



FEATURE

Towards a 'Top 10 Guidelines' for researchers and conservation practitioners working on Sacred Natural Sites.

by Bas Verschuuren and Robert Wild

With this article we would like to invite you to think creatively and critically about the role of science and by extension those of conservation and policy-making in relation to sacred natural sites.

In its work, the Sacred Natural Sites Initiative (SNSI) supports custodians and their communities to protect, conserve and revitalize sacred natural sites.



A meeting to discuss research and protocols for safeguarding the sacred groves of the Tanchara community in northwest Ghana.

Working directly with custodians of sacred natural sites - such as indigenous peoples and faith groups - immediately exposes one to different ways of knowing and seeing the world.

How then can we improve recognition and respect for the importance of sacred natural sites, including the meaningful relationships that their custodians and communities have developed with those sites, often over many generations?

Working together with SSIREN and SANASI (the world database on sacred natural sites) has given us the opportunity to exchange ideas and improve our own responses to this question.

Constructive research has been inhibited because the traditional custodians are extremely conservative and also because of the researchers' lack of openness about the aims and objectives, rights, obligations and benefits of the research projects to the community.

This quote gives a clear message - Custodians may welcome science, especially when they see they have a part in it, may control the process and see that the results can help further their cause.

Both-Ways Management from Australia (Yunupingu and Muller 2009), and Two-Eyed Seeing in Canada (Bartlett et al. 2012) represent powerful experiences and expressions of combining western and indigenous science, beliefs and practices into a mutually respectful and powerful approach to ways of knowing.

While it is true that most universities and research institutes nowadays have an ethical code of conduct for research, these have not been specifically developed to include all sensitivities related to sacred natural sites.

A community of practice for learning from each other's experiences and improving the tools, methods and approaches available could be extremely valuable to the conservation of sacred natural sites.

We are grateful for your input and also appreciate any links and materials that you think we should share with others through the platform on Methods and Approaches that we are building as a resource for everyone.

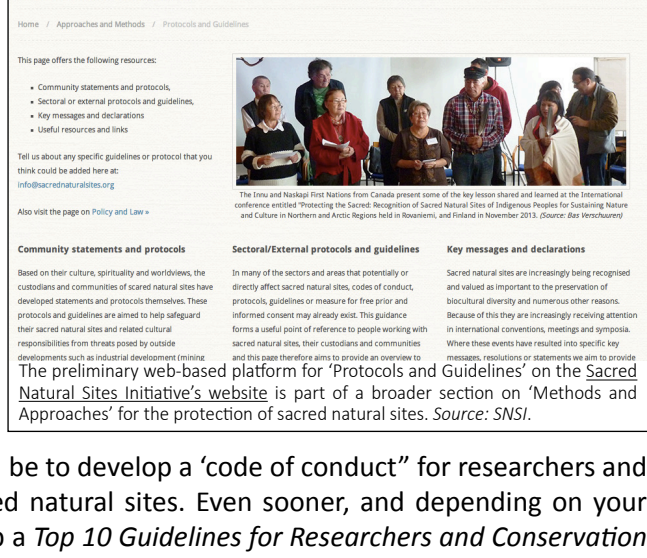
References: Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., Marshall, A., 2012. Two-Eyed Seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing.

International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE), 2006. International Society of Ethnobiology Code of Ethics (with 2008 additions).

Kalume Tinga, K., 2004. The presentation and interpretation of ritual sites: the Mijikenda Kaya. Museum International 56(3): 8-14.

Yunupingu, D., Muller, S., 2009. Dhimurru's Sea Country Planning journey: opportunities and challenges to meeting Yolngu aspirations for sea country management in Northern Territory, Australia.

Bas Verschuuren and Robert Wild are Coordinators for the Sacred Natural Sites Initiative. The Initiative builds a programme of work with custodians, communities, scientists, conservationists and other stakeholders in support of the protection, conservation and revitalization of sacred natural sites and landscapes.



NEWS

New records of endangered legume species found in Kenyan sacred sites

Note by: Itambo Malombe, Esther Kioko, Mwadime Nyange, Saidi Chidzangah and Abdulrahman Matano

Human-related habitat disturbances continue to pose great challenges to sustainable conservation of the threatened flora in the fragmented, biodiversity-rich, Kaya forest ecosystems along the Kenyan coast.

Back issues of SSIREN made available online: All past issues of SSIREN have been hosted by the Sacred Sites Initiative's website and can now be accessed online.

Release of New Film: Elemental: This film features stories of three individuals united by their deep connection with nature: an Indian government official gone rogue is on a pilgrimage down the Ganges river and rouses the Indian public to treat their sacred 'Mother Ganga' with respect.

New bibliography of books on spiritual ecology: A bibliography of nearly 700 books on spiritual ecology and related topics was compiled by the Research Institute for Spiritual Ecology in July 2013.

Launch of the International Confucian Ecological Alliance: On September 9, the International Confucian Ecological Alliance (ICEA) was launched in the historic city of Deng Feng in Henan Province, central China.

Publications: Abbate, C.S., Di Nuovo, S., 2013. Motivation and personality traits for choosing religious tourism: a research on the case of Medjugorje. Current Issues in Tourism 16(5): 501-506

Chrysavgis, J., Foltz, B.V. (Eds.), 2013. Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation [Prefatory Letter from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew]. Fordham University Press, New York

Di Giminianni, P., 2013. The contested rewe: sacred sites, misunderstandings, and ontological pluralism in Mapuche land negotiations. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 19(3): 527-544

Dussias, A.M., 2013. Friend, foe, frenemy: the United States and American Indian religious freedom. Denver University Law Review 90(2): 347-431

Frascaroli, F., 2013. Catholicism and conservation: the potential of sacred natural sites for biodiversity management in central Italy. Human Ecology 41(4): 587-601

Grim, J., Powell, R., Riley, M.E., Trapani, T.C., Tucker, M.E. (Eds.), 2013. Oxford Bibliography on Religion and Ecology. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Hilliard, A., Weldon, S. (Eds.), 2013. Many Faiths, One Earth In Action: Stories of African Faith Commitments. Alliance of Religions and Conservation, Bath

Hitzhusen, G.E., Tucker, M.E., 2013 The Potential of religion for Earth stewardship. Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment: 368-376

Taylor, B. (Ed.), 2013. Avatar and Nature Spirituality. Wildrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Canada

EVENTS

October 16-December 7, world wide Screenings of Elemental film

October 22-November 27, South Africa Fracking: How Should People of Faith Respond?

October 26-28, Eugene, OR, USA 17th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Environmental Philosophy

October 31-November 1, Eindhoven, Netherlands The Roles of Climate Models: Epistemic, Ethical and Socio-political Perspectives

November 22, Baltimore, USA Mapping the Field of Religion and Ecology: Theories, Methods, and Future Directions

ISSUE 2(4) AT A GLANCE:

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NEWS

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UPCOMING EVENTS

October 16-December 7, world wide Screenings of Elemental film. October 22-November 27, South Africa Fracking - How Should People of Faith Respond? One-day workshops. October 26-28, Eugene, OR, USA 17th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Environmental Philosophy. October 31-November 1, Eindhoven, Netherlands The Roles of Climate Models: Epistemic, Ethical and Socio-political Perspectives Conference.

ON THE BOOKSHELF

List of relevant publications issued in the last three months

OPPORTUNITIES

October 31. Call for papers Greening the Gods: Ecology and Theology in the Ancient World. November 30. Call for papers Religion, Ecology, and the Environment in Africa and the African Diaspora. December 15. Summer School Submissions Oxford Summer School on Religion and Animal Protection

ABOUT SSIREN

The Sacred Site Research Newsletter (SSIREN) was conceived at the symposium 'Conserving nature at sacred sites', held at the University of Zurich on the 25th October 2011, as a means to inform and aggregate the community of researchers working on sacred natural sites.

SSIREN is an acronym from the title Sacred Sites Research Newsletter, but as a creature a Siren is also a convincing symbol of the connection between beliefs, culture and nature, which is characteristic of sacred natural sites.

The Newsletter is issued quarterly and is literally 'made' by its members: everyone is warmly encouraged to submit news, events, opportunities, and recent relevant publications, or to introduce their work in a feature article.

All past issues of SSIREN are currently hosted by the Sacred Sites Research Initiative's website and are available for download.

CONTACTS

For inquiries about the newsletter, to submit an article, or to contribute in any other way, please contact the editors:

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FRIENDS

SANASI - World Database on Sacred Natural Sites

ARC - The Alliance of Religions and Conservation

ISSRNC - The International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture

SACREDNATURALSITES

SNSI - The Sacred Natural Sites Initiative

CSVPA - IUCN-WCPA Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas

OPPORTUNITIES

October 31 Greening the Gods: Ecology and Theology in the Ancient World conference: Call for papers

Papers are now being accepted for the conference Greening the Gods: Ecology and Theology in the Ancient World. The conference will be held at Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK, on March 18-19, 2014.

November 30 6th Conference of the African Association for the Study of Religion (AASR): Call for papers on Religion, Ecology, and the Environment in Africa and the African Diaspora

The conference will take place at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, from July 30 to August 3, 2014. More info available here.

December 15 Submissions to Oxford Summer School on Religion and Animal Protection

The Summer School will be held at St Stephen's House in Oxford, July 21-23, 2014. More info here.



We warmly thank the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale and Alliance of Religions and Conservation for their precious updates and contributions to this newsletter

You receive this newsletter because you have previously participated in initiatives or sacred natural sites. Tired of it? Please contact the Editors. Think it's fantastic and would like to involve a colleague or a friend? Contact the Editors all the same.