

THE ADVENTURES OF PATRIMONITO*

One of the themes of the International Year of Biodiversity is Education. UNESCO's World Heritage Education Programme has developed a series of short, animated cartoons for schools which depict the adventures of a character called Patrimonito, a heritage guardian whose name means 'small heritage' in Spanish.



Introduction

In this early scene from the film, poachers have come to the Virunga mountains to kill gorillas. One will be shot trying to protect its young then carried to a nearby village to be sold as bushmeat. Patrimonito will explain to the villagers why gorillas need protecting.

In each adventure, Patrimonito comes to the rescue of a natural or cultural World Heritage site that is experiencing problems. The character was created in 1995 by a group of Spanish-speaking pupils during a workshop at the First World Heritage Youth Forum in Bergen (Norway) and has since become an international mascot.



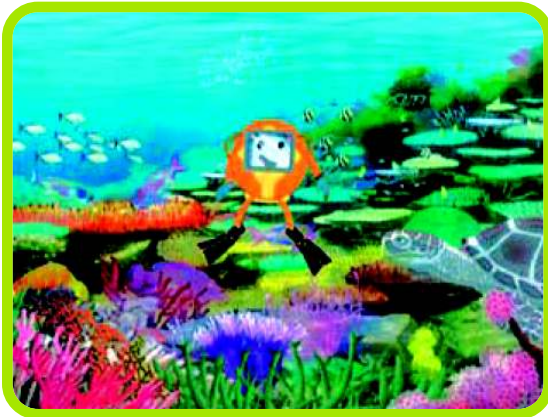
The cartoon series was launched in 2002 within a competition for secondary school pupils organised by UNESCO to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. The winning storyboards have been professionally animated and are distributed to schools in CD-ROM format.

So far, eight 4-minute films have been made. There is no dialogue but music and short texts accompany each film in one or more of the six official languages of UNESCO: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Five of these films follow the fortunes of cultural heritage:

- the historic centre of Havana (Cuba);

* Reprinted from 'A World of Science', Vol. 8, No.4, October-December 2010



In this film, Patrimonito visits the Great Barrier Island in 1980 (left), where he meets dugongs, turtles, schools of many different kinds of fish and colourful corals. He then returns with a young friend 20 years later, only to find that warming sea temperatures from climate change have bleached the corals. In the second still (right), Patrimonito has grabbed an anchor before it can lodge in a coral on the seafloor and his young friend is picking up rubbish thrown overboard by the growing number of pleasure yachts in the area.

- the wooden church in Urnes (Norway);
- the 11 churches built out of the rockface in Lalibela (Ethiopia);
- historic monuments of Novgorod (Russian Federation); and
- the Old Town of Avila (Spain).
- the Sub-Antarctic Islands (New Zealand);
- the Virunga Mountains (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda) ; and
- the Great Barrier Reef (Australia).

In the cartoon overleaf, we follow the adventures of Patrimonito in the Sub-Antarctic islands, which have been over-run by a horde of little pigs.

The remaining three focus on natural sites:

Invasive little aliens: a Patrimonito adventure



One hundred fifty years ago, the seas and cliffs south of New Zealand in the sub-Antarctic islands teemed with seals, seagulls, penguins and a great diversity of other species. The islands were home to ten of the world's 24 albatross species.



One day in 1864, a sailing ship came into view. As the ship approached the islands, a storm brewed. The ship was tossed about by the high waves. With night falling, the captain accidentally ventured too close to the shore and the ship was thrown against the rocks.



The only survivors were two little pigs who managed to make it ashore on a barrel, a girl and a boy. The locals greeted them with curiosity rather than fear. It wasn't long, however, until the two little pigs were causing trouble. One day, a pig came racing around a corner so fast that he knocked a couple of penguins into the water! He then accidentally crushed the unprotected egg under his hoof.



The pigs were always hungry. When one of them saw a seagull sitting on a big, juicy egg, it would chase the seagull away then grab the egg and eat it. The pigs loved living on an island where they could find plenty to eat. Soon they were raising a family. They had a lot of piglets, who then had a lot of piglets of their own. Within a few years, there were hundreds of pigs on the island.



Life became a nightmare for the birds. With the pigs eating or destroying their eggs, they were unable to raise any chicks. The bird population began to dwindle. As the years went by, there were fewer and fewer birds in the seas and skies. By 2004, the situation had got so bad that Patrimonito decided to act.



He hopped in a dinghy and headed for the Sub-Antarctic Islands. The birds greeted him anxiously. The pigs kept breaking or eating their eggs, they said, and trampling the undergrowth. It was becoming impossible to raise a family. There was only one thing for it, Patrimonito realised.



The pigs would have to go! In a green meadow, Patrimonito sneaked up behind one of the pigs and threw a net over it. He was such a good pigcatcher that, within no time at all, he had captured all the pigs on the island. He piled them high in his dinghy and, with a cheery wave, he was off. At last, the birds could raise their chicks in peace.



The bird population started to climb again and, by 2255, the seas and skies were once more teeming with birds. This is a true story. The introduction of pigs into the Sub-Antarctic Islands endangered the existing animal and plant populations. That is why these pigs are called 'invasive alien species' and that is why they had to go!

For details and to view these films: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/patrimonito>