributes and the effectiveness of tourism management. Analysing this data will clarify the specific issues related to tourism in World Heritage sites and indicate which management actions can be effective in response. Furthermore, these findings can inform the development of guidance related to sustainable tourism under the World Heritage Convention.
- World Heritage sites overlapping with other international designations offer another avenue to address threats beyond site boundaries by adopting a landscape and seascape level approach. However, overlapping designations also present challenges related to potential differences in governance and legal frameworks, as well as integrated management. The Conservation Outlook Assessments show that for many World Heritage sites which overlap with other international designations there is a lack of understanding on the nature and impact of this overlap. A first step would be to conduct a cluster analysis investigating the impact of overlapping designations on management effectiveness in addressing threats affecting World Heritage sites. Together with the upcoming IUCN Managing MIDAs 2 guidance, this exercise will help understanding the role that Multi-Internationally Designated Areas (MIDAs) can play as spatial planning tools for integrated landscape and seascape management, while enhancing the conservation outlook of natural World Heritage sites.

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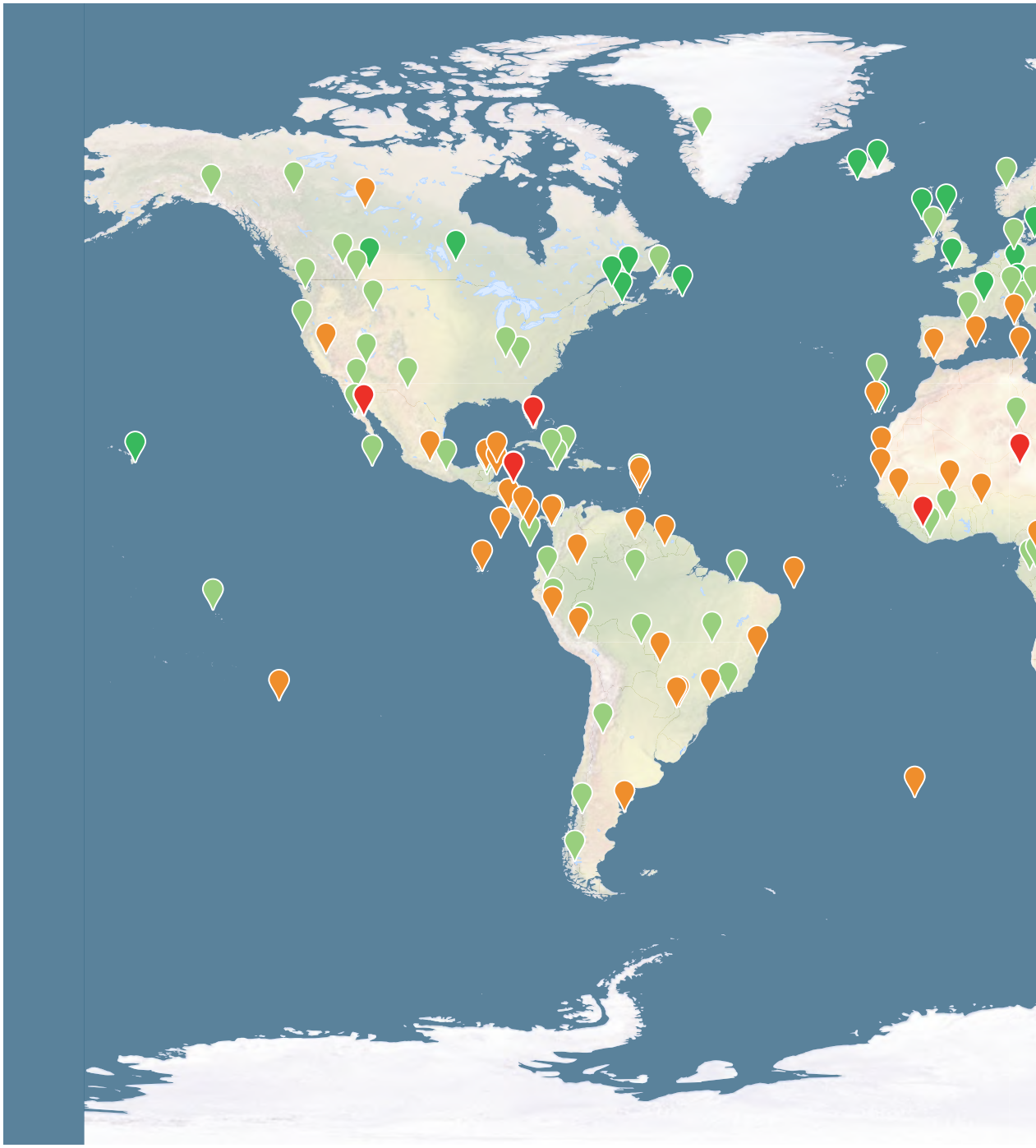
Natural World Heritage sites




Good
Good with Some Concerns
Significant Concern
Critical

Credits

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