



Marine Highlights

3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress

November 2004

Every four years, the IUCN – The World Conservation Union and its members come together in a governing body, the IUCN World Conservation Congress. This Congress represents the world's largest democratic environmental forum where governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) jointly establish conservation priorities, guide the Union's policy and approve its Programme. The 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress was held from 17-25 November 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand, under the theme: "People and Nature – Only One World" and involved more than 4800 participants, including over 40 Ministers, 1000 scientists, 200 business representatives and thousands of representatives from NGOs participating in over 350 separate sessions. The Commission Days, World Conservation Forum and Members Business Assembly highlighted the valuable contribution of conservation action in helping reduce poverty and maintain a healthy planet. Participants exchanged information on conservation tools and approaches, heard the world's latest scientific knowledge, launched landmark initiatives, took part in high-level debates, signed a number of agreements, and voted on over 100 resolutions on critical conservation issues, including those of marine and coastal ecosystems.

Congress participants expressed strong support for sustainable use of coastal and marine resources as well as the conservation of the rich biodiversity of our seas. The IUCN World Conservation Forum provided an excellent opportunity for the ever-expanding global marine community to congregate and share experiences and ideas. IUCN's Global Marine Programme helped guide members to forum sessions with topics ranging from invasive species to deep sea fishing regulations. Key messages, such as the importance of ecosystem-based approaches and the necessity of nurturing partnerships amongst stakeholders and across scales, ran through the highly diverse marine sessions. In the wake of this productive and inspiring meeting, the IUCN Global Marine Programme looks forward to continuing its work with current members and forming new partnerships within the global marine community.



"It is important that the protection of marine life and the oceans should not be a case of 'out of sight, out of mind'. Marine conservation is a matter of global priority and utmost urgency; it is time to move from reactive to proactive mode if we wish to reverse the trend of marine exploitation."

**Mr. Valli Moosa, S. Africa,
elected IUCN President at
the Congress**



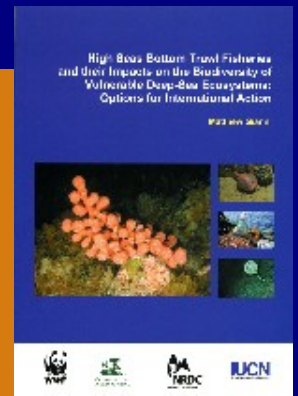
THREAT TO THE HIGH SEAS

Currently, there is little or no control over fishing activities and associated environmental impacts in areas outside of national jurisdiction, or the “high seas”. World experts led Congress participants in spirited discussions about how to stem ecosystem degradation and increasing species vulnerability in the high seas through improved fisheries management.

Bottom trawling is increasingly recognised as a major threat to species-rich and fragile deep sea ecosystems, such as seamounts and cold water corals, a fact highlighted in a new publication entitled, *High Seas Bottom Trawl Fisheries and their Impacts on the Biodiversity of Vulnerable Deep-Sea Ecosystems: Options for International Action* (M. Gianni). The report *The Mediterranean Deep-Sea: Highly Valuable Ecosystems in Need of Protection* was also introduced. The impacts of fishing on vulnerable open-ocean (pelagic) species was also examined as further efforts are needed to reduce the death rates of non-target species such as seabirds, sea turtles and sharks (RECWCC3.116 *see back page for more information). A time out on high seas bottom trawling together with the creation of a network of high seas MPAs were highlighted as crucially needed precautionary steps for conservation of biodiversity and sustainable resource management on the high seas.

A lively exchange of views initiated at the Congress is continuing amongst those involved in the fisheries sector, highlighting the fact that open channels of communication can help clarify critical issues and pave the way towards their solution. As fisheries make up an important economic sector of society, building ownership and a sense of collective responsibility over common resources are crucial to the conservation and sustainable use of the high seas.

IUCN members, both governments and NGOs, responded to these concerns by adopting a resolution on the protection of seamounts, deep sea corals and other vulnerable deep sea habitats from destructive fishing practices on the high seas (RESWCC3.066). It calls for urgent action and stricter legal mechanisms to protect international waters, including an interim prohibition on deep sea bottom trawling. An additional resolution (RESWCC3.064) calls for urgent measures to reform and upgrade regional fisheries bodies, end illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, cooperate in establishing networks of marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction; and improve governance mechanisms to protect, restore and sustainably manage marine biodiversity and productivity in the high seas.

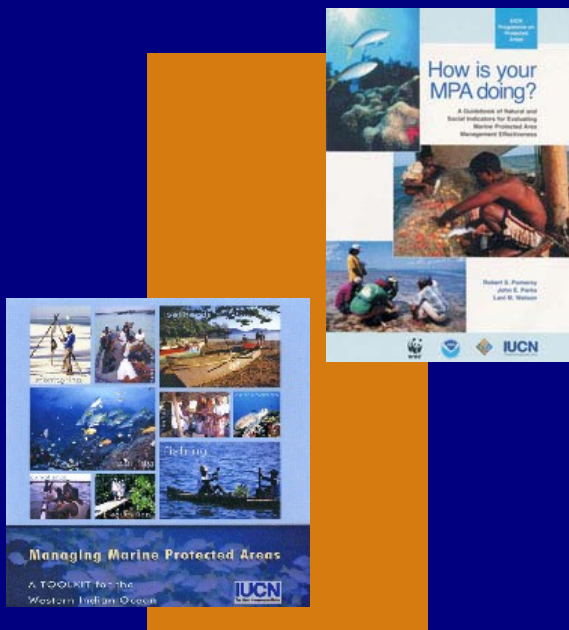


Deep-sea biodiversity

from left to right: Crinoid, Hydroid Monocoryne, Paragorgia red and white, Giant Octopus
Photos by Alberto Lindner, courtesy NMFS

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) continue to be recognised as vitally important elements in the protection and sustainable management of marine biodiversity. They are also becoming increasingly known as an essential tool in sustaining marine resources, in particular the fishery resources, upon which many people's daily livelihoods depend. IUCN members and Congress participants took a step further to carefully consider how to make MPAs more effective in the longer term. This was achieved by examining ways to sustainably expand, finance and incorporate them into ecologically coherent MPA networks, such as one proposed for Antarctica and the Southern Ocean (RESWCC3.036).



To accompany these productive sessions, several books were launched that are useful tools for MPA practitioners, including: *How is your MPA doing? A Guidebook of Natural and Social Indicators for Evaluating Marine Protected Area Management Effectiveness* (Pomeroy et al);

Incorporating Marine Protected Areas into Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management: Principles and Guidelines (Belfiore et al); and *Managing Marine Protected Areas: A Toolkit for the Western Indian Ocean* (IUCN Eastern Africa Regional Programme).

International recognition was awarded to countries providing leadership in the establishment and development of comprehensive systems of MPAs. The Australian Government, for example, was lauded for its recent efforts to increase both the number and total area of no-take zones within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (RECWCC3.108)

SUSTAINABLE USE

The world's fisheries are in crisis. There is mounting evidence of a sharp decline in global catches of wild fish, leading to calls for urgent measures to regulate exploitation rates and for adequate alternatives. The Congress featured fisheries and aquaculture as the main areas relevant to human use of marine resources. In a lively discussion, managers, scientists and local stakeholders involved in large-scale regional projects identified the benefits of an ecosystem-wide approach to marine resource management, especially fisheries. Experts shared experiences on methods to integrate the legal, socio-economic and ecological components comprising the complex "bottom-up" approach of managing Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) with tools and measures that exist at other scales, for example marine protected areas. This active dialogue provided another example of the importance of improved communication, stakeholder participation and synergies across all geographical and institutional scales (RESWCC.067).

Aquaculture has appeared as a possible solution to answer the growing global demand for seafood protein; however, it raises a number of other concerns for the health of our marine environment, including waste material release, disease, maintenance and assurance of product quality, and the introduction of new species. There are clear benefits in defining the principles and criteria for sustainable aquaculture, but the requirements and implications to achieve this vary across geographic scales. Congress participants agreed on the development and implementation of internationally accepted guidelines which are based on common goals of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and which would be adapted to the specific local communities and environmental needs.



"In the new Regional Advisory Council for the North Sea, we are engaging a wide range of stakeholders into the management of the regional fisheries in the framework of an Ecosystem approach"

Tony Hawkins,
Regional Advisory
Council for the
North Sea

TROPICAL ECOSYSTEMS, REEFS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Globally, coral reef habitats and associated species are facing mounting threats. At the same time, local, regional and international coral reef conservation organisations are scaling up their efforts with new innovative initiatives designed to address these issues.

The escalating impact of climate change on coral reefs was one of the key issues addressed at the Congress, and a panel of experts noted that continuing global climate change will alter biodiversity with an elevated risk of extinction of some vulnerable species.

Coral bleaching events, the invasion of non-native species, and storms are linked to climate change, and will increasingly threaten the richness and productivity of coral reefs. These current issues are documented in the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network biennial benchmark report, *Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2004* (edited by Clive Wilkinson). The report not only paints the current picture of coral reef status, but also offers recommendations from over 80 countries for reef biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, the report highlights the complexity of coral reef management, the need for multidisciplinary knowledge, cooperation from all ranges of stakeholders, and action from local to global levels. A new chapter on cold water corals has been added to address new threats.

The Congress also focused on the needs and achievements within regions containing coral reefs, in particular the Caribbean, for which The Caribbean Marine Protected Area Managers Network (CaMPAM) initiative was highlighted. IUCN's members and partners clearly recognize the intrinsic value of coral reefs, and are focusing increasing attention on addressing threats to their integrity.

*Coral Reef species right, from top: Pink Frogfish (Photo: Jeff Dawson); Large Giant Clam - *Tridacna maxima* (Photo: Chuck Savall); yellow and blueback fusiliers (Photo: Rich Wilson).*



"Climate change started affecting coral reefs in the 1980s; this is not a case of waiting for impacts in the future"

- David Obura, Coordinator, Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean (CORDIO) programme in East Africa

Photo: Fully and partially bleached corals on the Great Barrier Reef - Copyright Australian Institute of Marine Science, Photo by Ray Berkemans

MARINE SPECIES LOSS

The loss of marine species, through extinctions and severe depletions, has enormous implications for global biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, as well as for coastal communities and other resource-users who depend on them. A number of sessions at the Congress drew attention to this loss as a phenomenon that is increasingly understood but remains under-appreciated. An expert panel discussion organised by IUCN Species Survival Commission – Marine, presented recent findings on documented marine extinctions and vulnerability of certain species groups, thus refuting many of the “myths” about marine species being more resilient to external pressures. Bycatch, the largely unregulated live reef food fish trade (REWC3.100), and undersea noise pollution (RESWCC3.068), among others, were reviewed as contributing forces to this trend. The launch of the 2004 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species – A Global Species Assessment drew attention to the threatened status of an increasing number of marine organisms. Over one-fifth of the world’s sharks, skates and rays were reviewed, with the number of other fishes increasing as the Red List process expands. A Global Marine Species Assessment was announced at the meeting, which aims to evaluate the threatened status of up to 20,000 marine species over the next five years to better understand the extent and nature of these losses. The Congress also encouraged mechanisms for improving management and conservation of individual species or species groups, including sturgeons and western grey whales (RESWCC3.078 and RESWCC3.077). These concerns converged in many ecosystem-based sessions and resolutions, particularly in relation to MPAs and high-seas fisheries issues.

Threatened Species illustrated right, from top: Endangered “Nassau Grouper” (Photo: John E. Randall); Vulnerable “Icon Star” (Photo: Debby Ng); Endangered “Humphead Wrasse” (Photo: Christian Laufenberg); Endangered “Largetooth Sawfish” (Photo: R. Mitchell).



MARINE INVASIVE SPECIES

Preliminary findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirmed that invasive alien species (IAS) are one of the major drivers towards homogenisation of ecosystem biodiversity in marine environments. During the Congress’ “Coping with Aliens” workshop, participants established that although IAS have been recognized as a major threat to biodiversity, the efforts to combat them have been insufficient to date.

Invasions are less likely to be accurately recorded and monitored in marine, as opposed to terrestrial, environments. Increased baseline and monitoring surveys, and more detailed and quantitative risk assessment methodologies were identified as key priorities. In order to build capacity to identify and mitigate AIS, there were also calls for the development of regional marine IAS networks, greater cooperation and sharing of resources, and increased involvement with all stakeholders, including the private sector.



*One of the prize winning photographs from the “Zoom on the Invasives” photo competition. Alien jellyfish, *Rhopilema nomadica*, wreaks havoc for Mediterranean coastal fisheries. Photo: Bella Galil, Israel*

IUCN Global Marine Programme

Responding to the global need to conserve our marine and coastal resources, the IUCN Global Marine Programme (GMP) is working across Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Mediterranean, and Central and South America. The GMP contributes to the conservation of marine biodiversity by promoting, influencing and catalyzing sustainable uses and equitable sharing of resources, as well as protecting ecosystems. The GMP provides vital linkages for the Union and its members to all the IUCN activities that deal with marine issues, including projects and initiatives of the Regional offices and the 6 IUCN Commissions. In addition to serving as the hub for marine issues within the Union, the GMP also provides policy advice and guidance to governments, communities, NGOs and the private sector. The GMP directly implements pilot initiatives, in collaboration with partners, in various parts of the world's oceans.

For more information on our programme, please contact:

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The IUCN Global Marine Programme was delighted to be a central part of such a diverse and interesting series of discussions. We were pleased to welcome many of the world's leading marine experts, representatives from government and industry, and other important decision makers. The World Conservation Congress continues to be a watershed event for the shaping of environmental policy and planning.

Fil. Lic. Carl Gustaf Lundin, Head, IUCN Global Marine Programme

Other Information

*Website for resolutions and recommendations:
http://www.iucn.org/congress/members/submitted_motions.htm
IUCN bookstore: www.iucn.org/bookstore

Acknowledgements

Additional photography: Cover page - Orange Coral (Chuck Savall), Starfish (José Antonio Moya); Page 3 - Fishing Boat (c) Wolcott Henry 2001
Compiled by Lauren Nichols
Design and layout by James Oliver

PARTICIPATING PARTNERS

Biosecurity New Zealand
Conservation International (CI)
Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
Coope SoliDar R.L.
Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean (CORDIO)
CPPS (Permanent Commission for the South Pacific)
Dept of Marine & Coastal Resources, Thailand
Federación Española de Organizaciones Pesqueras (FEOPE)
Fondation d'entreprise TOTAL pour la Biodiversité et la Mer
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations-MEDSUDMED
Food and Agriculture Organization: Regional office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO:RAP)
Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)
Global Environment Facility – International Waters: Learning Exchange & Resource Network (GEF-IW:LEARN)
Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)
James Cook University
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
Nature Conservation Society of Japan (NACS-J)
Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA)
Peoples Republic of China Resident Mission (PRCM)
Perry Institute for Marine Science (PIMS)
Society for the Conservation of Reef Fish Aggregations (SCRFA)
The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
The University of Hong Kong
Warsaw University: Interfaculty Study Programme in Environmental Protection (ISPEP)
Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)
World Wildlife Fund, USA (WWF-US)

IUCN COMMISSIONS

IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)
IUCN Commission on Environmental Law (CEL)
Species Survival Commission, European Sustainable Use Specialist Group: Fisheries Working Group (SSC-ESUSG)
Species Survival Commission: Shark Specialist Group (SSC:SSG)
World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)
World Commission on Protected Areas: High Seas MPA Task Force