

BIOSPHERE RESERVES

The team of the Thematic Group on Biosphere Reserves brings you recent news

February 2020 – Edition 4

Most of the photos in this newsletter are property of UNESCO and refer to the biosphere reserves designated in 2019.

Dear BRTG member,

We are pleased to bring you the fourth issue of the Newsletter of the Thematic Group on biosphere reserves of the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM). Our aim is to better connect the work of the CEM regarding issues such as ecosystem-based assessment, ecosystem governance, and resilience to activities within biosphere reserves, and to enhance collaborations between UNESCO and IUCN. One way to do this is through the exchange of information and good practices, so we invite you to read this newsletter and contribute to future issues – and let us know your proposals for future collaborative activities.

Martin Price (martin.price@perth.uhi.ac.uk) and Esperanza Arnés (esperanza.arnes@gmail.com), Co-chairs





BIOSPHERE RESERVES DESIGNATED IN 2019

The International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme designated 18 new biosphere reserves at its 31th session at UNESCO's Headquarters from 17 to 21 June 2019.

The new biosphere reserves are in 12 countries: Austria, Eswatini, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

Of these 15 new biosphere reserves, 1 is transboundary, a process that is increasingly valued as it promotes linkages between countries and gives prominence to the ecosystem logic.

BRTG ARTICLES

1. **Honey Bee Day in Agasthiar Biosphere Reserve (India)**

   Davidson Sargunam

Tribal Foundation, India is supporting indigenous Kaani community in Agasthiar Biosphere Reserve to domesticate honeybees and discourage them from wild honey hunting as the latter activity involves killing 1000s of bees, eggs, larvae and amounts to habitat destruction. Also, after honey hunting, the hunters leave fire splinters that create forest fire damaging forest trees and threaten wild animals. To secure honey as food for the indigenous people and to boost their economy we support them to have bee nests with the help of Government Horticulture Department. We help the Kaani indigenous people to market the honey in town and cities. World Honey Bee Day observed by agriculturists in South Western Ghats, Agasthiar Biosphere Reserve.

More information could be found in this link: https://indiantribalheritage.org/?p=30227

2. On the value of the Starikov's area of the state natural biosphere reserve "Rostovsky"

Olga. N. Demina, L. L. Rogal, M.A. Abacharaeva

We recently published a paper that outlines the main environmental values of the Starikovsky area of the Rostovsky State Natural Biosphere Reserve in preserving the gene pool of the natural flora and phytocenotic diversity of both the steppe part of the Don basin and the steppe zone as a whole; points to the prospects for its inclusion in the category of biosphere reserves, including the transfer of innovative environmental protection technologies in agricultural production at the world level.

The floristic-phytosociological significance of the distinguish syntaxons is given and the characteristics of the subassociation Eryngio campestris–Stipetum ucrainicae ornithogaletosum fischerianii Demina et al. 2012, since its locus classicus is located in the Starikovsky area.

It is proposed to expand the boundaries of the reserve protection of the intact areas of the steppe virgin lands in watershed areas - an increase in the area of the Starikovsky area, the creation of a cluster section of the reserve in the okr. w. Kiselevka Zavetinsky district and the Don Steppe Reserve in the north of the Rostov region.

3. Respectful cross-cultural relationships for the sharing knowledge

Liette Vasseur, UNESCO Chair in Community Sustainability from Local to Global, Depart. Biological Sciences, Brock University, St Catharines, ON L2S3A1

In Canada, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Call for Action in 2015, a major step was made to acknowledge the wrongdoings of the past (and even the present) and injustice done to Indigenous Peoples and now trying to reconcile. The process has been taken seriously by the Canadian Biosphere Reserves. New actions have been initiated to first increase awareness of the injustice that was done (and some times still done) to Indigenous Peoples, and second to create an ethical space where knowledge sharing becomes important to enhance respect and exchange of ideas for the sustainability of the Biospheres.

In the case of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere (NEB), this has meant starting with coming at the table and reinitiate the

dialogue. It is important to explain that since its designation in 1990, the NEB was managed by the Niagara Escarpment Commission. However, this agency is the regulatory body for the Greenbelt of which the Niagara Escarpment is the backbone. It became clear form the periodic review that the governance structure of the NEB needed to be modified. In 2019, a Transitional leadership Committee was formed to develop a renewed structure and enhance grassroot engagement, especially with the NEB's rights-bearing Indigenous communities. The process will also bring a broad base of the NEB stakeholders, including local and regional government bodies as well as sectors such as agriculture, tourism, youth, and environment. The importance of inclusion in dialogues for Biospheres is critical for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, if they want to be considered models.

In Canada, we have developed for research and publications in various peer-reviewed journal such as Botany, principles to ensure that Indigenous knowledge was respected, securely maintained by and for Indigenous communities and that publications have followed the ethical principals that were elaborated under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in terms of prior free and informed consent. See commentary of Botany (April 2019 for the principles).

My reflection has not stopped at this level. During my recent meeting in Jamaica, discussion with persons of African descents demonstrated the importance of having these principles as well being respected for them. Through injustice for centuries and movement due to the slave trade, peoples of African descents have also had their knowledge being used and abused and many of their cultural heritage either destroyed and reduced as a way to having "more uniform" communities. However, their heritage and cultures are as important and should be respected as Indigenous Peoples. I believe that the principles that we have elaborated in the past under UNDRIP should be applied to all other cultures that have been displaced and suffered injustice because of their origin. I believe that this is even more important right now as we move along the UN Decade of Persons of African Descents.

Biological diversity and its conservation are the usual target of Biospheres. However, dialogues on bio-cultural diversity have demonstrated the importance of integrating cultures and cultural diversity to ensure a greater level of sustainability.

4. Partnerships for ecotourism in BRs

Martin Price. Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland, UK

In February, the final conference of the three-year 'Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism' (SHAPE) project took place in North Karelia BR, Finland. The project has been funded by the European Commission's Northern Periphery and Arctic programme, which aims to use transnational cooperation to facilitate sustainable community development in northern and arctic regions.

SHAPE involves partners from Canada, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Scotland who are working together to develop ecotourism initiatives in areas that are protected for their valuable natural and cultural heritage. The partners include two universities (in Finland and Scotland: the lead partner), both of Scotland's BRs (Wester Ross and Galloway and Southern Ayrshire), Nordhordland BR (Norway), North Karelia BR (Finland), and Manicouagan-Uapishka BR (Canada), as well as Snaefellsnes Regional Park (Iceland), which is considering applying to become a BR. All of these regions, which the project refers to as 'sustainable heritage areas' (SHAs), have sustainable community development as a central goal. They are tackling challenges common to Arctic and northern areas that are often sparsely populated, e.g. the out-migration of young people, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of services and infrastructure.

Tourism is an increasingly important means of economic development in many rural areas. However, alongside the well-recognised economic benefits, the growth of tourism can pose threats to valuable natural and cultural heritage. There is a growing awareness of the importance of ecotourism in addressing this challenge. Developed in partnership with local communities, well-designed ecotourism initiatives can contribute to sustainable development while preserving the natural and cultural assets they are based on. Several of the partners wish to attract more tourists, who will 'stop, stay and spend', bringing benefits to the local economy. In contrast, other areas, such as Iceland's Snaefellsnes peninsula, are struggling with the impacts of too many tourists: huge increases in tourism in recent years are putting significant pressure on an area with a small population and few facilities and services.

At the regional level, project partners are facilitating networks of stakeholders involved in heritage management, tourism and community development to develop ecotourism initiatives that preserve rather than damage natural and cultural heritage. Transnationally, SHAPE is facilitating the exchange of approaches and experiences between partners and distilling this into an information resource for communities facing similar challenges across northern and arctic regions – and worldwide. In 2019, many local people involved with tourism and community development in each SHA took part in learning journeys to other SHAs, to observe how new approaches are working in practice and discuss how these could be applied in their own areas. Accounts of these experiences, in addition to other good practice guidance, is being included in an open-access e-service that will facilitate local, regional and transnational cooperation and partnerships and knowledge exchange: see https://www.shapingecotourism.eu/




INFORMATION LINKS

1. **Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve in Mexico**

Beyond being the hibernation habitat of a species emblematic, the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve is an area in the that there are connections between multiple species that make welfare possible region of. Know these areas, the communities that inhabit them and organizations that are joining forces to conserve these delicate Ecosystems is key to coping with climate change.

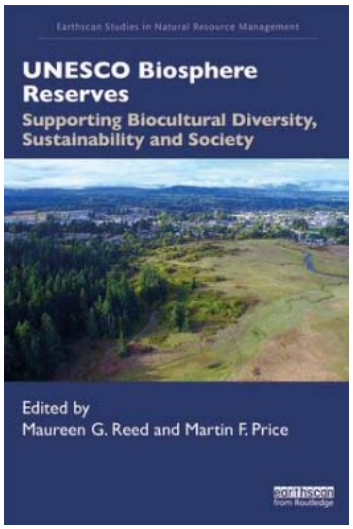
On February 18, 2020, the documentary was presented in Mexico City: "Más allá de la Monarca" *(Beyond the Monarch)*.

Here the link (it has english subtitles): https://vimeo.com/343360488?ref=fb-share

2. **UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: Supporting Biocultural Diversity, Sustainability and Society.**

The first global book on Biosphere Reserves 'UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: Supporting Biocultural Diversity, Sustainability and Society', edited by Maureen Reed and Martin Price, has already been published.

You can find it here: https://www.routledge.com/UNESCO-Biosphere-Reserves-Supporting-Biocultural-Diversity-Sustainability/Reed-Price/p/book/9781138369320



It includes many contributions from members of the BRTG. The book has 25 chapters, divided into three sections. It starts by outlining the origins and history of BRs and the MAB Programme, showing how they contribute to advancing sustainable development. The second section documents the evolution of BRs around the world, including 15 case studies, from each of the five UNESCO world regions. Each case study demonstrates how conservation, sustainable development and the role of scientific research have been interpreted locally. The book concludes with seven chapters that discuss thematic lessons to help understand the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainability science, providing a unique platform from which lessons can be learned. This includes how concepts become actions on the ground and how ideas can be taken up across sites at differing scales.

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