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The Official Newsletter of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity • APRIL–JUNE 2023

ASEAN, EU conclude 5-year biodiversity project



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JAKARTA, Indonesia — The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia, showcased the gains and impacts of its European Union-supported project called the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) on 6 June 2023.

The BCAMP Completion Workshop: Advancing Partnerships for Transformative Change and Sustainable Biodiversity Conservation presented significant accomplishments of the project and provided a platform for region-wide discussions on ways forward for such a long-standing partnership for biodiversity.

This five-year initiative has been pivotal in enhancing environmental, social, and economic well-being through effective biodiversity conservation and management of protected areas in the ASEAN region. Over the past years, the project achieved significant breakthroughs, improving the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation in ASEAN by focusing on ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) and protected areas.

“Through the BCAMP project, we have been able to expand important biodiversity areas under regional protection with the number of ASEAN Heritage Parks increasing from 44 in 2018 to 55 this year. These AHPs were supported with various capacity enhancement activities that contribute to their effective management, such as marine SMART patrolling, capacity development for park rangers, biodiversity assessment, GIS trainings, and more, demonstrating that investing in regional cooperation strengthens our collective actions to achieve global goals, such as Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and to effectively implement regional commitments, such as the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework,” said Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, ACB Executive Director.

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ASEAN Announces Best Ecosystem Restoration Projects



The first-ever set of ASEAN Green Initiative awardees with Dr Theresa Mundita Lim, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (6th from L); Mr. Ky Anh Nguyen, Director, Sustainable Development Directorate, ASEAN (5th from R); and Dr. Bad'ah Achmad Said, Deputy Director, Directorate of Biodiversity Conservation of Species and Genetics, DG of Conservation on Natural Resources and Ecosystem, Ministry of Environment and Forestry (5th from L).

JAKARTA, Indonesia – In celebration of the 50th World Environment Day, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) revealed the first-ever set of ASEAN Green Initiative (AGI) awardees – distinguished greening and reforestation programmes by individuals, organisations, and the private sector across the region.

The AGI programme aims to encourage the planting of at least 10 million native trees across 10 ASEAN Member States in a span of 10 years. The programme puts emphasis on native tree species for planting since they are likely to survive in their natural environment and are more sustainable in the long term.

Native trees are well adapted to the climate and soil, hence they are more resilient and have a higher rate of survival. Planting and growing native trees could enrich biodiversity and help revive the natural interactions between organisms and species of both flora and fauna.

“Since its official launch in August 2021, the AGI was able to spark an ecosystem restoration movement in the ASEAN region that is built on sound scientific principles to reverse the significant decline of forest cover in the region which has been recorded at a rate of 8,000 km sq annually, from 2000-2020, or an equivalent of 160,000 km sq. The AGI hopes to build momentum for more coordinated efforts from different sectors, including the youth and the education sector to help promote biodiversity literacy, contribute to building resilience against climate change impacts, future pandemics, and other global challenges,” said Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, ACB Executive Director.

Prior to the announcement of the first AGI awardees, the ACB conducted a forum on ecosystem restoration, which gathered experts, representatives of development organisations, and officers of local and national governments in the

field of environment, forestry, and natural resources.

The forum identified key issues and challenges, opportunities, and recommended actions for forest rehabilitation, and ecosystem restoration at the national and regional levels as well as opportunities for the expansion and collaboration of the AGI network of partners. Participants also shared approaches and tools in ecosystem restoration that advance community resilience, including livelihoods, ecotourism, and incentives; as well as the promotion of private sector partnerships and engagement of the youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in restoration initiatives.

Recognising ASEAN’s Best

Eight greening initiatives were recognised for their exemplary work in ecosystem restoration from Lao PDR, Malaysia, Singapore,

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ASEAN Announces Best Ecosystem Restoration Projects



Dr. David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity delivers for the recognised initiatives at the AGI Recognition Ceremony.

and the Philippines. The awardees represent homeowner associations, national NGOs, local and national government agencies, and the private sector. Collectively, these recipients have planted more than 1.4 million native trees in their respective areas. They were chosen based on the following criteria: ecological soundness, socio-economic impacts, sustainability, and compliance with governance and institutional mechanisms.

The ACB is proud to recognise the first-ever set of AGIs:

Medium-Scale Initiatives – 101 up to 5,000 trees planted

1. Lao Cherry Blossom Tree Project, Lao PDR
2. Ayala Westgrove Heights Native Tree and Wildlife Haven, Philippines
3. Ayala Land Carbon Forest Project in Davao, Philippines

Large-Scale Initiatives – Over 5,000 trees planted

1. Habitat Rehabilitation Programme

through Tree Planting Activities under Central Forest Spine (CFS) Management and Development Project, Malaysia

2. Yayasan PETRONAS Tree Planting Activities in support of PETRONAS Walk4Trees Programme, Malaysia
3. Ayala Land Carbon Forest Project in Cebu, Philippines
4. BINHI: The Greening Legacy, Philippines
5. OneMillionTrees Movement, Singapore

“We have been supporting the Centre since it was founded in 2005 and through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) project, I’m very glad that we have supported the ASEAN Green Initiative. The event today and the meetings in the coming days are a great opportunity to look at the results we have achieved together and to plan for future cooperation”, said Mr. Thibaut Portevin, Head of Cooperation of the European Union (EU) Delegation in Jakarta.

German Ambassador to Indonesia, ASEAN, and Timor Leste Ms. Ina Lepel, likewise expressed the unwavering support of Germany for the restoration efforts in the ASEAN region in her recorded message. “As a long-standing partner of the ASEAN and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, the Federal Government of Germany remains steadfast in supporting the ASEAN region in the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of its wealth of natural resources and unique biodiversity”, she said.

The recognition event was made possible with the support of the Federal Government of Germany through the ACB-GIZ Institutional Strengthening of the Biodiversity Sector in ASEAN II (ISB II) Project and the European Union (EU) through the BCAMP Project, in cooperation with the Republic of Indonesia, through its Directorate of Biodiversity Conservation of Species and Genetics, Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

To know more about the AGI, log on to www.agi.aseanbiodiversity.org.

ASEAN, EU conclude 5-year biodiversity project

The BCAMP Project was instrumental in introducing the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes (ABH) programme, which recognises exceptional individuals in ASEAN who have made significant contributions to biodiversity conservation and advocacy efforts in their respective countries and the region. The sixth and seventh AHP conferences were also made possible through BCAMP, which were helpful in deepening the appreciation and understanding of the AHPs and facilitating enhanced knowledge and skills of park managers on planning and implementing ecosystem management, restoration strategies, and building resilience.

Another notable BCAMP initiative is the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme which was designed to empower the youth to effectively contribute to the formulation and implementation of biodiversity policies. Under this programme are the Young ASEAN Storytellers, which was designed to provide a platform for ASEAN youth with powerful and inspiring stories to tell on biodiversity;

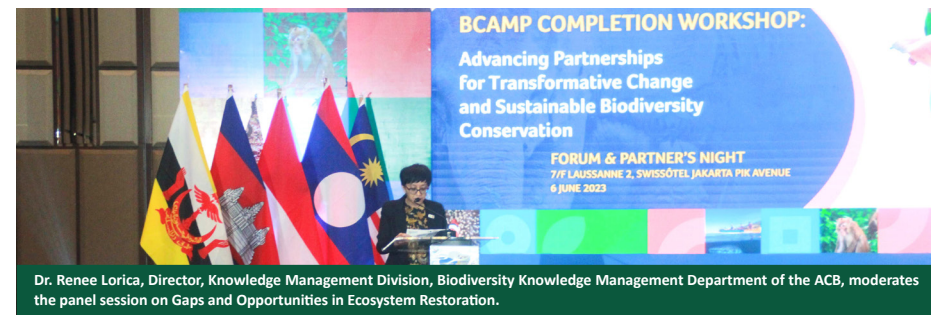
the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Leaders (AYBL) Programme, a one-year training and mentorship programme; and the Young Internships for Protected Areas subprogramme.

In conjunction with the project culmination, the ASEAN Green Initiative (AGI) Recognition Ceremony and a forum on ecosystem restoration were likewise conducted to recognise exemplary tree planting and ecosystem restoration initiatives, identify key challenges and opportunities, and foster collaboration among governments and key players from the development sector at the local, national, and regional levels.

The AGI is a flagship initiative of the ASEAN that recognises outstanding

efforts in forest rehabilitation and ecosystem restoration, involving a diverse range of environments and stakeholders, by planting 10 million native trees across the 10 ASEAN Member States in a span of 10 years, in line with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Degradation. The first cycle of this recognition scheme was supported by the European Union, the Federal Government of Germany, and the ACB.

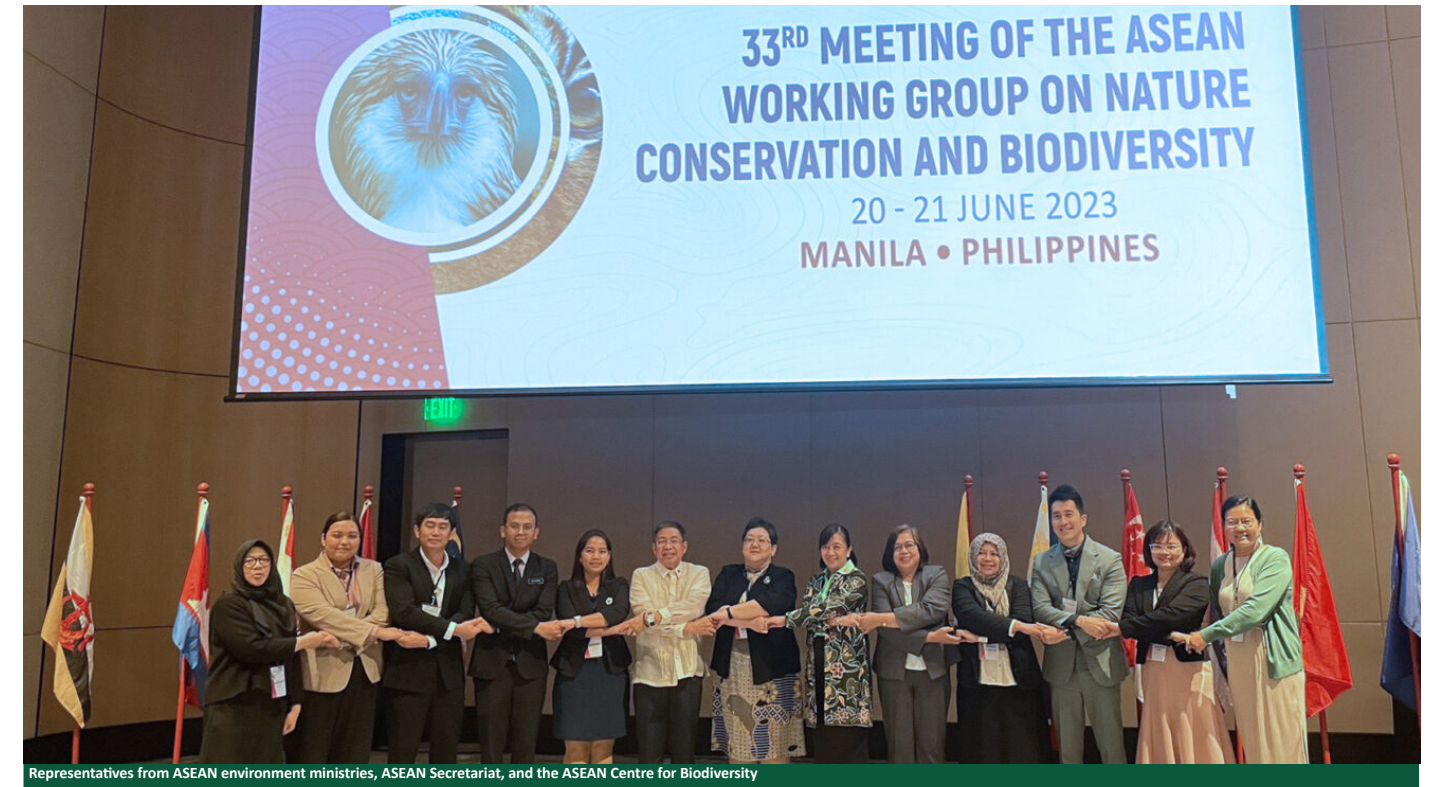
To access new biodiversity publications and policy recommendations developed through the BCAMP Project, scan the QR codes.



Dr. Renee Lorica, Director, Knowledge Management Division, Biodiversity Knowledge Management Department of the ACB, moderates the panel session on Gaps and Opportunities in Ecosystem Restoration.

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PH Hosts ASEAN Meet to Plan Regional Actions to Hit New Global Biodiversity Targets



Representatives from ASEAN environment ministries, ASEAN Secretariat, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

The 10-nation political and economic bloc, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), met in Pasay City, Philippines for a two-day meeting to map out its actions for nature in line with the new set of global biodiversity targets or the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Hosted and chaired by the Philippines through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), with support from the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), the 33rd Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Nature and Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB) gathered key ASEAN policymakers from 20 to 21 June 2023 to discuss how the rich biodiversity in the region can be protected and sustainably used to contribute to the resiliency, recovery, and economic development in Southeast Asia.

The AWGNCB was established to boost collaboration in resolving issues related to the conservation and sustainable utilisation of biological resources in the region. Following the practice of ASEAN on the rotational hosting of its member states for its meetings, the last time the same body met in the Philippines was in 2013 and the next will be after ten years or in 2033.

DENR-BMB Assistant Secretary Marcial Amaro, Jr., who served as the meeting chair, stressed the importance of regional cooperation and the role of AWGNCB in the implementation of 23 new global biodiversity targets that were adopted in 2022.

He likewise urged intensified collective efforts since biodiversity challenges transcend geographical borders. "There are targets such as restoration of degraded ecosystems that require connectivity to enhance ecosystem functions and services.

The use, harvest and trade of wild species necessitate cross-border cooperation to minimise overexploitation and reduce risk of pathogen spillovers. The impacts of climate change cannot be mitigated within geographical territories alone, global action is imperative. Monitoring, assessing, and reporting compliance of large, transnational companies and financial institutions entail cooperation among AMS for full disclosure of risks, dependencies, and impacts on biodiversity," he said.

Apart from the ASEAN member states, representatives from the region's dialogue and development partners, such as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument, GITEC-IGIP GmbH, Ministry of Environment of Japan, and Hanns Seidel Foundation participated in the open session of the meeting.

Some of the highlights of the discussions were the newly declared

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Viet Nam launches Con Dao National Park as its 12th ASEAN Heritage Park

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Director Nguyen Khac Pho of the Con Dao National Park receives the AHP Certificate from ACB Executive Director Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim.

Con Dao Island—In celebration of its 30th year of establishment, Con Dao National Park was officially launched as the 55th ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP).

Aside from its pristine beaches, diverse ecosystems, and abundant flora and fauna, Con Dao is known for its historical value as it witnessed the bravery and selflessness of thousands of heroes who fought for Viet Nam during the colonial period. With its rich natural and cultural heritage, Con Dao National Park was declared the newest addition to the growing number of AHPs — a network of effectively managed protected areas and nature reserves in the ASEAN region.

“Of the 55 ASEAN Heritage Parks, 12 can be found in Viet Nam, making it the ASEAN Member State with the highest number of declared AHPs. This only reaffirms Viet Nam’s commitment in ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of its ecosystems and biodiversity through the effective and participatory management of its protected areas,” said Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), after handing over the AHP certificate to the park management

of Con Dao. The ACB serves as the secretariat of the AHP Programme.

A nature reserve or a protected area goes through a rigorous selection process before being recognised as an AHP to ensure that it meets the stringent standards of ecological completeness, naturalness, uniqueness, and having high conservation importance, to name a few. As an AHP, the Park can avail of various programme support in the form of capacity development, technical assistance, livelihood projects, joint conservation initiatives, and other opportunities for promoting the Park in different regional and global fora.

Nguyen Khac Pho, director of Con Dao National Park, thanked all government, non-government, and international organisations for supporting the conservation initiatives in the Park that contributed to its current achievements and its national, regional, and global recognitions. Aside from being an AHP, the Park was also recognised as a Wetland of International Importance or a Ramsar Site in 2014.

Prof. Dr. Dang Huy Huynh, Viet Nam’s 2017 ASEAN Biodiversity Hero, also graced the launching

ceremony. “Now that Con Dao is declared as an AHP, it is not just an important conservation site in Viet Nam — it is also recognised as a vital conservation area in the world,” said Prof. Huynh.

From ‘hell’ to ‘heaven’ on Earth

Con Dao Island was once tagged as “hell on Earth” as it was once a prison for an estimated 20,000 fallen Vietnamese soldiers and patriots during the war period. Classified as a Special National Monument, Con Dao’s historical features include the Hang Duong Cemetery and the Con Dao Prison where the “Tiger Cage” can be found. The Tiger Cage symbolises one of the worst means of solitary confinement during the colonial era.

Beyond its gloomy past, Con Dao National Park is now known as an ecotourism paradise as its 14 islands serve as havens for both terrestrial and marine biodiversity. The geographic isolation of the Park resulted in high species endemism. Species that can only be found in the Park include *Dipterocarpus condorensis*, *Ilex condorensis*, *Pavetta condorensis*, *Psychotria condorensis*, Con Son’s black giant squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor condorensis*),



The pristine coasts of Con Dao Island is popular to tourists where many ecotourism activities can be done.

and Con Son’s long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis condorensis*). The Park’s marine habitat is also home to seven critically endangered species and 67 endangered and vulnerable species.

Located in Ba Ria-Vung Tau province in southeastern Viet Nam, tourists may visit Con Dao National Park by land, air, and water. The Park is a popular site for ecotourism activities such as hiking, trekking, camping, birdwatching, swimming, diving and snorkelling for coral-watching, visiting turtle laying grounds, releasing baby turtles, and other nature-based activities. Hotels, resorts, guesthouses, cabins, and other accommodation facilities are available in the area.

Tourists are strictly prohibited from bringing single-use plastic items into the Park. The popular spots for tourists on the island include the Ong Dung Beach, Soray Plantation, Tre Lon and Tre Nho Island, Nhat

Beach, Shectaresrk Cape, Trung Islet, Dam Tre Bay, Cau Island, and Bay Canh Island.

To know more about the Con Dao National Park, log on to www.condaopark.com.vn.



Once tagged as “hell on Earth”, Con Dao National Park is now a heaven for flora and fauna that thrive on land and under water.

ASEAN welcomes Mt. Inayawan Range Natural Park as 53rd Heritage Park



MIRNP is home to the indigenous people of Maranao ("People of the Lake").

LANAO DEL NORTE, Ph—The Philippines officially launches Mt. Inayawan Range Natural Park (MIRNP) as the 53rd ASEAN Heritage Park and the 11th AHP in the Philippines during the 64th Araw ng Lanao del Norte celebration held on 28 June.

MIRNP, situated in the lush green forests of the province of Lanao del Norte, is known as the "last forest bastion" in the province, being the only primary remaining and largest rainforest dominated by dipterocarp species and containing high diversity of flora and fauna. The park is likewise considered as the primary water source by surrounding and nearby communities and municipalities.

"Mt. Inayawan's forests and biodiversity are still intact; hence it is now an AHP. This will give the Maranao people an increased sense of deep pride and responsibility to further protect and preserve it," said Ismail C. Ambola, incumbent MIRNP Park Superintendent.

Some of the endemic species found in MIRNP are the endangered Pinsker's hawk eagle (*Nisaetus pinskeri*), the critically endangered Philippine eagle, the vulnerable tree species Magkono

(*Xanthostemon verdugonianus*), and the Philippine Flying lemur (*Cynocephalus volans*).

Dutiful environmental stewardship

"We commend the support of all stakeholders, particularly the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte and the local government of Nunungan in the participatory governance of the Park contributing to its sustainable protected area management," said Dr. Arvin C. Diesmos, Senior Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, secretariat of the AHP Programme.

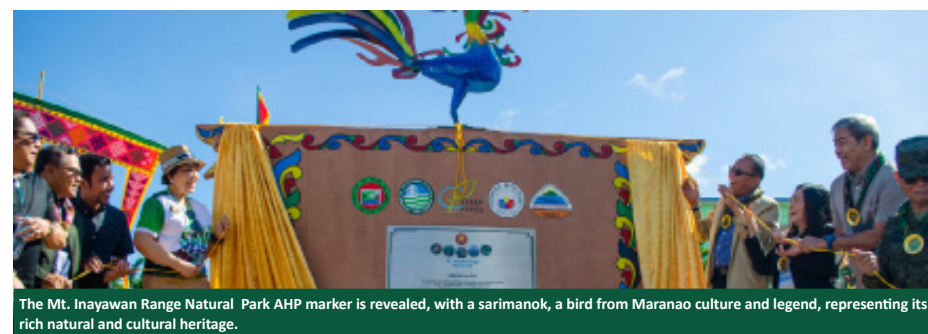
"The distinction of Mt. Inayawan Range Natural Park as an ASEAN Heritage Park is a great honor," said Lanao del Norte Governor Imelda Dimaporo "Together, let us stand as guardians of nature, protectors of our heritage, and advocates for a

greener and healthier planet," she added.

Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, Executive Director of the ACB, lauded and welcomed MIRNP to the ever-growing AHP network. She expressed the ACB's readiness to support the park's conservation efforts and to help ensure the effective and efficient management of this new AHP.

Since its establishment in 1984, the AHP Programme has declared 55 protected areas as part of the AHP network. These heritage sites are biologically rich parks and nature reserves that serve as models of effective protected area management and conservation.

To learn more about the AHPs, log on to www.aseanbiodiversity.org.



The Mt. Inayawan Range Natural Park AHP marker is revealed, with a sarimanok, a bird from Maranao culture and legend, representing its rich natural and cultural heritage.

PH Hosts ASEAN Meet to Plan Regional Actions to Hit New Global Biodiversity Targets

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Discussions continue among ASEAN representatives and partners in pursuit of achieving the 23 Targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in the Region.

and nominated ASEAN Heritage Parks; updates on regional biodiversity programmes and projects such as the EU-supported Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN Project, the ACB-KfW Small Grants Programme, and the Institutional Strengthening of the Biodiversity Sector in ASEAN supported by the GIZ; the new set of ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes; results of the first cycle of the ASEAN Green Initiative; outcomes

of the 15th UN Biodiversity Conference; and the region's ways forward in the achievement of the global biodiversity targets. The youth, represented by the Youth Biodiversity Leaders, likewise participated in the discussions by presenting the next steps for the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme that was recently institutionalised by the ACB.

ACB Executive Director Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim reiterated the

importance of regional cooperation, and cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration in maximising the value of biological resources to benefit the ASEAN community and thanked the Philippine government for its leadership in advancing the region's biodiversity mainstreaming and sustainable development agenda.



Ms. Clarissa Arida (front left), Director of the Programmes Department of the ACB, and Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim (front right), ACB Executive Director, lead the ACB at the 33rd AWGNCB.

Lao PDR mulls nominating Nong Kham Sen as an urban wetland ASEAN Heritage Park



Nong Kham Sen Wetland

Officials from Lao PDR Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment, Agriculture and Forestry, and Foreign Affairs; representatives from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF); and local officials and stakeholders of Nong Kham Sen (NKS) Wetland met at the Stakeholders Workshop on NKS Wetlands Management and discussed opportunities for coordination and cooperation in view of the possible designation of NKS as an urban wetland ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP).

The WWF-supported stakeholder workshop was held to advocate policies on water resources and to report on the achievements of NKS wetland management that have contributed to improving the livelihoods of local communities around NKS.

One of the agenda items of the activity is the NKS' AHP

nomination, which is in line with the management and conservation plans to be developed in the NKS Master Plan 2024–2030. The relevant ministries are now considering which agency would lead the nomination process.

The ACB, through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) Project and with funding support from the European Union (EU), has been supporting the processes and initiatives aimed to recognise urban wetlands as AHPs, including the NKS Wetland.

Last March, the BCAMP and the National Parks Board Singapore organised an experiential learning visit to the urban wetland AHP Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in Singapore for the officials and stakeholders of Nong Kham Sen Wetland.

The activity helped the Lao PDR officials and protected area staff to have a productive in-person learning experience on the conservation practices, wetland management, and the various educational and recreational activities of an established AHP urban wetland such as the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

Urban wetlands are currently under-represented in the existing 55 AHPs. Moreover, studies show that by 2050, almost 70 per cent of the world's population will settle in cities and urban areas.

As such, the AHP Regional Action Plan recommends pilot testing urban wetlands as part of the AHP network. Two proposed urban wetland sites have been identified as pilots, namely, Nong Kham Sen Wetland in Lao PDR and Bang Pu Nature Education Centre in Thailand.