



MALAYSIA welcomes 1200 participants to 2nd ASIA PARKS CONGRESS

The 2nd Asia Parks Congress, convened in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, from 24-29 May 2022, was co-hosted by Sabah Parks, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the IUCN Asia Regional Office. The Congress attracted over 1,200 participants from Asia and beyond, representing government agencies, NGOs, international organisations, youth, Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), academia and the private sector.

A particularly striking feature of the 2nd APC was the IPLC Forum, which brought together over 200 IPLC representatives. The Forum also held a forum specifically for youth. The 2nd APC offered a unique opportunity to assess the status of protected and conserved areas in the region and to set the agenda for the next decade. It took place at a particularly timely moment, in advance of the adoption of the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its new targets for protected and conserved areas, especially Target 3 (30x30 approach).

The theme of the 2nd Asia Parks Congress was “Parks for Nature and People”, highlighting that protected areas are important not only in their own right but also for the contributions they make to the wellbeing of society.

The event was specifically designed to address priority issues through its six thematic streams addressing topics such as Nature-based Solutions for health & wellbeing, governance of protected & conserved areas, connectivity & transboundary conservation, effective protected & conserved areas, economic & financial sustainability of protected & conserved areas and urban conservation & a new generation.

Amongst other achievements, the Congress celebrated the inscription of Sabah’s Sugud Islands Marine Conservation Area on the IUCN Green List – the first marine protected area to receive this recognition in Asia. The delegates of the Congress agreed on a Kota Kinabalu Declaration – a powerful statement that seeks to bring key issues from Sabah to the world.

© IUCN/Sean Southey

IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs):

The largest portfolio in the world of the IUCN Green List Approved sites with 20 out of the 66 is spread across Asian countries. There are in total 50+ sites engaging in the IUCN Green List certification programme, including the following countries, Bhutan, China, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, and Viet Nam. In addition to these, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand have shown interest in implementing the Green List.

IUCN Green List framework is also being used as a diagnostic tool for site assessment and gap analysis. There are many sites that are using this approach, including the four key sites under the Mekong River Commission, in South East Asia.

Tech4Nature programme, in collaboration with Huawei, also has been providing innovative technology solutions for protected area management and best practices for the Green List sites in the region.

Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP):

A unique network of government agencies responsible for protected areas with 23 members from 17 Asian countries and two institutions members - the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). For more details please refer to <http://www.asiapartnership.org> The key contributions for 2022 include:

- Support to the 2nd Asia Parks Congress at Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia
- Establishment of the Asian Youth Network for Protected Areas (AYNPA).

Building guidance and capacity on “Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures” (OECMs):

To mainstream Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM), the IUCN Asia Regional Office, in collaboration with Ministry of Environment of Japan (MoEJ), Korea National Parks Services (KNPS) and WCPA, has taken an initiative to engage with countries to provide guidance on OECMs. In line with this, the very first workshop on OECMs was held on 18 - 20 October 2022 in the Republic of Korea. IUCN is in discussion with other countries in Asia to facilitate similar national dialogues and organise national workshops for Bangladesh, Thailand, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

Creating pathways through national dialogue for the advancement of 30x30 agenda, Target-3 of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework:

To address this as an effort to scale up regional marine protected areas, capacity development has been initiated by the IUCN Asia Regional office. The first such consultation workshop was carried out in Trang Sea in Thailand, for Mu Ko Libong Wildlife Non - Hunting Area and Hat Chao Mai National Park, also using the IUCN Green List as diagnostic tool for assessing the capacity and needs and benchmarking governance and effective management. More such workshops are planned for other key areas in the region, including the Coral Triangle and the Bay of Bengal.



MALDIVES designates 12 protected areas with REGENERATE project

© IUCN

The Reefs Generate Environmental and Economic Resiliency for Atoll Ecosystems (REGENERATE) project, implemented from 2013 to 2023, was a collaborative initiative between the Government of Maldives, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and IUCN. This project aimed to enhance economic, social, and environmental resilience to the adverse effects of climate change in the Maldives, which is home to the seventh largest reef ecosystem in the world, covering over 8,000 square kilometres.

Ecological surveys conducted across 79 sites established a crucial baseline for conservation planning, resulting in the designation of 12 new legally protected areas and the declaration of Addu and Fuvahmulah as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. Additionally, the project confirmed a previously unrecorded mangrove species, *Bruguiera hainessi*, in Haa Alif Kelaa, in the north of the Maldives.

Addressing the critical issue of coral bleaching, the project established a national coral bleaching response plan, bringing together various agencies under an interagency task force. This collaborative effort centralized nationwide recording and management actions during mass coral bleaching events. Standardized surveys were promoted through the publication of guidelines for coral reef and small island vegetation surveys, ensuring consistent data collection practices. Furthermore, the first-ever long term study of coral reefs from 2015 to 2019 shed light on the reefs' resilience to climate change, emphasising the significance of oceanward facing reefs within atolls.

The project implemented the first-ever assessment of species at a national level through the Maldives National Red List Initiative. By building the capacity of IUCN Red List Assessors within the government and civil society, developing a National



Red List Roadmap, and publishing assessments for five marine reptiles and thirty-nine coral species, the project significantly contributed to species conservation efforts.

Capacity-building efforts were extended to key stakeholders, with over 80 government staff receiving formal training on ecological training, statistical analysis, and protected area management. Rangers from all protected areas underwent training on excellence in field management of natural resources. Changes were implemented in the Bachelor of Environmental Management course at the Maldives National University. Sixty-six science teachers received training in problem-based learning. Awareness activities such as the "Moodhu Maakandu" festival and public lectures engaged over 2500 individuals, while social media platforms engaged over 1 million people, promoting wider understanding and awareness.

The REGENERATE project successfully mainstreamed evidence-based conservation efforts, expanded the protected area network, supported ecosystem and species conservation, and demonstrated the economic advantages of preserving ecosystems. The collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology (MoECCT), Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture, Maldives Marine Research Institute, Environmental Protection Agency, and Maldives National University were instrumental in achieving these remarkable outcomes, enhancing the resilience of the Maldives' coastal resources in the face of climate change. MoECCT became a State Member of IUCN in April 2022, making it the sole State Member in the world to join throughout the year.



IUCN staff familiarising local students with coral reefs, at an annual festival held through REGENERATE. © IUCN

BRIDGE Programme engages Indigenous communities in the Meghna basin

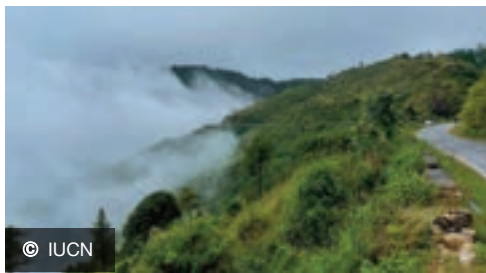
The Meghna river basin is shared by Bangladesh (47%) and India (52%), and covers 82,000 square kilometres. Special features of Meghna are the presence of millions of Indigenous communities dependent on its forest and wetlands. The basin area overlaps with the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot, making it an important refuge for many endangered plants and animals.

Through the BRIDGE (Building River Dialogues and Governance) Programme, IUCN is facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues and joint research in the basin, to advance Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). The Meghna basin dialogues have highlighted several water governance challenges due to increasing population pressures, the degradation of forests and wetlands, and climate change, including increasing drought and floods (MKF 2021). The learnings from dialogue and joint research led to the development of policy and planning support tools, such as land use maps and an online land use atlas of the basin.

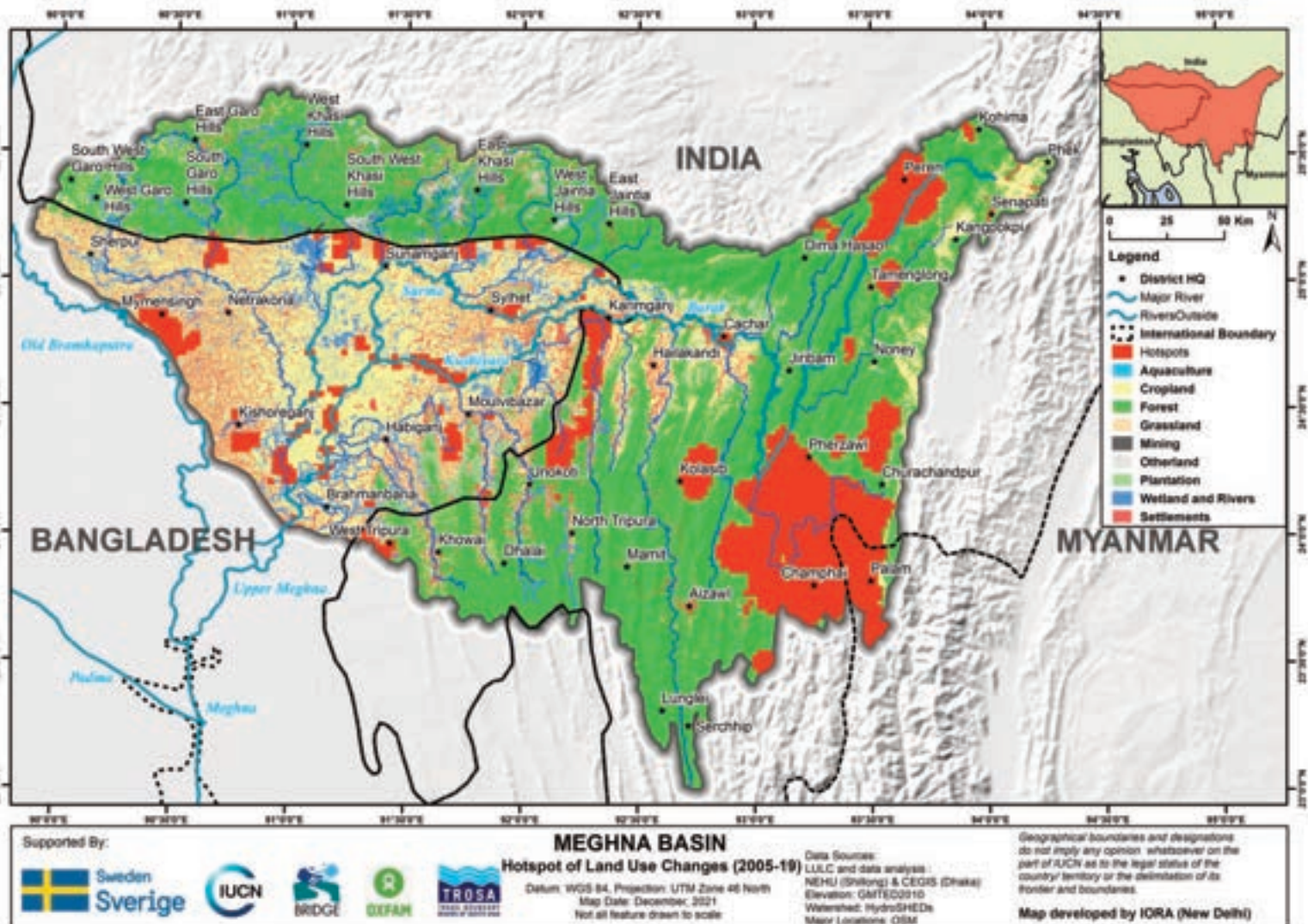
Meghna dialogues has successfully engaged representatives from the Indigenous communities from Bangladesh and India, as well as IUCN Members working in the basin, such as the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoEFCC) from India and Bangladesh, along with civil society organisations, such as the Balipara Foundation from India, and Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS), Brotee and Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) from Bangladesh.

© IUCN





In 2022, IUCN facilitated interviews with more than 30 Indigenous community members in the basin, from Meghalaya and Manipur in India, to Jafflong and Sunomganj in Bangladesh. The interviews were captured and published as a film, *Living in Harmony with Nature - Application of Nature-based Solutions in the Meghna river basin*. The Meghna NbS film has been disseminated to more than 1,000 people, and used in the NbS capacity-building workshop. Going forward, IUCN will be working with multi-stakeholders and donors to further strengthen the engagement of Indigenous peoples in regional water dialogue and support their engagement in the design and implementation of NbS to reduce their vulnerability to climate change impacts.







PAKISTAN government and IUCN launch Climate Change Gender Action Plan

Under the Gender - Responsive Readiness Grant of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) titled “Building Capacities and Innovative Approaches through Development of a National Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP)”, IUCN Pakistan and Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination developed the first National Climate Change Gender Action Plan of Pakistan. It was the first Gender Readiness Grant awarded by GCF to any country. It had been a highly interactive and participatory process to draft the action plan with the participation of key stakeholders including from the government, civil society, international partners, academia, private sector, women organisations and activists.

Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP) of Pakistan is developed around six priority sectors as per the National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan, including forest and biodiversity; agriculture and food security; disaster risk management; water and sanitation; integrated coastal management; and energy and transport. A sectoral gender analysis of each of the six sectors was conducted to assess the existing gender gaps. The action plans for each sector revolved around four themes including capacity building, policies and management mechanisms, gender balance, adaptation and mitigation measures.

The ccGAP development process was an effective way to orient government and civil society stakeholders on the nexus between gender and climate change. After the national launch on 20 July 2022, IUCN Pakistan organised provincial launch events in collaboration with the planning and development departments of the Government of Pakistan to foster a broader understanding at the provincial level. IUCN Pakistan also assisted other agencies in developing GCF projects to incorporate gender. As a step towards implementation, IUCN and Embassy of France in Pakistan launched the Gender and Climate Awards to recognise outstanding women and organisations working on women and climate change aspects.



NEPAL achieves global commitment to double its tiger population

On the occasion of Global Tiger Day (29 July), Nepal announced that its tiger population has more than doubled in 13 years, to 355 in 2022.

According to the 2009 tiger census, there were 121 wild tigers in Nepal. This number rose to 198 in 2013, and 235 in 2018. Over the last four years, the total number of tigers has grown by 120. The latest tiger census report indicates that there are currently 128 tigers in Chitwan National Park, 125 in Bardiya National Park, 41 in Parsa National Park, 25 in Banke National Park, and 36 in Shuklaphanta National Park, culminating in a total of 355.

In 2010, leaders from 13 tiger range countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Viet Nam) convened at the International Tiger Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, pledging to double the number of wild tigers across their geographical areas by 2022. At that time, Nepal set a target to raise the tiger population to 250 by 2022. The current positive outcome shows that Nepal has surpassed its target by an additional 105 tigers.

Since 2014, IUCN Nepal has implemented the 'Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP)', funded by the German Cooperation (BMZ) through the German Development Bank (KfW). The first phase of the ITHCP, which took place between 2014 and 2021, provided grants to a diverse range of organisations to operate 12 projects across six priority Tiger Conservation

© Krishna Hengaju



Conducting a meeting with stakeholders on tiger conservation

© Amit Poudyal / IUCN

Landscapes in tiger range countries (India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Indonesia).

The programme is aligned with the objectives of the Global Tiger Recovery Programme and its objectives are a subset of those, with a focus on improving three main areas:

- The management of protected areas, corridors and buffer zones;
- The protection of tigers through anti-poaching, and monitoring of tigers and prey;
- The livelihoods of communities living in and around tiger habitats to reduce poaching, over-exploitation of forest resources and human wildlife conflicts.

Watch tower constructed at Parsa National Park

© Amit Poudyal / IUCN

