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'Understanding volcanoes and society: the key for risk mitigation'



A Global Perspective on Protected Volcanic Areas: Revision of the IUCN Volcano Thematic Study

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Volcanic landscapes are among the most recognizable protected areas of the World Heritage Program, the Global Geopark Network, and the Man in the Biosphere programs. These landscapes are identified for their biological, geological, and cultural values to communities and societies across every continent. Despite global recognition for these landscapes, important questions remain. Are the world's most significant and important volcanic landscapes recognized and properly protected? What are the challenges in the management of volcanic world heritage properties in the future? Are the various regions of the globe properly represented in these programs?

To address these questions, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has undertaken a revision of its previously published work, the *Volcano Thematic Study on World Heritage Volcanoes*, which focused solely on World Heritage properties (Wood, 2009, *World Heritage Volcanoes*, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 70pp.).

The revision examines not only World Heritage properties, but includes properties currently in the Man in the Biosphere Program as well as in the Global Geopark Network. Preliminary evaluation of the current lists of properties show that for World Heritage sites, 58 of 1031, (5.8%) have significant volcanic features; for Biosphere Reserves, 57 of 651 (8.7%) have significant volcanic features; and for Global Geoparks, 21 of 120 (17.5%), have significant volcanic features.

The results suggest:

- Volcanic features are often cited as part of the value of a property, but are frequently not the primary basis for listing.
- While volcanic features appear to well be represented for World Heritage listings, they may not be the “best-of-the-best” from a purely volcanic perspective.
- The perception that volcanic features are “overrepresented” in heritage listings may be an artifact of the “co-listing” effect whereby a property is listed for biological, cultural, or historical importance.
- Some sites have outstanding volcanological features, but these features were not included in listing.