

# ANNUAL REPORT

(April 2023 to March 2024)

**Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C)  
for World Natural Heritage Management and Training for  
Asia and the Pacific Region, under the auspices of UNESCO  
Dehradun, India**



Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre  
World Natural Heritage Management and  
Training for Asia and the Pacific Region



**unesco**  
Centre  
Under the auspices  
of UNESCO



**भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान  
Wildlife Institute of India**

## Background

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015, an Agreement was signed between Government of India and UNESCO to establish in Dehradun a 'Centre for World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region' as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO. It was signed by the Director General of Forests, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India as counterpart to the signature by the Director General, UNESCO, Paris. The Agreement was previously approved by the Government of India's Cabinet of Ministers, chaired by Hon'ble Prime Minister on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2015. The Centre has accomplished Annual Work Programmes for the years 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2022-23.

In its vital role of the stewardship of Natural World Heritage, the Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) for World Natural Heritage Management and Training in the Asia-Pacific region, under the auspices of UNESCO, advances the mission through meticulously crafted short-term and long-term capacity-building initiatives, enriched by the wisdom of diverse heritage experts. Nestled within a region abundantly graced with natural and mixed heritage, the Centre champions the cause of conservation in steadfast collaboration with State Parties, the World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention, academic institutions and other Category 2 Centres, and fortifies the management capacities essential for safeguarding Natural World Heritage.

## Mission and Objectives

The Centre's mission is to strengthen implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Asia and the Pacific Region by building the capacity of all those professionals and bodies involved with Natural Heritage site inscription, protection, conservation and management in Asia and the Pacific region, through training, research, dissemination of information and network building. The overall objective is to focus on Natural Heritage conservation issues with the aim to:

- ◆ contribute to the strengthening of capacities in the management of Natural World Heritage in the region;
- ◆ contribute to achieving a more balanced representation of properties from Asia and the Pacific on the World Heritage List;
- ◆ raise awareness among the general public and the youth in particular of the importance of Natural World Heritage and the need to protect it; and
- ◆ foster international cooperation on Natural World Heritage initiatives.

## Activities Undertaken During 2023-24

### I. Capacity-Building Programmes and Outreach

The Centre's mandate is to contribute to the strengthening of capacities in the conservation and management of World Natural Heritage is derived from the "World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy" drawing on the World Heritage Committee's focus on capacity building as one of its five strategic objectives (the 5Cs: credibility, conservation, communication, capacity building and community). The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework which favours the development of effective actions and programmes to strengthen or develop capacities of practitioners, institutions, communities and networks for the conservation and management of World Heritage. Another basic objective of the Centre is to raise awareness among the public in general and youth in particular, of the importance of natural World Heritage and the need to protect it. In 2023-24, WII-C2C achieved the same through programmes at the WII campus in Dehradun as well as on-site trainings at 4 Natural World Heritage Sites addressing government officers, foreign delegates, school teachers, tourism operators and forest frontline staff.

#### 1. Natural Heritage Session at ICCON Conference, Mysuru (9-11 April, 2023)



The 1<sup>st</sup> Indian Conservation Congress (ICCON) 2023 was a biennial conference that brought together wildlife professionals, researchers, managers, conservationists, and policymakers under one roof. It was organized from 9-11 April 2023 in Mysuru, Karnataka. By creating a platform for dialogue and sharing of ideas, it generated solutions for pressing conservation issues including protection of natural heritage. In this regard, on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2023, the Wildlife Institute of India – Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) conducted a post-conference workshop “Conserving Natural Heritage: from the global to the local” with two components – an orientation session on the World Heritage Convention, documentary screening and an interactive quiz on Natural World Heritage Sites for some 15 participants. WII-C2C staff also made poster presentations in the conference on the evolution of the nature-culture paradigm in heritage conservation and impacts of climate change on the Adi-Kailash Askot Sacred Landscape. Both of the presentations expanded on the impacts of a sustainable lifestyle through a look at how existing nature-culture linkages can be identified so that they can be worked into updates to site management plans while looking at a specific example in the Himalayan region where climate change has severely affected the ecology and the traditional lifestyle of the people depending on it. As part of the inaugural day where the Hon’ble Prime

Minister of India spoke, WII-C2C had also made a poster presentation of its activities since its inception as part of the display set up for review by the Chief Guest for the occasion.

## 2. World Heritage Day, WII, Dehradun (18 April, 2023)



On World Heritage Day 2023, WII-C2C organized “The Journey: A Natural Heritage Quiz” which saw enthusiastic participation by various WII Departments/Cells/Courses through nominated representatives. The quiz was organized from 16:00 – 17:30 on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at the WII Porta Cabin. The programme began with an introduction to the World Heritage Convention and World Heritage Day by Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, WII-C2C for the gathered audience of nearly 70 members. This was followed by the quiz which took the 7 participating teams of 6 members each along with all those in attendance on a trip to world of heritage – its wonders and its mysteries. There were 3 rounds of questions dedicated to Pioneers (of the conservation movement), Landscapes (of heritage importance) and Characters (flora and fauna that represent natural heritage), after which the team representing the MSc Wildlife Science team came through as clear winners. Dr. S Sathyakumar, Registrar, WII awarded the winners and encouraged the attendees to take an active interest in quizzing as it increased their base of knowledge while asking them to use the World Heritage Site list as an indicator of must-visit places wherever they go.

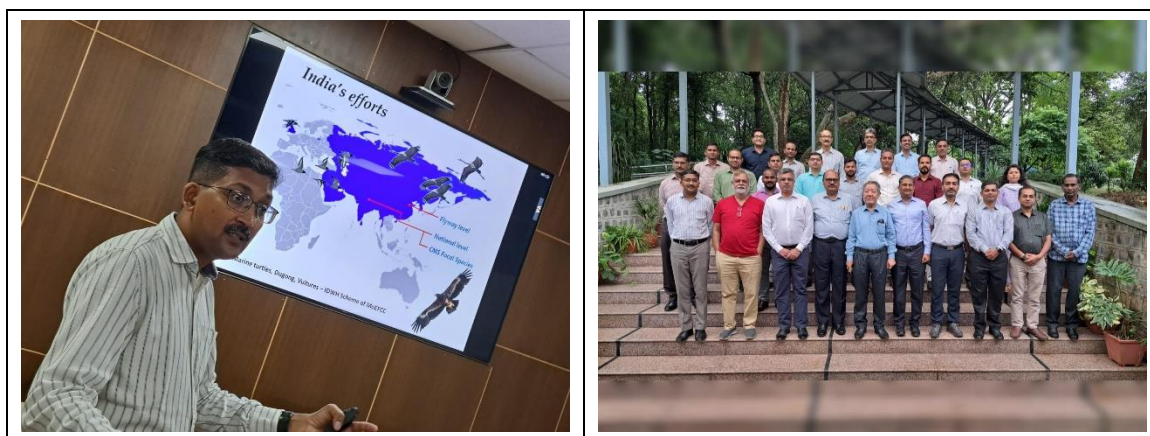
## 3. Mission LiFE Programme (05 May–05 June, 2023)



Mission LiFE in which LiFE stands for ‘LiFEStYle For Environment’ is a campaign which aims to generate a mass movement towards an environmentally conscious lifestyle. The concept of

'Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE)' was introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 at Glasgow on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, calling upon the global community of individuals and institutions to drive LiFE as an international mass movement towards "mindful and deliberate 6ecognized6, instead of mindless and destructive consumption" to protect and preserve the environment. LiFE puts individual and collective duty on everyone to live a life that is in tune with Earth and does not harm it. Those who practice such a lifestyle are 6ecognized as Pro Planet People, under LiFE. WII-C2C conducted nearly 100 activities at their office and home during the one-month campaign till Environment Day on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 under the categories of Save Energy, Save Water, No Single Use Plastic, Reduce Waste, Reduce E-Waste, Healthy Lifestyle, Sustainable Food and Swachata Action among others. These included documentary screenings, reuse and repair of existing equipment, awareness generation about sustainable practices and cleanliness initiatives at office. Through guidance provided by WII-C2C, Mission LiFE activities were also conducted at the Natural World Heritage Site of Great Himalayan National Park.

#### 4. **Module on International Biodiversity Conventions' for IFS Officers, WII Dehradun (23 August, 2023)**



WII-C2C hosted a 'One-day Module on International Biodiversity Conventions' for IFS Officers on 23 August, 2023 as part of a '1-week Compulsory Training Course on International Conventions on Forestry, Climate Change and Environment', coordinated by the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA). In his opening remarks, Director WII highlighted the significance of international conventions and their applicability at the site level management as well. With 18 officer participants, the module at WII was set in context with an introductory overview on international biodiversity conventions, followed by specific sessions by Scientists on the Convention on Migratory Species, Convention on International Trade in Migratory Species, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, World Heritage Convention, International Whaling Convention and Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The sessions elaborated on the mandate, provisions, structure and applicability to India of the respective Conventions.

## 5. Certificate Course in Heritage Management (07 August – 15 September, 2023)



Heritage studies is an exciting new interdisciplinary field of inquiry which draws on a range of academic disciplines and skills including history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, art history, biology, geography, textual analysis, and visual communication, to name but a few. Heritage is becoming a management mandate in many national and international agendas and the need for professionals is growing every day. The 1st Certificate Course on Heritage Management (CCHM) from 7<sup>th</sup> August-15<sup>th</sup> September 2023 was initiated by the WII-Category 2 Centre on World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region (WII-C2C) with the aim of equipping officer trainees with the concepts, theories and practices implemented in the multi-disciplinary field of heritage conservation. Through this 6-week course, the participants learnt how landscape level interventions maximize the potential of scale and unforeseen beneficial interconnections as cultural, ecological and economic benefits are compounded. The class consisted of 7 students – Forest Officers from Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Tripura along with an equivalent Officer from the Geological Survey of India and Maharashtra Tourism. The course covered fundamental and applied subjects including biodiversity and natural heritage, site management, nature culture linkages and heritage risk management. The participants developed a comprehensive understanding of the span and variety of heritage studies through interactive presentations and discussions; Best Practice Guidelines and recent Policies; management techniques; heritage expert talks and field tours to Keoladeo NP, Sultanpur NP, Agra, and Jaipur.

## 6. Participation at United Nations Forum on Forests, FRI Dehradun (26-27 October, 2023)



The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change organized a Country-Led Initiative (CLI) event as part of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) from 26-28 October, 2023 at the Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun, Uttarakhand. The United Nations Forum on Forests promotes the management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests. India holds the distinction of being a founding member of UNFF. The UN General Assembly adopted the first-ever UN Strategic Plan for Forests for the period of 2017-2030. This Strategic Plan serves as a global framework for actions at all levels to achieve the sustainable management of all types of forests, including trees outside forests, and to combat deforestation and forest degradation. The CLI's primary goal is to contribute to the discussions of UNFF regarding the implementation of Sustainable Forest Management and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests. It also aims to facilitate the sharing of best practices among UNFF member States for the implementation of SFM and the UNSPF. The CLI will discuss on thematic areas involving forest fires and forest certification. During this event, experts from UNFF member countries, the UN organizations, regional and sub-regional partners, as well as major groups, will deliberate on the thematic issues. WII-C2C staff participated in the event making poster presentations on the importance of natural heritage and its larger associations with some of the most well-protected ecological habitats of the world.

#### 7. World Natural Heritage Site Managers Meeting Round-II: Role, Responsibilities and Partnership, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan (27– 28 October, 2023)



On 27th – 28th October, 2023 at Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, WII-C2C organized “World Heritage Site Managers Meeting Round 2: Roles, Responsibilities and Partnership”. It was attended by site managers from 5 natural World Heritage Sites in India. The meeting began with the site managers elaborating on what makes their respective sites special in terms of biodiversity and conservation value. This was followed by a discussion of the ongoing and future management interventions at the site necessary to preserve these values by the participants. The need to study and document the impact of larger forces like climate change on these areas and the importance of digital tools like apps and field equipment utilizing digital technology were also brought up. There was a common agreement that the World Heritage status of the sites need to be promoted more through souvenirs, signages and other means using a uniform visual language/branding for World Heritage Sites making them instantly identifiable in flyers, websites and other media. Besides this, the Outstanding Universal Values that the sites have been inscribed were found to need further study and documentation with increased collaborations and site visits between World Heritage Sites.



**8. Natural Heritage through Education, Awareness and Network Building among Teachers, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan (29 October, 2023)**



The WII-Category 2 Centre organized a one-day teachers training workshop on October 29, 2023, aimed at educating and building the capacity of teachers from schools located around Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan. The program focused on enlightening educators about the significance of World Heritage Sites and the key role teachers play in conserving these natural treasures. With the participation of about 25 teachers from multiple local schools, the workshop encompassed various classroom sessions on fundamental insights into the importance of World Heritage Sites and Teacher's Role in Conservation by WII-C2C Staff. A crucial addition to the workshop was the screening of a documentary/ movie focusing on Keoladeo National Park. This visual medium provided a captivating portrayal of the park's history, biodiversity, and its significance as a World Heritage Site. The movie offered a deeper understanding of the park's ecosystem, engaging the teachers in a visual journey through its natural wonders. Following the presentations and the movie screening, all participating teachers embarked on a guided tour within Keoladeo National Park. During this excursion, the Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Sh. Manas Singh, engaged with the teachers. He provided invaluable insights into the park's significance, expounded on biodiversity conservation, and highlighted strategies for preserving the park's ecosystem. This immersive experience within the park allowed the teachers to witness firsthand the park's diverse flora and fauna, further deepening their understanding of its ecological importance.

**9. Capacity Building Programme on World Heritage Nomination of Bhedaghat-Lametaghat for staff of MPTB, Forests and Tourist Guides (06 – 07 Nov 2023)**



The WII-C2C organized a two-day capacity-building program, held on November 6-7, 2023, aimed at enhancing the understanding and expertise of participants from the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Officials and tourist guides. The program focused on the World Heritage Nomination of the culturally and ecologically significant Bhedaghat-Lametaghat region. With the participation of about 17 tourism officials and guides from Bhedaghat Lametaghat, the programme encompassed various sessions and practical engagements. On November 7th, programme participants, accompanied by the WII-C2C team, embark on a field visit to the nominated site in the picturesque Narmada Valley. Dr. Chitiz Joshi took a detailed field session, explained of both criteria for World Heritage status. This practical exposure provided participants with a firsthand experience of the site's unique geological formations and ecological richness. The two-day capacity-building program achieved its intended objectives by enriching participants with knowledge about the World Heritage nomination process, emphasizing sustainable tourism practices, and providing an immersive experience during the field visit. The collaborative efforts between WII-C2C, MPTB, and tourist guides are important for the effective management and preservation of Bhedaghat-Lametaghat.

#### 10. Asian Rangers Forum Session, Guwahati, Assam (05–08 December, 2023)



The First Asian Ranger's Forum was held on 5-8 December, 2023 in Guwahati, India. Hosted by regional and national ranger associations, conservation organizations, International Rangers Federation (IRF), Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) and Assam Forest Department, the Forum brought together the Asian ranger community to discuss challenges, share experiences, and highlight contributions towards protecting biodiversity. As many as 146 participants, including 89 active Rangers and 35 women from 20 countries as well as representatives of local communities converged to participate in the global event. Mr. Niraj Kakati, Technical Officer, WII-C2C, presented a talk on 'Leveraging International Biodiversity Conventions for Strengthening Conservation', which underlined the relevance of global biodiversity treaties to the site-level protection of biodiversity in protected areas by Rangers. An overview was provided on six major International Biodiversity-related Conventions under the aegis of the United Nations, viz. Ramsar Convention on Conservation of Wetlands, Convention on Migratory Species, Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species, World Heritage Convention, Convention on Biological Diversity and International Whaling Commission. Along with the basic principles of the Conventions, specific emphasis was placed on their regional initiatives with reference to Asia and their synergy through the

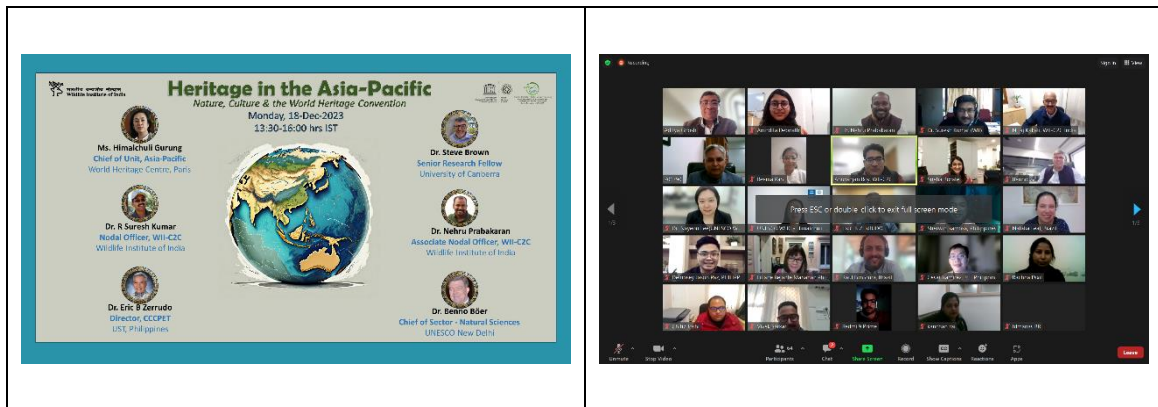
Sustainable Development Goals. The objective was to highlight how the Rangers, as biodiversity guardians, could leverage the provisions of the international conventions to strengthen the conservation and protection status of the natural areas under their supervision. 40 participants, including Rangers and other professionals, representing Protected Areas from Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Nepal and Bhutan attended the talk.

**11. Training Programme for Frontline Staff on Monitoring of Outstanding Universal Value of Natural World Heritage Sites: Sundarbans National Park, Sajnekhali, Sundarbans National Park (11-12 December, 2023)**



WII-C2C, in collaboration with West Bengal Forest Department, organised a Training Programme for Frontline Staff on Monitoring of Outstanding Universal Value of Natural World Heritage Sites at Sajnekhali, Sundarbans National Park on December 11th – 12th, 2023. The morning session of the workshop introduced the concept of Outstanding Universal Values (OUV) and its relevance in the monitoring and management of the Sundarbans World Heritage Site to Frontline Staff of the Sundarbans National Park while the afternoon session saw the programme engage the 28 participants in team reviews and presentations as they analysed OUV statements against current conditions and an intensive SWOT analysis of park management. The 2nd day of the OUV workshop for frontline staff in Sundarbans National Park involved a focused feedback session on their learnings from the exercises done by them and UNESCO World Heritage management training needs felt by them. This was followed by a valedictory function as the participants were recognized and appreciated for their enthusiastic involvement in the OUV training. Then they went on field to the Sudhanyakhali Camp to see the mangrove nursery and camp expansion works in progress. Discussions and thoughts shared during the field visit yielded further insights into the specific challenges of monitoring and protecting a landscape where every action including patrolling needs to be planned as per the rise and fall of the tides.

## 12. International Webinar on 'Heritage in the Asia-Pacific: Nature, Culture and the World Heritage Convention' (18 December, 2023)



Heritage represents important inter-generational legacy of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with respect to natural heritage and landscape level interventions. With the purpose to provide a platform to bring together heritage academics, practitioners, site managers and State Party representatives to actively discuss the evolution and protection of natural/mixed/cultural heritage sites through the World Heritage Convention, the WII-C2C organised an International Webinar on 'Heritage in the Asia-Pacific; Nature, Culture and the World Heritage Convention' on 18 December, 2023. The event saw participation of nearly 200 participants from 26 countries. Invited speakers from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, Philippines, Australia and India along with a panel of eminent representatives from UNESCO Delhi Office, ASI, WHIPIC Republic of Korea and University of Leicester offered their expert views on the theme of the webinar. Key insights gained from the webinar included the need for inter-institutional and trans-disciplinary collaborations and partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region; evolve and overcome the neocolonial aspects of World Heritage; synergizing the 1972 World Heritage and 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions; improved holistic management through a combination of scientific and humanist approaches; training of stakeholders in the heritage industry about the importance of heritage interpretation; policies and plans for training of tourists; study of heritage and nature-culture links specifically from the aspect of the economy; research questions on critical aspects of climate change and sustainable economic growth should look to traditional sources for answers and the critical role of C2Cs like WII-C2C in contributing to achieving the preceding objectives.

## 13. Role of Civil Society in Tourism and Natural Heritage Conservation (29– 31 January 2024)



The Wildlife Institute of India - Category Centre (WII-C2C) for World Natural Heritage Management and Training for the Asia and Pacific Region conducted a three-day training programme on the "Role of Civil Society in Tourism and Natural Heritage Conservation." The program took place from 29th to 31st January 2024, and it was sponsored by the RT Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India. The specialized capacity-building training programme was organized to enhance participants' knowledge and skills in the domains of tourism, advocacy, and community engagement. The program, led by experts from reputed organization including the Geological Survey of India, Archaeological Survey of India, Independent experts from tourism industry and also World Heritage Site Manager, sought to strengthen organizational capacities, foster collaboration, and develop advanced advocacy skills. Twelve participants from four World Heritage Sites, namely Nanda Devi, Keoladeo NP, Great Himalayan National Park, and Kaziranga NP, attended the program. Additionally, six C2C researchers and heritage professionals, and seven resource persons of different domains were present, making a total of twenty-five participants.

#### 14. Capacity Building for Declaration of UNESCO World Heritage, Mangaluru / Karkala (05 – 09 February 2024)



WII-C2C conducted a One-Week Compulsory Training Course for Indian Forest Service (IFS) Officers on "Capacity Building for Declaration of UNESCO World Heritage Site" sponsored by the RT Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India. 3 days of the training course were conducted at hotel conference halls in Mangalore and Karkala as Classroom sessions and a 2-day field visit was organized in Kudremukh National Park, part of the serial Western Ghats World Heritage Site and nearby areas to explain heritage management themes as earlier discussed in the Classroom. Nine officer participants from 8 states completed the programme. The training provided the participants with a comprehensive understanding of the criteria used by UNESCO for nomination of Natural World Heritage Sites along with knowledge of the nomination process which includes preparation of nomination dossiers, conducting site assessments and ensuring that the proposed site meets UNESCO stringent criteria. The course was interactive and discussed key processes and challenges in the declaration of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It enhanced the ability of officers to collaborate across disciplines to adopt an integrated approach in the nomination and management of natural heritage sites. Besides classroom sessions on themes like global heritage governance, World Heritage Convention, nomination

& evaluation, protection & management, reporting & monitoring, the field component drew on management interventions in Kudremukh NP as it recovered from a major mining operation within its boundaries from the recent decades.

**15. Nature’s Chorus: Heritage Narratives from Kaziranga and Beyond, Kaziranga National Park (12 – 13 February 2024)**



A one-day programme “Nature’s Chorus: Heritage Narratives from Kaziranga and Beyond”, was organized by WII-C2C on Monday, February 12th, 2024 at Kohora Convention Centre, Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve with an optional field component on Tuesday, February 13th, 2024 at Koliabhomora, Tezpur, was designed to explore the significance of natural heritage as a source of inspiration, identity, and conservation motivation. Through a combination of talks and interactions, the programme aimed to clarify the concepts of natural heritage to 66 gathered students from local colleges, drawing insights from diverse fields including conservation science, creative arts, history, literature, and indigenous communities. Featuring invited speakers like Stephen Alter, Arup Kumar Dutta, Shiela Bora, Raza Kazmi, and Vandana Menon who were authors, scientists, academics and documentarians from varied backgrounds, the event provided attendees with a comprehensive understanding between cultural identity, conservation efforts, and natural heritage preservation. Attendees had the unique opportunity to engage with leading experts and creative voices across domains, fostering enriching discussions and insights crucial for fostering a deeper appreciation and effective conservation of our natural heritage. The students learnt to observe with a hunter’s keenness and a poet’s concern; methods of making memorable impactful communications; protect nature from unregulated industrialization, thoughtless urban planning, and exploitation for entertainment; recognize the many cultural connections that a natural landscape has; understand the power of storytelling in preserving natural heritage and felt inspired to tell their own stories of natural heritage.

## 16. Certificate Course in Natural Heritage Management (19 February – 15 March, 2024)



A Certificate Course on Heritage Management (CCNHM) was organized in WII-C2C from 19th February to 15th March 2023 for International Participants sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs – Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (MEA-ITEC) Programme. In a first of its kind international course, the 12 participants from 8 countries (Costa Rica, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Sri Lanka and Mongolia) were trained on the core principles and theory of heritage along with the ability to incorporate the same into their official roles and responsibilities. The course drew on Wildlife Institute of India's (WII's) expertise in the field of wildlife conservation and natural heritage management in addition to the global diversity of officer trainees to boost cross-learning. Through this 4-week course, the trainees were equipped with critical skills on themes like Concepts and Conventions, Heritage Management, and Heritage Interpretation. Classroom topics covered included Heritage Values – From Personal to Outstanding Universal Value; Nature-Culture Linkages and Sustainable Development; Managing Mountain World Heritage Sites; Human Dimensions of Natural Heritage Management; Visual Communication and Heritage and Interpretation Principles and Planning among others. Practical aspects of heritage management were also addressed through multiple field day trips (Wadia Institute, FRI and Rajaji National Park) and a 5-day field trip which included visits to the Indian Institute of Heritage, Archaeological Survey of India and 5 World Heritage Sites based in Bharatpur, Delhi and Agra. This international course provided ample proof that across the world, the challenge of sustainably balancing heritage promotion and protection remains and reinforced the need for focused study of nature-culture links, besides illustrating how natural heritage provides invaluable opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary learning on site, in effect acting as a living classroom.

## II. Research Activities on Identified World Heritage Priority Issues

Besides the previously stated workshops, courses, international conferences and outreach initiatives for capacity-building, an important function of WII-C2C is to undertake research on identified priority issues related to World Natural Heritage protection and management, whether it be for Reporting & Monitoring Requirements for Natural WHS, Advisory Services to a variety of Stakeholders and Nominations of Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites. The Centre endeavours to explain the key concepts and processes of the World Heritage Convention and ensure that all stakeholders are able to make the most effective use of the Convention to support World Heritage conservation. The Centre offers advisory services and technical inputs to Central and State Governments of India, other countries on request, UNESCO Advisory Bodies and other relevant institutions on World Natural and Mixed Heritage issues, including those for conservation and management of World Heritage Sites, State of Conservation reports, State Party interventions at World Heritage Centre sessions among others. To contribute towards enhanced representation of natural or mixed properties on the World Heritage List, the Centre offers technical support to State Parties in the process of nomination of World Heritage Sites. With respect to this, in 2023-24 WII-C2C has embarked on multiple avenues of enquiry through nature-culture discussions, advice on newly initiated heritage conventions, promoting geological heritage and providing expertise on State of Conservation reports.

### 1. Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area, Manipur World Heritage Nomination Dossier Preparation (June, 2023)

**Nomination Dossier for Keibul-Lamjao Conservation Area, Manipur**

- The site was put in Tentative list in 2018
- Category: Mixed World Heritage Site
- Criteria: (v) (vi) (ix) (x)
- Working on the Nomination file

**Criteria under which inscription is proposed**

- Criterion (v):** be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, landscape, or seascape which is representative of a culture or cultures, or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.
- Criterion (vi):** contain exceptional natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
- Criterion (ix):** be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.
- Criterion (x):** contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.

• KLCA nominated for its unique natural system of phumdis, endemic biodiversity in the form of Sangai, beauty & human attachment

Description of site	Manipur, KLCA, Physiography, Soil, Climate, Biogeography
History and development	Manipur's history, Local communities, Conservation history
Criteria under inscription is proposed	Cultural linkage, Aesthetic, Ecological processes, Conservation
Statement of integrity	Size and Intactness
Statement of authenticity	Cultural, Legislative, Institutional framework
Comparative analysis	Based on Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs)

**ON LAMJAO: THE HERITAGE OF THE WETLANDS**  
 The wetlands of the phumdis, the floating islands of water hyacinth and grasses, are a unique and valuable natural resource. They are a vital part of the ecosystem and provide a habitat for many species of plants and animals. And to preserve the world's last remaining population of the Sangai deer, the last natural refuge of Manipur brow antlered deer (*Rucervus eldii*)

Source: Lamjao

In 2018, WII-C2C had facilitated the successful inclusion of Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area in India's Tentative List. The Agreement has now been operationalised to prepare the full nomination dossier of the site. The Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area (KLCA) represents an extraordinary story of natural antiquity, diversity, beauty and human attachment with a core area of Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLNP) (40 sq. km) and a buffer of Loktak Lake (140 sq. km) and Pumlun Pat (43 sq. km). The property area along with buffer area is located in the southern part of Bishnupur district and eastern part of Thoubal district of Manipur, India. The entire area has a rich history of natural flora and fauna in the Indo Burma Biodiversity hotspot and is known for its diverse freshwater ecosystem located under varied geo-morphologic and ecological regime. This national park covering an area of 40 km<sup>2</sup> is the only floating national park in the world and the last natural refuge of Manipur brow antlered deer (*Rucervus eldii*)



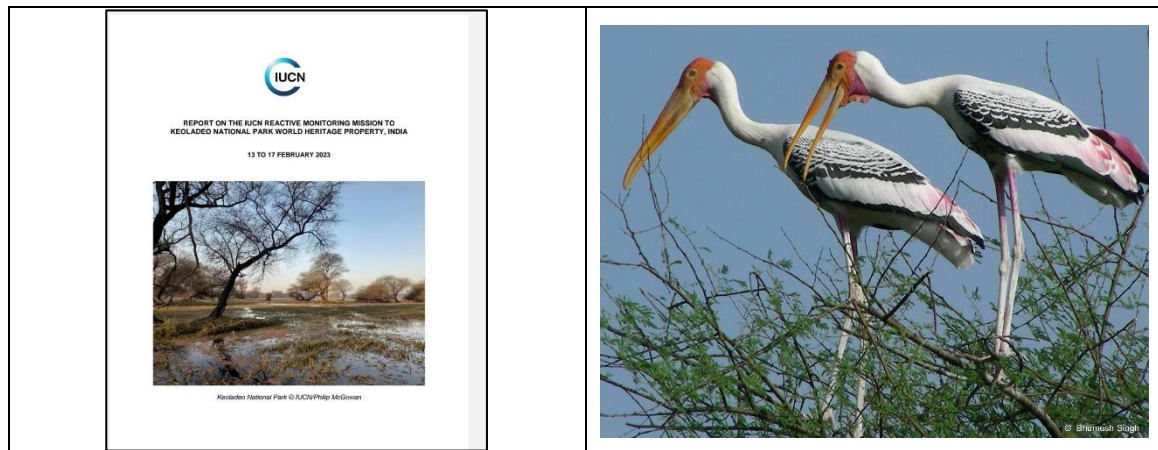
eldii) locally known as Sangai, which is the state animal of Manipur. About 29 sq. km is covered by a thick and almost contiguous mat of *Phumdis*, which is a combination of soil, vegetation and organic matter in different decaying stages. A nomination document for the proposed site is in the stage of drafting which is to be followed by site-level consultations based on restoration of peace from ethnic conflict in the region.

**2. Consultation Meeting on Kanger Valley National Park World Heritage Inscription process, Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh (12 June, 2023)**



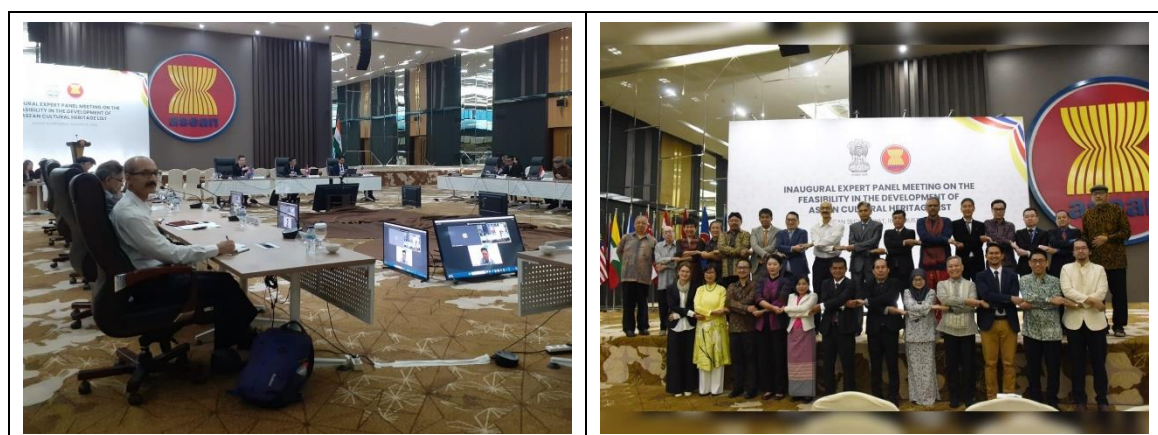
Located at a distance of about 30 kilometres from Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh, Kanger Valley was declared a National Park in the year 1982. Spread over 200 square kilometres, its name is derived from the Kangar river, which flows along its length. It is a typical mixed humid deciduous type of forest, in which the sal, teak and bamboo trees are prominent. In addition to a variety of flora and fauna, this National Park is home to three exceptional caves of Kutumbasar, Kailash and Dandak – known for their geological structures such as stalactites and stalagmites. On 12th June 2023, WII-C2C represented by Dr. Bhumesh Singh Bhadouria participated in a 1-day workshop focused on nomination of Kanger Valley National Park to the UNESCO World Heritage List (Tentative List Process). A prior attempt to do so about 12 years ago was left pending. Researchers and experts from institutions such as the Zoological Survey of India, National Cave Research & Protection, Kakatiya University, Indian Institute of Tourism Management deliberated on the natural and cultural values present in the site for recognition at an international level. The meeting was attended by 30 participants in person and about the same number of online participants. The meeting recognized the geological history captured in the caves of the site, the living heritage aspects of the indigenous communities such as the use of local medicinal plants, and the rich biodiversity of the landscape particularly as an intersection of certain flora found in the Himalayas and the Eastern Ghats.

### 3. Report of the IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission to Keoladeo National Park (July, 2023)



WII-C2C had earlier facilitated the IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission to Keoladeo National Park in February, 2023 which had visited India with the objective “to assess its state of conservation and progress made in addressing issues of water provision and invasive species”. Subsequently, it was associated with providing technical inputs to the Rajasthan Forest Department and the IUCN in finalizing the Mission Report submitted for review in July 2023. The summary recommendations of the Mission include: to develop a clear list of attributes that convey the OUV to inform the long-term monitoring, protection and management of the property; Secure a long-term strategic solution to water supply; Ensure the current status of the Siberian Crane is accurately reflected in the monitoring and management of the property; Establish a scientifically-based monitoring programme based on the attributes that convey the OUV to inform management of the property; Establish a long-term adaptive management strategy for invasive species; Review the 2017-2027 Management Plan with an explicit focus on the management of the OUV of the property; Ensure management planning and decision-making is focused specifically on the OUV of the property, including that planned activities explicitly and transparently contribute to its protection and management.

### 4. ASEAN Cultural Heritage List Meeting, Jakarta (16 August, 2023)



WII-C2C participated in the 1st Expert Panel Meeting on the Feasibility in the Development of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Cultural Heritage List (ACHL), held on 16 August, 2023 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia. As part of the efforts to strengthen cooperation in the ASEAN arts and culture sector, the ASEAN Senior Officials

Meeting for Culture and Arts (SOMCA) in 2019 noted the proposed idea for the development of the ASEAN Cultural Heritage List. It was attended by representatives from the 10 ASEAN member Countries, 2 UNESCO Experts, 3 External Experts and two Indian Experts with cultural (ASI) and natural heritage (WII) expertise. Mr. Niraj Kakati from WII-C2C represented India from the natural heritage component. The objective of the meeting was to develop the feasibility study for the ACHL and to provide recommendations on substantive and operational matters related to the setup of the ACHL. Major outcomes included understanding ACHL may be seen as a paradigm shift and distinguished from existing UNESCO World Heritage concept of Outstanding 'Universal' to 'Regional' Value; need to consider shared regional heritage along with individual country assets; use of culture-sensitive terminology; need for capacity-building in protection and preservation of heritage, community participation and stakeholder engagement; cultural heritage inventory mapping; adoption of sustainability principles; and fund-raising strategy. Mr. Niraj Kakati of WII-C2C emphasized linking nature-culture and suggesting a fund-raising consultation with potential donors and partners could be considered both to share the vision of ACHL and raise resources for it. Follow-up Expert Panel Meetings are proposed to take the initiative forward.

#### 5. ICOMOS General Assembly, Sydney (01-09 September, 2023)



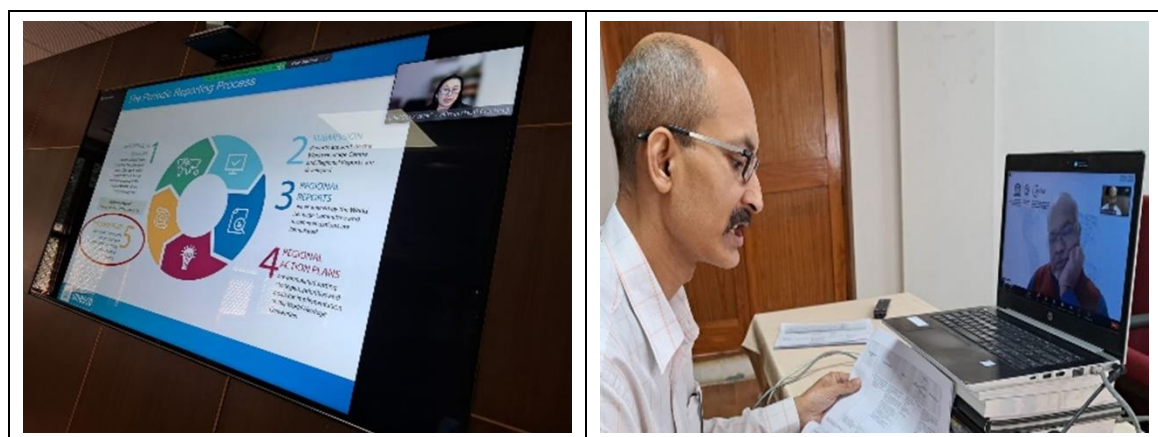
The overarching theme of International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) GA2023 organized in Sydney, Australia from the 1st to the 9th of September, 2023 was 'Heritage Changes'. Mr. Anuranjan Roy, World Heritage Assistant, WII-C2C had been selected for and participated in the ICOMOS GA 2023 Youth Forum organized at the World Heritage Site of Cockatoo Island/Waremeah from the 1st-3rd of September. The Youth Forum looked at how the youth and emerging professionals in the world of heritage conservation can contribute new ideas. As part of a final presentation with colleagues from Australia and Saudi Arabia, he presented on how the site of Cockatoo Island/Waremeah had inadequate representations of its natural past. On 6th September, Mr. Roy presented his selected abstract "Nature as Heritage – Communicating the Implicit" at the main GA at the International Convention Centre, Sydney on how the values of nature are implicitly understood and sometimes quantified as ecosystem services, but there is a need to bolster its acceptance as heritage as the concept of heritage (particularly for urban constituencies) remains strongly linked with generational objects of culture in the form of built heritage, artefacts, crafts, and customs. As part of a GA field tour, Mr. Roy also studied the exemplary site management adopted at the World Heritage Site of the Greater Blue Mountains Area in the locations of the Three Sister and the Gully Aboriginal Settlement.

**6. Review of State of Conservation Reports and Nomination Dossiers for 45th World Heritage Committee Session at Riyadh (10-25 September, 2023)**



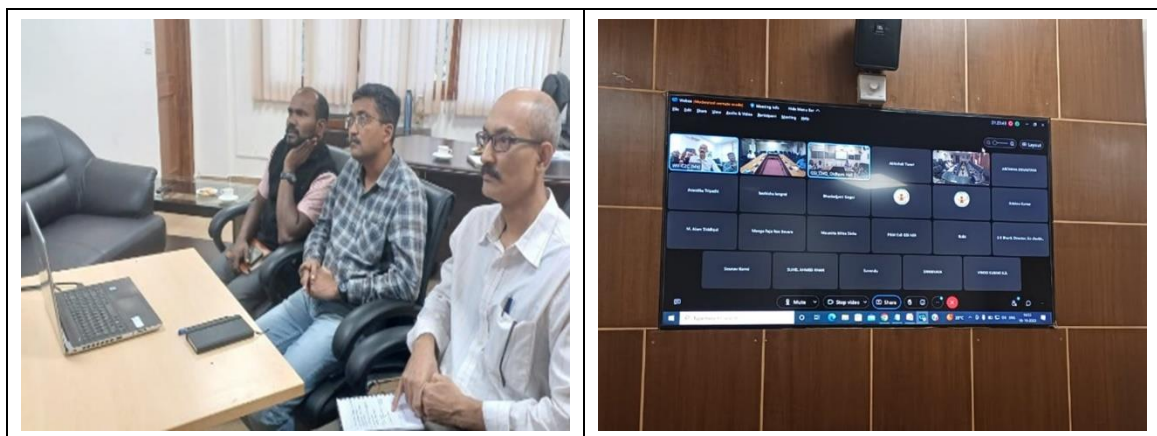
The 45th Session of World Heritage Committee Session was held at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 10-25 September, 2023. As India is a member of the World Heritage Committee, WII-C2C provided technical support to the Indian delegation through the review and inputs on matters concerning Indian and world natural heritage sites in India and the world. In continuation to review and submission of 25 State of Conservation Reports of World Heritage properties earlier, WII-C2C further provided comments on nomination dossiers of 7 new sites to be considered for inscription and 3 sites with boundary modification proposals at the 45th Session of the Committee. These included sites in Bale Mountains National Park (Ethiopia), Nyungwe National Park (Rwanda), 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid (Saudi Arabia), Cold Winter Deserts of Turan (Kazakhstan/Turkmenistan/Uzbekistan), Tugay forests of the Tigrovaya Balka Nature Reserve (Tajikistan), Zagori Cultural Landscape (Greece), Evaporitic Karst and Caves on Northern Apennines (Italy), Hyrcanian Forests (Azerbaijan), Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba Archipelago (Viet Nam), Azerbaijan/Iran, Forests of the Carpathian and Europe. WII-C2C was also called upon to offer expert opinion on specific sites in Venezuela and Mongolia.

**7. Heritage Asia-Pacific Chat on 3rd Cycle World Heritage Periodic Reporting for Asia and the Pacific Region – Online (18 October, 2023)**



The 3rd Cycle of Periodic Reporting, one of the core monitoring mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention, was completed for all States Parties of the Asia and Pacific Region in 2021. The Periodic Report and the associated Regional Framework Action Plan (2023-2030) was presented at the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee 2023 where it was endorsed. In this regard, WHITRAP Shanghai, a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO, organised a Heritage Asia-Pacific (HeritAP) Chat (virtual mode) on 18 October, 2023 to review the exercise, outcome and action plan of the 3rd Cycle of Periodic Reporting in Asia and the Pacific region. The event included an overview on the recently undertaken Asia and the Pacific Periodic Reporting exercise by Ms. Himalchuli Gurung, Chief of Unit – Asia-Pacific, World Heritage Centre, followed by reflections on the exercise by experts and Site Manager. In this context, WII-C2C represented by Mr. Niraj Kakati and Mr. Anuranjan Roy, underlined its involvement with the earlier two cycles of Periodic Reporting exercise and highlighted select action/activities from the Action Plan which would be relevant to its mandate including providing technical support to nomination dossiers; facilitating synergy between Conventions; organising mid-cycle monitoring and meetings of national focal points and site managers; awareness raising and heritage commemorations. The way ahead outlined by the organisers was for partners viz. WHC, Advisory Bodies and C2Cs to identify potential action/activities along with targets/indicators for implementing the Action Plan. In addition, sub-regional workshops may be conducted for discussing specific issues of the countries within Asia and the Pacific Region.

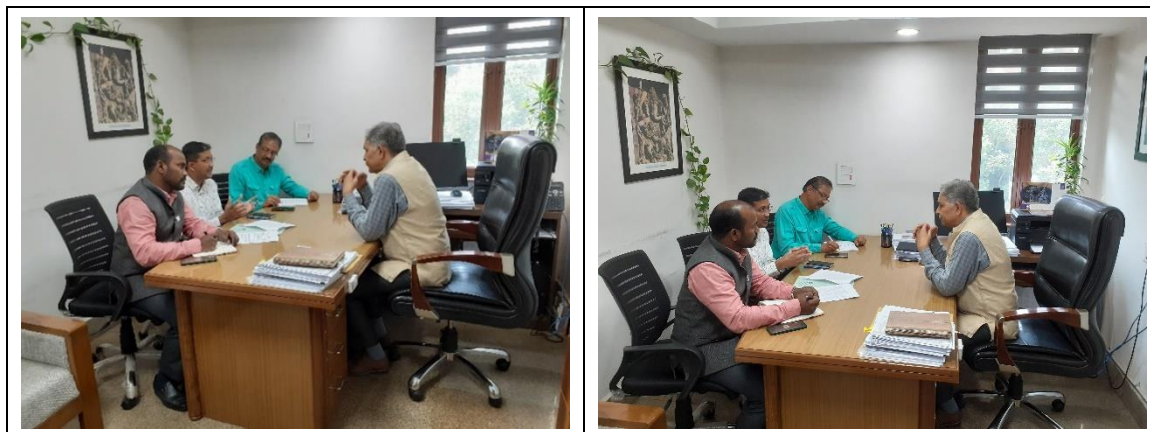
#### 8. Knowledge-Sharing Meeting between WII-C2C and Geological Survey of India – Online (18 October, 2023)



Geological Survey of India (GSI) convened a knowledge sharing session on Geo-heritage Management on 18th October, 2023 via video conference. WII-C2C was invited as a domain expert in the field of World Natural Heritage, represented by Dr. Suresh Kumar (Nodal Officer), Dr. Nehru Prabakaran (Associate Nodal Officer), Shri. Niraj Kakati (Technical Officer) and Dr. Chitiz Joshi (Assistant Technical Officer). GSI Officials included Mr. R. Balaji (DDG Curatorial division, Kolkata), Mr. S. Sarkar (DDG SU: Madhya Pradesh), other Directors and officers involved in Curatorial division and Mr Abhishek Tiwari (Geologist, Madhya Pradesh Unit of GSI). Mr. Balaji informed about the context of the session based on GSI's active involvement in Geo-heritage issues and potential for engaging with WII-C2C. Mr. Niraj Kakati introduced the mandate and activities of WII-C2C, followed by overview of basic provisions of World

Heritage Sites with specific reference to Geological values and on the concept of Global Geoparks. In particular, details of their criteria and nomination process were highlighted. The discussions centred around the scope for collaboration between the agencies in the areas of World Heritage nomination dossier preparation with Geological values, documentation of biodiversity / natural heritage component of Global Geoparks, capacity building training and workshops, networking and outreach. Both the organisations agreed to continue the interactions towards developing a mutually beneficial partnership in the Geo-heritage domain.

#### 9. WII-C2C meeting with ASI, New Delhi (01 November, 2023)



WII-C2C Scientists met with ASI Officials at the latter's headquarters in Dharmo Bhawan, New Delhi on 01 November, 2023 with the purpose of discussing coordination and collaboration on World Heritage issues. WII-C2C was represented by Dr. Suresh Kumar (Nodal Officer), Dr. Nehru Prabakaran (Associate Nodal Officer) and Shri. Niraj Kakati (Technical Officer). ASI officials included Mr. Jahnwaj Sharma (ADG-WH), Mr. Madan Singh Chauhan (Director-WH) and Gajanan Katade (Superintending Archaeologist). WII-C2C inquired about outcomes of the 45th World Heritage Committee Session and plans for the next year's Session. WII-C2C informed about the MoU with ASI signed in 2021 and the need to activate the provisions. ASI expressed keenness in the activities of the MoU. Key outcomes of the informal interaction included the preparation for the 46th Session of the WHC post the formal proposal is approved by the Government of India and proposals may be taken for various activities to be undertaken in collaboration between the agencies. A working group of representatives from both the agencies is proposed to continue regular liaison for the activities. Preliminary discussions focussed on joint research activity between ASI, WII and GSI related to Ramgarh Crater and potential Tentative List preparation for Crater Serial Site in India. A meeting may be proposed for GSI involvement with ASI and WII in order to establish synergy and cooperation.

## 10. ASEAN Cultural Heritage List Meeting – Online (06 December, 2023)



Following the 1st Expert Panel Meeting on the Feasibility in the Development of ASEAN Cultural Heritage List (ACHL) held on 16 August 2023 at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, with the support of the Government of India, the 2nd Expert Panel Meeting on the Feasibility in the Development of ASEAN Cultural Heritage List (ACHL) was organised on 06 December 2023 via video conference. The objective of the second meeting was to build on the discussions at the First Expert Panel Meeting to arrive at proposing recommendations and due considerations specifically on defining the envisaged ASEAN Cultural Heritage through suggested themes/topics/stories, and developing the approach and the criteria to be used. Represented by Mr. Niraj Kakati from WII-C2C, key outcomes that emerged from discussions of the meeting included the understanding that scope of ACHL includes both tangible and intangible heritage; evolution and changing character of heritage is essential quality of living heritage; other categories of heritage may include transboundary heritage, heritage at risk, etc.; Culture – Nature linkage is important to consider; importance of inclusivity in the approach to the implementation of ACHL; need for multi-stakeholder consultations in identifying and implementing ACHL; collaborative rather than competitive approach and representation of shared heritage of the region; need to understand the views of ASEAN countries on the values and criteria that is considered important to be conveyed. Follow-up meetings of the Expert Panel as well as the SOMCA Working Group are proposed during 2024.

## 11. Meeting with Geological Survey of India on World Heritage Inscription of Geoheritage Sites and Geoparks (14 December, 2023)



Dr. Chitiz Joshi, Assistant Technical Officer, WII-C2C met officials from Geological Survey of India (GSI) to discuss mutual cooperation in World Heritage Inscription of Geoheritage Sites and Geoparks at the Central Headquarters of Geological Survey of India in Kolkata. GSI officials in attendance included Sh. R. Balaji (Deputy DG, HRD & TCS), Smt. Maitry Roy Moulik (Director, Curatorial Division) and 4 Senior Geologists from the Curatorial Division. Despite having many geological features of importance, there is no World Heritage Site nominated from India on geological criteria (viii) and this meeting was an initiation towards the same.

## 12. Reconnaissance Survey in Dhala Crater, Madhya Pradesh and Lonar Crater, Maharashtra (16-19 January, 2024)



Geo-heritage sites are geological features or landscapes that have outstanding universal values. These sites are important for understanding Earth's history, processes, and evolution. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has identified a total of ninety geo-heritage sites across the country, with three of them being meteorite impact craters - Lonar Crater in Maharashtra, Dhala in Madhya Pradesh and Ramgarh Crater in Rajasthan. In this context, after the series of discussions with GSI, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has approached the Wildlife Institute of India's Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) to assess the feasibility of incorporating these sites into India's Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage Sites. On 16th January, 2024, the WII C2C team, accompanied by two geologists from the Geological Survey of India Bhopal office, Sri Bishwaranjan Jana and Ms. Sana Dilnashin, conducted a visit to the Dhala crater. On 17th January, 2024 the WII-C2C team visited the Geological Survey of India Deputy Director General Shri S.S Sarkar and Director Shri Wankhede at GSI Bhopal office to further discuss the proposed listing of Dhala crater in India's Tentative List. Subsequently on 19th January, 2024, the WII-C2C team, met with Mr. Chetan Rathod, Range Forest Officer, Lonar Wildlife Sanctuary before proceeded to make a field visit to the Lonar crater to note its geological, cultural, and ecological values.



### 13. Ramgarh Crater Visit (29 October, 2023)



Dr. R Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer, WII-C2C and Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, WII-C2C visited the Ramgarh Crater at the request of the Rajasthan Forest Department to understand the natural and geological heritage values of the site. The Ramgarh Crater, in Rajasthan's Baran district, was formed 165 million years ago due to a meteor impact and has been nominated as the country's first geo-heritage site. The crater forms a circular depression surrounded by hills and forests, and the crater's lake supports a variety of flora and fauna. The crater is significant for its ecosystem services, biodiversity, cultural and heritage values.

### 14. Evaluation of State of Conservation Reports of Natural World Heritage Sites (November 2023-January 2024)



As part of the advisory and technical support mandate of WII-C2C, the Centre provides inputs and facilitates the preparation and submission of State of Conservation Reports of Natural World Heritage Sites. Report on the State of Conservation of Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (India) in response to Decision 44 COM 7B.184 of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2021 was submitted in November 2023. Report on the State of Conservation of Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India), in response to Decision 45 COM 7B.83 of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2023 was submitted in January 2024.

### III. Co-ordinated Activities with World Heritage Stakeholders and Expert Exchanges

A fundamental purpose of WII-C2C is to coordinate its activities with the States Parties, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies of the World Heritage Convention and the network of existing category 2 centres related to World Heritage besides implementing programmes for the exchange of experts with other regional resource centres. The World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy also foresees UNESCO Category 2 Centres in the regions working on World Heritage issues as appropriate institutions to take the lead in developing a regional capacity building strategy and associated programmes for strengthening capacities at the regional level. For the year 2023-24, this was accomplished through working with regional offices on climate change, supporting international volunteer programmes for Natural World Heritage Sites, expanding on concepts of interpretation with other C2Cs, participating in pioneering transboundary conservation initiatives, and examining ways to bring together the multiple international biodiversity related conventions.

#### 1. World Heritage and Climate Change Session at UNESCO Sub-Regional Conference on World Heritage, Bhopal (17-18 April, 2023)



WII-C2C participated in the “UNESCO Sub-Regional Conference on World Heritage”, jointly organized by UNESCO New Delhi and the Department of Tourism, Madhya Pradesh on 17th-18th April 2023 at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. November 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention which brings a good occasion to deliberate the achievements of the past 50 years and brainstorm on the challenges ahead with respect to World Heritage and Sustainable Development, Sustainable Tourism, Historic Urban Landscape and Global Strategy. Dr. Gautam Talukdar, Scientist and then Nodal Officer, WII-C2C, chaired a Technical Session on World Heritage and Climate Change, highlighting the impact of Climate Change on World Heritage Sites, with specific reference to natural heritage. He also shared about the ongoing deliberations at the World Heritage Committee for finalising the draft of the Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage. The policy document urges all States Parties to undertake actions to address Climate Change under the Paris Agreement consistent with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances, that are fully consistent with their obligations within the

World Heritage Convention to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of all World Heritage properties. This Conference provided a good opportunity to gather officials, experts and civil society representatives from the South Asia region to further reinforce the national and regional capacity for the conservation and management of cultural heritage, especially the World Heritage sites. Over 100 national and international participants were part of the session.

## 2. World Heritage Volunteer Programme, Sikkim (15-24 April, 2023)



WII-C2C participated in the World Heritage Volunteers (WHV) 2023 Campaign by providing technical support to Khangchendzonga National Park (KhNP) Management Authority, Sikkim for carrying out action camp projects around the World Heritage Site during the first phase of the programme during 15-24 April, 2023. The World Heritage Volunteers (WHV) Initiative, led by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, is a campaign to encourage young people to undertake concrete actions and play an active role in the protection, preservation and promotion of World Heritage. It consists of action camp projects organized by organizations or institutions, involving national and international volunteers in awareness-raising and hands on activities. These projects are implemented in cooperation with multiple stakeholders and partners, including the local communities, who work together towards the preservation of our common cultural and natural heritage. Ms. Pallabi Chakraborty represented WII-C2C as a resource person where she presented talks on the World Heritage Convention and Outstanding Universal Value, with specific reference to linkage between cultural and natural heritage and its manifestation in Khangchendzonga National Park as a Mixed World Heritage Site. She was part of the trekking activities as well as involved in imparting hands-on basic conservation and preservation technique of the park landscape and cleanliness sensitisation to nearly 60 youth volunteers of the programme. WII-C2C contributes by supporting site management authorities to enhance awareness of stakeholders about the World Heritage Convention and strengthening the Centre's outreach mandate.

### 3. IUCN Asia Protected Area Partnership, WII, Dehradun (27-29 April. 2023)



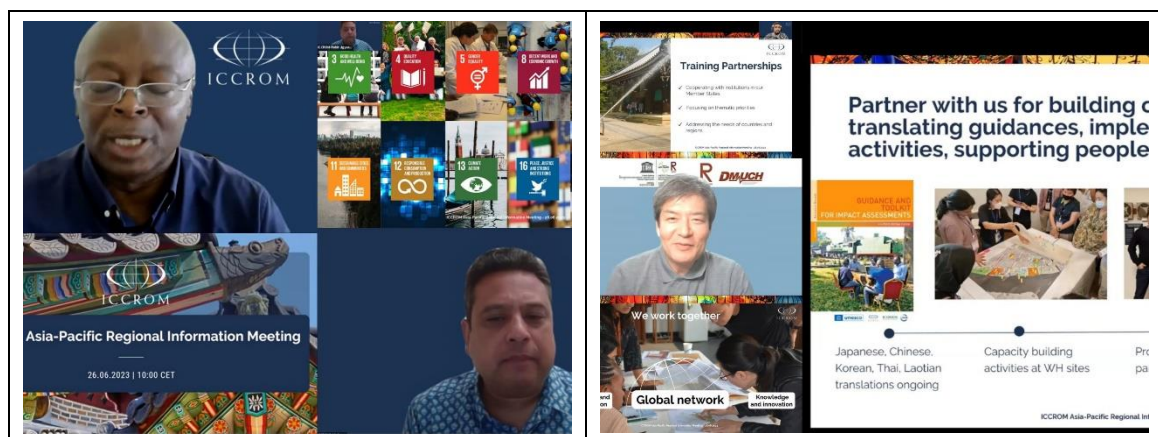
The 7th Technical Workshop and 8th Steering Committee Meeting of the Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) with India as the Co-Chair since 2020, was organized by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India in association with the IUCN Asia Regional Office, Bangkok and hosted by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun from 27th to 29th April, 2023. The Asia Protected Area Partnership (APAP), established in 2014, is a regional platform that aims to strengthen the management and governance of protected areas across Asia. APAP serves as a model for regional collaboration, showcasing the power of partnerships in driving progress toward the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity's post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The APAP agenda included various technical sessions on the APAP context, Country Updates, OECMS, IUCN Green Listing, Protected and Conserved Areas, and Strategy for achieving Target 3 of post-2020 GBF. WII-C2C provided technical support for conduct of the APAP Meeting and further presented a session on Natural Heritage Sites in the Asia-Pacific Region providing highlights of the World Heritage Convention as one of the most ratified convention in the globe concerning the protection of world cultural and natural heritage properties; and detailed information of World Heritage properties in Asia-Pacific sub-regions along with scope of areas which may contribute to natural heritage in the region. Participants included 30 representatives from member countries, 10 representatives from IUCN, 4 representatives from MoEFCC and 20 scientists and staff from WII.

### 4. 8th Annual C2C Coordination Meeting, Sejong, Korea (31 May–02 June, 2023)



WII-C2C participated in the 8th Annual Coordination Meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage-Related Category 2 Centres and Institutes held in Sejong, South Korea at the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC) on 31st May to 2nd June 2023 which included representatives from 10 World Heritage-related C2Cs. Dr. Gautam Talukdar represented WII-C2C at the same. He made presentations on the mandate & activities of the WII-C2C and on a selection of World Heritage Sites summarizing community perceptions with regard to the same. The meeting led to constructive dialogue on various topics, including the importance of the interpretation and presentation World Heritage properties, as well as sharing experiences on key activities that C2Cs should contribute to and support, such as periodic reporting and the World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy. Participants at the meeting adopted the “Declaration on Understanding and Cooperation among UNESCO World Heritage-related Category 2 Centres,” also referred to as the “Sejong Declaration.” a commitment from C2Cs to take a more active role in the conservation and management of World Heritage properties. The key objectives covered in the same were provision of capacity-building programmes to stakeholders at all levels, understand the regional characteristics, improve the visibility of the contribution of Category 2 Centres, and to strengthen and develop the expertise of the Category 2 Centres. These aims were to be pursued through taking advantage of the geographical locations of Category 2 Centres around the world, and exploring the possibility of implementing joint capacity building activities such as annual seminars.

## 5. ICCROM Asia-Pacific Regional Information Meeting – Online (26 June, 2023)



The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) is an intergovernmental organization working in service to its Member States to promote the conservation of all forms of cultural heritage in every region of the world through initiatives in conservation training, information, research, cooperation and advocacy. It has been working with scientists, conservators, museum curators, site managers, archivists, researchers and archaeologists for more than six decades and is one of the three Advisory Bodies to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee on nomination of World Heritage Sites. WII-C2C participated in the "ICCROM Asia-Pacific Regional Information Meeting" held online on 26th June 2023 where a broad span of heritage related agendas were discussed. The presentations centred around the importance of heritage in an age of accelerated climate change, urbanization and tourism along with the consequent challenges. Participants

discussed inclusive, people-centred and collaborative approaches with the development of effective tools, best practices and about adopting methodologies to help find solutions to satisfy both heritage conservation and development. The meeting identified as critical the need to understand on-ground challenges, research on identified topics and methodologies, develop flexible technical content, establish learning content and curriculum and evaluation and improvement of the same. The ensuing learnings helped to enhance conservation approaches, methods for safeguarding heritage through Climate Action, Disaster Risk Reduction and peace strengthening, robust management capacities supported by the World Heritage Convention, and appreciation of training partnerships in the Asia-Pacific Region.

## 6. Inception Workshop by UNESCO on "Heritage for Peace: Enhancing Transboundary and Regional Cooperation for Natural and Mixed World Heritage Sites in Asia" – Online (06 July, 2023)



On 6th July, 2023, WII-C2C participated in the inception workshop "Heritage for Peace: Enhancing Transboundary and Regional Cooperation for Natural and Mixed World Heritage Sites in Asia" by UNESCO. The workshop emphasised that while there were 43 transboundary / serial transnational World Heritage properties in 67 countries worldwide, there were only 1 transboundary site and 4 serial transnational World Heritage properties in 7 countries in Asia which was a low number for the region. The participants spoke on the need to address management challenges of transboundary/serial transnational heritage conservation (3 out of 5 transboundary/serial transnational properties in Asia are under Reactive Monitoring); potentials for new transboundary/serial transnational nominations (thematic studies) & extensions. The outcomes of the meeting shortlisted key opportunities for transboundary heritage in Asia today in the context of the World Heritage Convention, the current knowledge and capacity gaps for transboundary cooperation, conservation and management challenges for transboundary properties that need to be addressed as a priority in Asia and short and mid-term actions to reinforce transboundary World Heritage in Asia as the most important parts of the upcoming project. The East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF), its diverse partnerships, its successes and the linking of sites in the Yellow Sea region was brought up by a number of speakers. Mr. Anuranjan Roy of WII-C2C brought up how the recently initiated Central Asian Flyway (CAF) also offers similar opportunities for WII-C2C if connections can be made between organizations based in some of the 30 range countries of CAF.

7. **Bern III Conference on Cooperation among the Biodiversity- related Conventions for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Bern, Switzerland (22-26 January, 2024)**



Dr. Nehru Prabakaran, Associate Nodal Officer, WII-C2C participated in "Bern III Conference on Cooperation among the Biodiversity- related Conventions for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework" , held from 22-26 January 2024 at the Universal Postal Union in Bern, Switzerland. Dr. Nehru highlighted the potential role that national and regional level players like WII-C2C can play in advocating / implementing synergy among the biodiversity related policies at the national and grass-root level. The Conference, attended by more than 150 participants from 70 countries representing over 18 Multilateral Environmental Agreements, was organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which aims to contribute to the efficient and effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by identifying opportunities to drive and coordinate an inclusive collaborative approach in the implementation of the framework, whilst respecting the respective mandates of biodiversity-related conventions, other relevant multilateral agreements and United Nations organizations. Taking advantage of the Bern conference a brief meeting was held exclusively for the World Heritage Convention (WHC) team post the conference on 25 January 2024 in which five state parties were represented as well as three representatives from the Secretariat.

IV. Visit of UNESCO Mission for the renewal evaluation of the Agreement between UNESCO and Government of India for the Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) for 'World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region', under the auspices of UNESCO (5-10 March, 2024)

The Agreement between Government of India and UNESCO for the establishment of the Wildlife Institute of India - Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) for 'World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region', under the auspices of UNESCO, was formally signed on 02 September, 2015 by the Director General of Forests, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India as counterpart to the signature by the Director General, UNESCO, Paris. As per the notification of the entry-into-force clause of the Agreement dated October, 2018, the tenure of the Centre is due for renewal by 2024 for a subsequent period of eight (08) years. Pursuant to this, an UNESCO Mission, comprising of Prof. Robin Coningham from the University of Durham and Mr. Rajendra Suwal of WWF Nepal visited the WII-C2C premises in Dehradun to evaluate the extent to which the C2C's objectives were achieved and the relevance of the contribution of the C2C's activities to the achievement of UNESCO's programme. Their 5-day visit began with meetings in New Delhi with officials of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the nodal authority for World Heritage Sites. Following their arrival on the campus of Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Dehradun, the team had interactions with Director WII, Registrar WII, Dean WII, WII Faculty, WII-C2C Staff and were given a tour of the infrastructure of WII facilities at Dehradun. Besides this, they also had meetings with other stakeholders who had been part of WII-C2C programmes including DFO, Keoladeo National Park and the international participants of the then ongoing Certificate Course in Natural Heritage Management (CCNHM) on their field trip there. Following the visit of the Mission to WII-C2C, the evaluation team will now prepare and submit the report for consideration.





## V. Collaborations

WII-C2C collaborated with a range of local, regional, national, and international institutions and organizations including its first collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India on an MEA-ITEC course. The full list of collaborators are as below:

- Sikkim Forest Department
- Manipur Forest Department
- Chattisgarh Forest Department
- Rajasthan Forest Department
- Assam Forest Department
- West Bengal Forest Department
- Maharashtra Forest Department
- Madhya Pradesh Forest Department
- Karnataka Forest Department
- Department of Tourism, Madhya Pradesh
- Forest Research Institute (FRI)
- Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA)
- Indian Institute of Heritage (formerly National Museum Institute)
- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)
- Geological Survey of India (GSI)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) New Delhi
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- Ministry of External Affairs – Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (MEA-ITEC)
- International Rangers Federation (IRF)
- International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC)
- International Union of Conservation (IUCN)
- International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)
- International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)