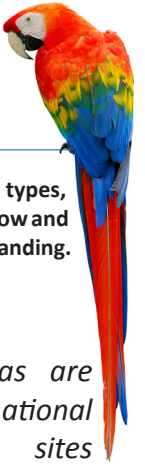


Protected Areas

Myths around data and information



Myth Topics

- ◇ International, National & Regional Protected Areas
- ◇ IUCN Management Categories
- ◇ National Park
- ◇ Marine Protected Areas
- ◇ Paper Parks

Protected areas are often misunderstood due to complexities in designation types, categorisation approaches, and terminology. Common misconceptions are explained below and the origins of the myths are described. Facts replace fallacy helping to improve understanding.

International, National & Regional

Myth - International sites are more important than national sites.

International sites are overseen by a body external to the designating government and are often high profile. In some cases the site must demonstrate different types of management and governance for the international designation to apply. International sites may also have more international awareness and publicity connected to them. This could lead to the impression that they are more important than national sites. However, national sites are as important as international sites.

Regional and international sites are those designated by national authorities to meet an obligation under a regional or international

Fact - All protected areas are designated by the national government. National sites are equally as important as international or regional sites.

convention or agreement. International and regional sites are still designated by the national government.

Sites can be very important at a national level and not be designated under a regional or international convention. Capacity, funding and time all control the ability of a country to designate a site at an international level. A national site may be of equal or higher biodiversity value than an international site.

IUCN Management Categories

Myth - Protected Areas without IUCN Management Categories are less important than those with them.

Fact - All protected areas are important. Some protected areas do not have an assigned category.

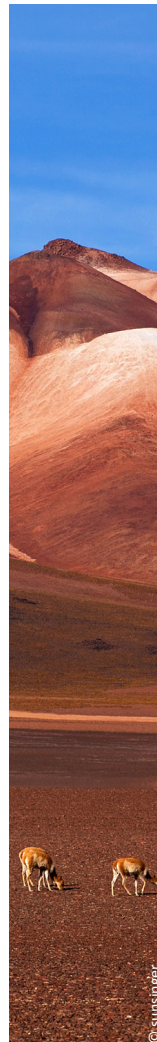
It is important to recognise that IUCN categories are not universally used. All protected areas in the WDPA fit the IUCN definition of a protected area. Some countries do not apply categories at all including Yemen, Morocco and Liberia. Others only apply them to some of their protected areas. Finland for example only applies categories to sites above 1000ha in size. Within the WDPA, 26% of protected area records do not have a category assigned (WDPA 2013). Protected areas with no reported IUCN management category do have biodiversity value. Not reported does not mean unmanaged. For example, some sites where the category is not reported could have management objectives which are the same as category Ia sites.

Myth - IUCN Management Categories are a hierarchy.

Fact - All Protected Areas are important. IUCN categories are not intended to prioritise some sites over others.

There are six management categories. They all have a number, I to VI. Unfortunately, because the categories are numbered they are seen as a hierarchy with category I being more important than category VI. However, the category system is not intended to rank protected areas. The aim of the IUCN categories is to provide a way of classifying the purpose of a site and to give recognition to different management systems and governance types. It also helps countries design a protected area system with a variety of management objectives. While categories V and VI include a more sustainable use aspect, their status as protected areas is no different to categories I to IV and they are equally important.

It should be noted that countries do not always apply the categories in the same way. For example Estonia considers category VI to be stricter in biodiversity conservation terms than category II which they feel to be more focused on recreation.



National Park & IUCN Category II

Myth - National Parks are always IUCN Category II

Fact - The title National Park existed long before the IUCN Management Categories system. Not all protected areas with 'National Park' in their title are IUCN Category II National Parks.

Each IUCN management category has a title as well as a number. Management category II is called National Park which has led to the idea that all National Parks are category II. However, countries do not name their protected areas according to the IUCN category titles. The title National Park is a very old one and has become widely used globally irrespective of the management category system. The examples below demonstrate that 'National Parks' can appear in every category.

Ia: Swiss National Park
Switzerland

Ib: Everglades National Park
USA

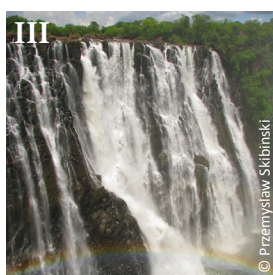
II: Białowieża National Park
Poland

III: Victoria Falls National Park
Zimbabwe

IV: Vitosha National Park
Bulgaria

V: Yorkshire Dales National Park
United Kingdom

VI: Expedition National Park
Australia



Marine Protected Areas



Myth - Marine protected areas all offer the same governance and management structure.

Fact - There is a variety of types of protected areas and mixture of management approaches in the marine environment (as there is in the terrestrial realm).

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are sometimes considered to be all one type of designation. All MPAs are thought to have the same management and a global governance structure. However, a diversity of types of protected area are found in the marine environment including marine parks, marine reserve & marine sanctuaries. A variety of management approaches, governance styles and activity restrictions will apply in different types of MPA. These will depend on the national government which designates the protected area.

Management may include a mix of zones allowing different types of activities. In some areas, such as no-take zones, the management will not allow removal of any living or non-living resources. Other zones will allow certain activities such as tourism or boating while not allowing others including trawling or dredging.

The IUCN definition of a protected area applies both in the terrestrial environment and in the marine environment. To classify as a protected area in either environment the primary management objective of the defined area must be for nature conservation.

Beyond territorial seas, protecting marine areas is a difficult issue. Huge areas of the ocean, covering more than 60% of the globe, are beyond national jurisdiction. Protection of these areas is complex because there is no comprehensive global mechanism for marine protected area creation and regulation that does not rely on national processes for implementation.

Local communities have traditional rights and tenure systems which have existed over long periods of time. In some locations these have been instrumental in setting up community marine protected areas such as Locally Managed Marine Areas in the South Pacific.

There is a variety of protected area types and management approaches in the marine environment that all fall under the banner of marine protected areas.

Paper Parks

Myth - Paper parks are not important.

Fact - Paper parks are still protected areas and are important.

The conservation community often term protected areas paper parks if the park exists on maps but may not be receiving adequate protection on the ground. In some cases this has led to the idea that these parks are not important.

However, whilst there may be no evident on-ground activity to manage the area, this does not mean that the protected area designation is not valid or that the

government does not recognise the need to protect the area. It simply means that the area is designated but may not be receiving the management it needs. This could be because of budget constraints at the national level or lack of capacity. In addition, the perception that the site is not being managed may be erroneous.

It is important to recognise that these parks do have legal protection despite any issues they may be facing. The status of a park with respect to management can also change rapidly and a new manager or funding stream can change the situation.

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Date of Publication
March 2014



UNEP



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