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UN's global network of biosphere reserves grows by 18 new sites



Sea life in the reefs of Baa Atoll, Maldives

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The United Nations today [added](#) 18 new sites to its global list of biosphere reserves, bringing the total to 581 in 114 different countries, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) reported.

The International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), meeting in the German city of Dresden, added sites in Lithuania, Maldives, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Togo for the first time to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

Biosphere reserves are places recognized by MAB where local communities are actively involved in governance and management, research, education, training and monitoring at the service of both socio-economic development and biodiversity conservation. They are thus sites for experimenting with and learning about sustainable development, UNESCO said.

UNESCO said the new sites are:

- Bras d'Or Lake, in Nova Scotia, Canada, which encompasses a saltwater estuary watershed "inland sea" with three passages to the Atlantic Ocean.
- Mao'er Mountain in China, which features a mountain landscape of exceptional scenery, with peaks reaching more than 2,000 metres above sea level.

- Corredor Biológico Nevados de Chillán-Laguna del Laja in Chile, which is located in the northern part of the Patagonia region and is a global biodiversity hotspot.
- Songor, Ghana, which is characterized by a unique combination of brackish/estuarine, freshwater and marine ecosystems with mangroves, islands and small patches of community-protected forests.
- Mujib, Jordan, which is part of the Dead Sea basin and Jordan Rift Valley landscape.
- Zuvintas, Lithuania, which includes lakes, wetlands, mires, peat bogs, and pine tree stands.
- Baa Atoll, Maldives, which harbours globally significant biodiversity in its numerous reefs.
- Berlangas archipelago, Portugal, which includes the Berlangas, a group of small islands and rocks, and the city of Peniche on the mainland.
- Volga-Akhtuba floodplain in the Russian Federation, which represents a mosaic structure of different landscapes, with high-yielding floodplain meadows, spawning grounds, oak groves and internationally important wetlands.
- St. Mary's, Saint Kitts and Nevis, which comprises cloud forests, mangroves and coral reefs.
- Blekinge Archipelago in Sweden, which includes most of the coastal areas and archipelagos of Blekinge, containing a variety of islands and islets.
- Nedre Dalälven River Landscape in Sweden, which covers 308,000 hectares with a mixture of wetlands, rivers, lakes, flood plains and productive forests.
- Oti-Keran/Oti-Mandouri in Togo, which encompasses various ecosystems, including shrubland, savannas, forest galleries and grasslands.
- Roztochya, Ukraine, which covers a total area of 74,800 hectares with agriculture, stock-breeding and fish farming as its main economic activities.
- Bura'a, Yemen, which is a rugged mountainous area intersected by several deep valleys rich in rare, vulnerable and endemic plant species.
- Santana Madeira, Portugal, which is the first biosphere reserve in the Madeira Archipelago. Despite an active tourist industry, agriculture dominates the economy of local communities.
- Ramot Menashe in Israel, which encompasses a mosaic of ecological systems that represent the Mediterranean Basin's version of the global "evergreen sclerophyllous forests, woodlands and scrub" ecosystem types.
- Trifinio Fraternidad Biosphere Reserve, which stretches over parts of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. It is home to many endemic species that inhabit the tropical humid forest.

Meanwhile, Cat Tien is the new name of the former Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve in Viet Nam, which was designated in 2001. Two new core zones have been added to the site, bringing its total area to 966,563 hectares, UNESCO said.

Australia also withdrew Macquarie Island from the WNBR because it is uninhabited by humans and human presence is a criterion for inclusion in the network.

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