

ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes

Post-Event Updates

Ten biodiversity conservation advocates representing the grassroots, government, academic, and business sectors received the 2017 ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Award at a ceremony held in Manila, Philippines on 7 August 2017. The inaugural award formed part of the celebration of ASEAN's Golden Anniversary.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), serving as the ABH Secretariat, initiated various learning events and activities to share the conservation stories of the first set of ABH, within and beyond ASEAN.



(Left to right) Mr. Eyad Samhan (Brunei Darussalam); Mr. Sophea Chhin (Cambodia); Mr. Alex Waisimon (Indonesia); Mr. Nitsavanh Louangkhout Pravongviengkham (Lao PDR); Prof. Zakri Abdul Hamid (Malaysia); Dr. Maung Maung Kyi (Myanmar); Dr. Angel C. Alcala (Philippines); Prof. Leo Tan Wee Hin (Singapore); Dr. Nonn Panitvong (Thailand), and Prof. Dang Huy Huynh (Viet Nam).

- **ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Magazine:** The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity published a 53-page magazine that featured the best practices of the 10 ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes. The magazine, which was distributed to the participants of the award ceremony and forum, will be shared with a wider audience in the region and in other countries. The magazine can be accessed through this [link](#).
- **ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes on Facebook:** The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity launched a social media campaign that introduced the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes and their advocacy to its followers. The Heroes' stories were also shared via other online platforms including the website heroes.aseanbiodiversity.org, the social media pages of ASEAN, the European Union, HARI Foundation, Inc., as well as other organisations supporting ACB's promotional efforts.
- **ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Videos:** A series of videos featuring the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Award and the 10 Heroes were produced and uploaded to [YouTube](#) and ACB's website. These videos were shared via online sharing platforms such as Facebook to ensure wider distribution.

- **ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Forum Series.** Three learning forums were conducted by the ACB to feature the conservation stories of the ABH. The first one was held right after the award ceremonies in August 2017 in Manila, Philippines; the second forum was held in March 2018 at the Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment; and the third leg was held in Manila, Philippines in September 2018.



ABH Regional Forum in Hanoi, Viet Nam



ABH Regional Forum in Manila, Philippines

Mr.



Alex Waisimon, ABH of Indonesia with students from the Philippines during the second ABH Regional Forum in Manila, Philippines



Dr. Angel Alcala, ABH of the Philippines during his lecture on marine biodiversity in Manila, Philippines

- **Participation in ACB Events.** The ACB continues to promote the ABH by inviting them to serve as resource speakers in various regional events that are relevant to their fields of expertise and experience.

ASEAN CENTRE for BIODIVERSITY

webinar

Biodiversity and Preventing Future Pandemics

20 May 2020 | 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M. (GMT+8)

Setting the tone: zoonoses and biodiversity conservation in the ASEAN region

COVID-19 situation in ASEAN

Health and Biodiversity in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and developments

Highlights of the ASEAN Scoping Study on Interlinkages of Health and Biodiversity

Updates on ASEAN response to wildlife management to curb zoonoses

H.E. Kung Phook
Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim
Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

Prof. Zakri Hamid
Secretary of the ASEAN Biodiversity Heritage Network

Dr. Oscar Primadil MPH
Secretary General, Ministry of Health, Indonesia
Chair of Senior Officials Meeting on Health and Development (COMHEALTH)

Dr. Unnikrishnan Payyappallimanna
International Institute for Global Health of the United Nations University

Ms. Antoinette Taus
Moderator
UN Environment Programme's National Council Ambassador for the Philippines

Catch us live on the ACB's Facebook account
facebook.com/ASEANBiodiversity

#BiodiversityDay

ZOOMING IN ON BIODIVERSITY
ASEAN-WIDE PHOTO CONTEST

#WeAreASEANBiodiversity

Awards Ceremony

31 January 2022, 15:00 GMT+8

facebook.com/ASEANBiodiversity

Featuring

MS. ANTOINETTE TAUS
Voice of ASEAN Biodiversity
CORA Founder

MR. SORWEA CHHIN
ASEAN Biodiversity Hero
Cambodia

MEET OUR EAS SIDE EVENT SPEAKER!

DR. ANGEL ALCALA
National Scientist of the Philippines and ASEAN Biodiversity Hero from the Philippines

Healthy Coasts and Healthy ASEAN:

Saving the ASEAN Seas through Effective Collaboration

Iloilo Convention Center, Iloilo City
27 November 2018, 1:30 – 5:45 PM



- **Media Interviews:** The 10 ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes were interviewed by media in the Philippines and in their respective countries. These interviews provided opportunities for the Heroes to share their advocacies and their stories to a wider audience.

- **Press Releases:** The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity featured the Heroes and their stories through press releases distributed across ASEAN. These articles were picked up by print and online publications. The 2017 ABH Media Exposure Summary is attached to this document as **Annex 1**.

Below are some news articles featuring some important updates about the first set of ABH after the awards ceremonies.

ASEAN Biodiversity Hero receives Midori Prize

January 31, 2019

ASEAN Biodiversity Hero from Malaysia Professor Emeritus Dr Abdul Hamid Zakri was one of the awardees of the prestigious 2018 Midori Prize for Biodiversity which “honours three individuals who have made outstanding contributions to conservation and sustainable use at local and global levels, and who have influenced and strengthened various biodiversity-related efforts, as well as raised awareness about biodiversity”.

The ASEAN Biodiversity Hero, a programme of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, headed by its Executive Director Dr Theresa Mundita S Lim, recognises outstanding achievers in biodiversity conservation in the 10 ASEAN Member States.

“My involvement with biodiversity has been a life-long preoccupation,” said Professor Zakri in his remarks as an awardee. “Appreciation of nature and biodiversity comes naturally. The sound of birds in the morning, the soft rustling of the leaves blown by the wind and the freshness of the air are all too familiar to me since I was young. It was only later in life that I discovered that I was living in one of the greatest biology laboratories on

the surface of the planet – Southeast Asia. I believe that sustainable development and the future of human civilisation hinges heavily on biodiversity – our web of life.”

Professor Zakri was a former science adviser to the Malaysian Prime Minister, and is considered a key actor in the development of biodiversity conservation governance in Malaysia and in the international arena, particularly with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

He was the first Asian to become the chair of the CBD’s Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, which is an open-ended intergovernmental scientific advisory body that provides the CBD Conference of the Parties with timely advice relating to the implementation of the Convention. He co-chaired the Board of the landmark UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which is one of the world’s largest-ever scientific collaborations involving over 2,000 leading scientists in a comprehensive synthesis and analysis of the state of the Earth’s ecosystems, representing a ground-breaking scientific assessment of their services, causes of changes, and consequences to humanity.



2018 Midori Prize Awardee and ASEAN Biodiversity Hero from Malaysia Professor Emeritus Dr Abdul Hamid Zakri. – AEON ENVIRONMENTAL FOUNDATION

Professor Zakri was elected as founding chair of the UN-affiliated Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, an independent body that bridges the gap between science and

policy, and provides impartial, accurate and up-to-date data and scientific information to assist in policy-making related to biodiversity management.

One of the leading spokesmen of developing countries in the negotiating sessions in the CBD, among his numerous notable international roles were being appointed by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon as one of the 26 eminent scientists in his inaugural Scientific Advisory Board.

The other Midori Prize awardees were Chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's World Commission on Protected Areas Kathy MacKinnon and Director General of the Society for the Protection of Nature Lebanon Assad Serhal. Each awardee received a plaque, a commemorative gift, and a monetary prize of USD 100,000 to support their work.

CBD Executive Secretary Dr Cristiana Pasca Palmer said the works of the three awardees represents the kind of energy, action and inspiration needed to improve the relationship between humans and nature and that they have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of its benefits.

The Midori Prize is co-hosted by AEON Environmental Foundation and the CBD Secretariat. The award aims to raise public awareness on the importance of biodiversity and to contribute to the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020.

Source: <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/asean-biodiversity-hero-receives-midori-prize/>

Alex Waisimon, Pahlawan Keragaman Hayati dari Papua (Alex Waisimon: Hero of Biodiversity from Papua)

oleh Asrida Elisabeth [Jayapura] di 15 September 2018

Alex Waisimon, kembali mendapatkan penghargaan. Kali ini, Gelar Pahlawan Keragaman Hayati ASEAN atau The ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes dari ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB). Sebelum ini, Alex terima penghargaan Kalpataru 2017 dan Kick Andy Heroes 2017.

Gelar Pahlawan Keragaman Hayati ini diberikan kepada sosok dari negara-negara ASEAN yang berjasa dalam upaya konservasi dan advokasi keragaman hayati di negara mereka masing-masing. Ada 10 orang mendapat gelar ini, salah satu Alex yang diserahkan pada acara Biodiversity Heroes Regional Forum di Manila, Filipina 4 September lalu.

Alex banyak beraksi dalam melindungi hutan, melestarikan cendrawasih dan satwa lain sekaligus berperan meningkatkan ekonomi masyarakat melalui ekowisata Bird Watching.

Alex membuat gerakan ini di kampung halamannya di Rhepang Muaif Unurum Guay, Distrik Nimbokrang, Kabupaten Jayapura, Papua.

Selain Alex, The ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes 2017 yang lain, Eyad Samhan (Brunei Darussalam), Sophea Chinn (Kamboja), Nitsavanh Louangkhot Pravongviengkham (Laos), Prof. Zakri Abdul Hamid (Malaysia). Juga Dr. Maung Maung Kyi (Myanmar), Dr. Angel C. Alcala (Filipina), Prof. Leo Tan Wee Hin (Singapura), Dr. Nonn Panitvong (Thailand) dan Prof. Dr. Dang Huy Huynh (Vietnam).

Dalam acara ini, Alex berbagi cerita konservasi dengan siswa dari berbagai lembaga akademis di Filipina, profesional muda, media, dan peserta dari negara anggota ASEAN.

Pengalaman kerja di Red Cross Asia Pacific, International Labour Organization, koki di Restoran Italia di Hamburg, sampai pemandu wisata di Bali, jadi bekal saat memutuskan pulang ke Papua pada 2014.



Alex kala menrima penghargaan di Manila. Foto: dokumen Alex W

Mimpinya, menyediakan mata pencaharian bagi masyarakat melalui ekowisata.

“Kunci ekowisata memetik manfaat dari hutan tanpa merusak dan memastikan generasi mendatang akan menikmati kesempatan melihat hutan dan keragaman hayati.”

Upaya dia, katanya, awalnya ada penolakan dari masyarakat. Alex tetap gigih. Hutan rusak karena penebangan, dia rawat. Hasilnya, burung-burung dan satwa lain kembali memenuhi hutan.

Pada Agustus 2016, ada sembilan kepala suku menyerahkan hutan seluas 19.000 hektar sebagai daerah ekowisata berkelanjutan. Luasan itu bertambah jadi 98.000 hektar.

“Sembilan kepala suku yang disatukan. Saya dekati mereka dengan filosofi; tidak boleh kasih habis, ambil lain tinggalkan yang lain, untuk anak cucu.”

Daerah Rheapang Muaif, tempat Alex tinggal merupakan kawasan hutan rumah 84 spesies burung dari 31 famili. Kawasan itu bahkan masuk daerah penting burung karena menyediakan perlindungan bagi lima spesies yang terancam punah termasuk *Casuaris unappendiculatus*, *Harpyopsis novaeguineae*, *Goura victoria*, *Psittaculirostris salvadorii*, dan *Epimachus bruijnii*.

Tempat ini, katanya, juga populer sebagai rumah burung cenderawasih. Enam spesies burung cenderawasih dari keluarga *Paradisaeidae* dapat ditemukan di daerah ini.

Jadi contoh

Dominggus Mampioper, pengunjung ekowisata Bird Watshing Rheapang Muaif, turut bangga atas penghargaan kepada Alex Wasimon.

Dia bilang, Alex memberi harapan bahwa hutan yang rusak, bisa kembali jadi rumah aman bagi satwa.

“Ini memberikan harapan kepada kita dan kepada semua orang ternyata meskipun hutan sudah diobrak-abrik tapi masih ada harapan untuk cenderawasih pulang ke rumahnya,” katanya.

Rheapang Muaif, katanya, bukan lagi hutan lebat, belum ada lagi pohon berdiameter 50 cm dampak penebangan, tetapi satwa-satwa mulai hidup bebas di sana.

“Orang bilang cenderawasih muncul pukul 8.00 pagi dan pukul 6.00 sore. Di sini siang pukul 1.00 dan 2.00 kita bisa melihat cenderawasih terbang.”

Dia bilang, hal menarik lain dari Alex, pengetahuan soal alam. Meski keliling dunia dan lama meninggalkan kampung halaman, Alex fasih bahasa lokal, mengetahui nama burung dan pohon dalam bahasa lokal. Bahkan, dia mengenal jenis burung dari suara, dan pohon yang menjadi rumahnya, hingga pengetahuan tentang musim-musim. mMsim matoa, missal, akan nada nuri dan kaka tua makan buah di pohon, di bawahnya ada kasuari dan babi hutan.

“Pak Alex mendapat pengetahuan-pengetahuan itu dulu dari orangtuanya dan dia tidak lupa. Dia melanjutkan dengan memindahkan pengetahuan lewat sekolah lingkungan yang dibuatnya di lokasi itu sekarang,” katanya.

Alex juga mendapat dukungan dari masyarakat adat.

Menurut Mampioper, tantangan sekarang adalah niat pemerintah mengubah status lahan itu dari hutan yang bisa dikonversi jadi hutan konservasi.

Sisa-sisa penebangan kayu di hutan yang kini dijaga Alex W. Foto: Asrida Elisabeth/ Mongabay Indonesia

Terancam pembalakan liar dan kebun sawit

Pada 2018, Sawit Watch memberikan catatan kritis atas kondisi hutan Papua. Menurut mereka, hutan tropis di Papua, terus menyusut seiring proses degradasi dan laju kerusakan hutan.

Pada 2005-2009, luas hutan Papua berkisar 42,22 juta hektar. Berselang tiga tahun kemudian (2011), mengalami degradasi dan tersisa 30,07 juta hektar. Rata-rata deforestasi di Papua berkisar 143.680 hektar per tahun.

Dikutip dari Sawit Watch, data Pemerintah Papua menyebutkan, luas perkebunan sawit Papua 958.094,2 hektar. Ia dikuasai 79 perusahaan perkebunan sawit tersebar di berbagai daerah seperti Merauke, Boven Digoel, Keerom, Sarmi, Waropen, Yahukimo, Nabire, Mimika Mappi, dan Jayapura. Luasan ini diperkirakan akan bertambah mengingat lahan di Sumatera dan Kalimantan, sudah habis.

Di Kabupaten Jayapura, tempat Alex Waisimon, ada dua perusahaan sawit yang beroperasi. Dikutip dari Atlas Sawit Papua, dua perusahaan itu adalah PT Sinar Kencana Inti Perkasa (20.535 hektar), anak perusahaan Sinar Mas dan PT Rimba Matoa Lestari (29.589 hektar), anak perusahaan Agrindo Group– bagian Raja Garuda Mas Group.

Dua perusahaan lain yang sudah memegang izin dan akan masuk di Distrik Kaureh yaitu PT Siringo-Ringo (29.278 hektar) dan PT Megasurya Mas (13.389 hektar). Keduanya anak perusahaan Musim Mas.

Ada tiga perusahaan sedang mengupayakan perizinan. Dua anak usaha Musim Mas yaitu PT Intibenua Perkasatama (25.773 hektar) dan PT Wira Antara (31.561 hektar). Satu lagi, PT Permata Nusa Mandiri (32.000 hektar).

Untuk pembalakan liar, pada Desember 2017, Koalisi Anti Mafia Hutan melaporkan tujuh perusahaan pemegang sertifikat kayu, sistem verifikasi legalitas kayu (SVLK). Ketujuh perusahaan ini beroperasi dari Kabupaten Jayapura dan Sarmi.



Perusahaan-perusahaan ini bawa kayu tak jelas asal usul tetapi seolah legal. Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi dalam pertemuan di Kantor Gubernur Jayapura, 6 September 2018 juga mengumumkan keterlibatan aparat kepolisian dan militer dalam kasus-kasus ini dan mengingatkan segera memberikan sanksi disiplin pada oknum-oknum terlibat.

Alex Waisimon bersama masyarakat, juga keluarganya, bersama-sama menjaga hutan. Foto: Alex Waisimon

Kebun sawit maupun pembalakan kayu, semua menggunakan alasan demi kesejahteraan orang asli Papua. Untuk sawit, misal, masyarakat diharapkan sejahtera dengan mengelola kebun sawit lewat program plasma atau jadi buruh perusahaan. Padahal, cara kerja seperti itu tidak sesuai cara hidup masyarakat lokal.

Untuk kayu, karena pengetahuan masyarakat terbatas, perusahaan membeli kayu-kayu dengan harga murah.

Alex, salah satu orang penolak ungkapan ‘orang Papua tidak sejahtera.’

Saat hadir sebagai narasumber di Festival Film Papua pada 9 Agustus 2018 di Jayapura, Alex menantang para penonton.

“Saya mau tanya kepada orang Papua dan jawab dengan jujur di hatimu. Siapa mengatakan dia miskin di Papua ini? Bukankah negeri ini kaya? Kenapa kita masih miskin? Tanah yang indah menyimpan banyak kekayaan. Bukankah kita ini kaya?”

Alex menyebut contoh di Keerom dan Merauke, sudah hancur karena kebun sawit. Selain hutan rusak, masyarakat juga kehilangan sumber penghidupan.

“Saya bilang sama keluarga, satu cenderawasih kau tembak dapat uang Rp500.000, Tapi kalau kau jaga kau lindungi alam ini, kau akan makan dan anak cucu akan makan terus. Kalau kau musnahkan itu, hartamu akan hilang. Selama-lamanya.”



Alex Waisimon menunjukkan bekas kaki kasuari dan babi hutan. Foto: _Asrida Elisabeth/ Mongabay Indonesia

Source: <https://www.mongabay.co.id/2018/09/15/alex-waisimon-pahlawan-keragaman-hayati-dari-papua/>

Dr. Alcala: Among '100 Remarkable Filipinos'

- *Negros Weekly*
- *Posted on: January 21, 2021*

National Scientist Dr. Angel Alcala was featured recently in the book, 100 Filipinos: A Collection of Biographies of Remarkable Men and Women of the Philippines by Noel de Guzman.

Alcala, who served as the ninth president of Silliman University from 1991 to 1992 before serving as Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources from 1992 to 1995 under President Fidel Ramos, is recognized in the book for his contributions to biology and conservation.

He is a native of Cauayan, Negros Occidental.

Alcala is known for his pioneering work in establishing marine-protected areas in the Philippines, which safeguard marine ecosystems and promotes sustainable fishing.

In 2017, he was named as one of the ten ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity.

The book also recognizes that Alcala authored more than 160 journal publications and books, and served as the chairman of the Commission on Higher Education from 1995 to 1999.

Alcala is currently leading the Angelo King Center for Research and Environmental Management as a professor emeritus of Silliman University.

Published in 2020, the book features Filipinos who “have lived through challenges, excelled in their respective fields, conquered their competition, inspired a nation, and even gave their lives for the country.”

“I aim to highlight notable Filipinos and their contributions to the country,” said author De Guzman.

Meanwhile, Silliman President Dr. Betty McCann, in her Yuletide message, said that we should “spread more hope, peace, joy, and love this Season.”

After all, according to McCann, the Christmas story is one of simplicity. “Our Lord and Savior was born in a manger with only his mother and father. His guests were a shepherd, a few animals, and the three magi. It is a heart-warming reminder of the true reason of the season,” she continued.

On the other hand, Ricardo Balbido Jr., chair of the Silliman Board of Trustees, expressed that “the year that passed was a year of serious reflection and discernment on one’s faith in God.” He said that the threats and challenges, especially those that disrupted financial resources, could have led those weak in faith to depression and surrender. “Fear, instilled by this pandemic, is the test to one’s faith in God,” said Balbido.

In like manner, recalled Balbido, the University initially experienced the same feeling of weariness and wariness over the institution’s survival. “But, we firmly believe, that Silliman University, as one of the foundations of God through its mission, shall always stand strong. The resources, both human

and assets, were already available and only needed calibration to shift to online teaching using online delivery media. This prompt response to the urgent need for a non-face-to-face learning delivery reassured the long-term survival of the institution.”

The knowledge and wisdom of our faculty and staff and the administration to get the institution promptly responsive to the new learning modality are abundant blessings from the Most High, he said in a hopeful tone,

Both Dr. McCann and Chair Balbido jointly wished that “we stand tall and proud of the strong Christian foundation of Silliman University. We look with high hopes for a better year, with people’s voices of care spreading strong, and with community sharing as a natural way of life. – NWI

Source: <https://negrosnowdaily.com/dr-alcala-among-100-remarkable-filipinos/>

Students gain insights into cultural tourism

April 16, 2021

Azlan Othman



Laksamana College of Business (LCB) International Tourism Management, Events Management and KCB Airline Hospitality Business students recently experienced tourism ‘in action’ during a field trip to Alai Gayoh Anak Pulau (HAGAP) in Kampong Bukit Udai, Tutong.

They were brought for an overnight trip to Alai Gayoh Anak Pulau to learn about cultural tourism and the Dusun ethnic group.

On the first day, they toured a mini museum around a longhouse followed by a talk on Brunei Dusun Materials Culture and Linguistic by Benson bin Tungpong

and Haji Mohammed Syafien bin Yandol.

On the second day, they went on a biodiversity walk led by **ASEAN’s Brunei Biodiversity Hero (ABBH)** and a number of guides. They also learnt to play Dusun traditional music from Benson, who was assisted by **Eyad Samhan Haji Mohammed Syafien**.

The visit was part of the students' module aimed to add context and substance to study materials and reinforces concepts learned throughout the academic years.

Source: <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/students-gain-insights-into-cultural-tourism/>

Why this Thai businessman was named a 'biodiversity hero'

April 4, 2018

By Tibor Krausz Correspondent
BANGKOK, THAILAND

In addition to running his family's sugar-cane mill conglomerate, Nonn Panitvong is among Thailand's most intrepid naturalists. Thanks to him, Thai nature lovers from all walks of life can pool their knowledge via a website.



Courtesy of Nonn Panitvong

Nonn Panitvong, named a “biodiversity hero” by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, shows off a bag full of specimens he collected during a field trip to a river in northern Thailand.

Now and again you can find Nonn Panitvong floating facedown in rivers and lakes. Peering intently into the murky waters through his snorkeling mask, the Thai taxonomist is there to observe the behaviors of various freshwater fish species. He can stay like that for hours.

Occasionally his own behavior draws attention. “Sometimes strangers passing by in boats prod me with their oars to make sure I’m still alive,” Dr. Nonn chuckles.

At other times you can find him in limestone caves. With a flashlight in hand or strapped to his helmet, he scouts around for rare species of karst-dwelling geckos.

About these ads

“Once I found this new species of gecko,” he recalls. “As I started measuring its body temperature, I realized it was around 3 degrees [C; about 5 degrees F.] higher than the surrounding environment,” he adds. “I became very excited, thinking I may just have discovered the world’s first warmblooded gecko!”

Stop the presses? Not quite. It turned out the coldblooded creature had simply absorbed the heat from Nonn’s hands as he was handling it. “My colleagues had a good laugh,” he says.

Well-groomed with a self-mocking sense of humor, Nonn may not seem like the conventional outdoorsy type. He looks more like a businessman, which is what he is: Nonn runs his family’s sugar-cane mill conglomerate and several green ventures he’s set up. Yet he’s also among Thailand’s most intrepid naturalists, regularly heading off on bird-watching trips, freshwater fish photography missions, and cave explorations.

But it isn’t just his fieldwork and eco-friendly business practices that have helped him to be recognized as a “biodiversity hero” by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which called Nonn “a key figure in the area of business and biodiversity.” It’s also been his promotion of do-it-yourself zoology and grass-roots environmentalism in Thailand.

A largely self-taught naturalist, Nonn has been a relentless popularizer of his homeland’s rich biodiversity, partly through his Siamensis.org website. A comprehensive database with some 20,000 members, the site has nurtured a form of crowdsourced ecology. It allows Thai nature lovers from all walks of life to pool their knowledge about often overlooked species, from snakes to dragonflies.

Thailand has been doing a good job of guarding some protected areas, local conservationists say, but much of its natural environment elsewhere is being steadily eroded. Forests continue to be cleared, and wetlands continue to be drained or flooded. Many once-ubiquitous animals are now nowhere to be seen. Via social media Nonn has been inviting lay nature lovers and trained biologists alike to act as volunteer nature-watchers for neglected areas.

The members of his platforms are also keeping an eye on the spread of invasive species. Whether introduced by accident or design, foreign species such as New Guinea flatworms, South American apple snails, and Amazonian water hyacinths can trigger a cascade of environmental fallout affecting fragile local ecosystems.

Nonn's online community has added to the sum of knowledge on local species, too. Taxonomy can be a real asset for conservation, he stresses. "We want to generate and spread knowledge," Nonn says. "One of our main themes is 'If you don't know it, you won't love it.' In the end, people will conserve only what they value and love."

Finding and naming new species

Some of what is in Thailand's environment has yet to be discovered by scientists. Over the years Nonn himself has found numerous new species. He named a small crustacean (*Stenasellus mongnatei*) that he discovered in a cave in Saraburi province in 2004 after a feisty village headman who had fought to protect his community's environment from encroaching development.

"There's more awareness of conservation issues in Thailand, but it's limited to a few high-profile species like tigers and elephants," observes Petch Manopawitr, a Thai zoologist who works for the prominent environmental organization International Union for Conservation of Nature. "Nonn has done valuable work in popularizing a broader view of wildlife conservation and advocating for lesser-known species."

Nonn started out the way many nature lovers do: as a child with a restless curiosity about living things. That was in the 1980s, when he began collecting various animals as pets. "I learned everything about them on my own," he says. "I even knew where ants nested in our house [in Bangkok]." He'd watch the insects for hours on end.

He also went on fishing trips – on rivers and lakes and at the seashore. "I wanted to learn about fish," he says. "I wanted to learn their habits, their likings, their migratory patterns."

Yet personal observations got him only so far. He often found himself stymied, especially with lesser-known species. While speaking to informed locals such as animal handlers and vendors at wildlife markets, he realized that "their knowledge was limited to their personal experience" with select animals.

Often, so was his. To fill the gaps in his knowledge, some two decades ago he began frequenting a nascent Thai web board where budding local naturalists shared insights about their favorite species. "I became fascinated by a group of freshwater fish called killies," he recalls. "I started posting about them under the name 'Killiman.' I was very popular [with other users]."

Joining forces with other hobbyists

Inspired by the platform's convenience, he joined forces with a few other hobbyists and launched Siamensis.org in 1999. "We started with fish and aquatic plants," he says. "But soon we attracted the attention of other nature lovers."

People with a passion for dragonflies began posting their pictures and articles. Then came people with a love of snakes. They were followed by others with a keen interest in turtles and lizards. Amphibian enthusiasts weren't far behind. "We grew and grew," Nonn says. "We turned into a community of people who had similar interests but had never had the chance to be a real community before."

Trained biologists, schoolteachers, pet owners – they could all now be part of this community. “Say a researcher specializing in bats went into a cave and found a curious-looking gecko,” Nonn elucidates. “He would take a picture and share it on the site” for the benefit of other users.

These other users included Nonn, who decided to pursue a PhD in environmental science with a focus on the biology of rare endemic geckos living at limestone karsts. He did this despite both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees having been in business-related fields.

“Previously I’d never had any formal scientific training in biology or chemistry,” he concedes. Not surprisingly, some professors at Kasetsart University in Bangkok, where he had applied for a spot in the PhD program, were skeptical of his ability to complete his project. Yet complete it he did, becoming a recognized expert in the field.

A regular on Thai television

Today, Nonn is a regular on Thai television as a nature popularizer, and he frequently gives talks on environmental matters. He plays down his newfound fame, however. “Looking back, I’m probably the most surprised at how far I’ve come,” he muses. “How have I become a Southeast Asian ‘biodiversity hero’? I have no idea.”

He retains his childlike curiosity about the natural world. “I used to dream that one day when I walked into a forest I would know everything. I’d be able to name all the plant and animal species there, and I’d be able to tell how they all interacted with one another,” he says.

“I realize now I can’t do that,” he adds. “But at Siamensis we can. We have enough experts in every field. Since I know a little bit about everything, I can connect them.”

Source:<https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2018/0404/Why-this-Thai-businessman-was-named-a-biodiversity-hero>

LESSONS LEARNT AND THE WAY AHEAD

STEM EDUCATION FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATORS IN ASEAN

Registration starts from Friday 16 July 2021

The NUS Faculty of Science and Temasek Foundation (TF), together with our partners, Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Science and Universitas Indonesia, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, present a series of webinars specially for ASEAN educators and students. This series of webinars is part of the ongoing programme, TF - National University of Singapore STEM Programme for University Educators in ASEAN. Our speakers, comprising award-winning educators and well-known researchers, will share pedagogical insights and suggestions for the development of STEM education.



Date: Thursday,
19 August 2021

Time: 6.00 pm
(Singapore time)

Duration: 1 hour

To register for this
talk, please click on
the link below (or
copy and paste link
on browser):

<https://nus-sg.zoom.us/j/84461234567>

WHY STEM EDUCATION IS CRITICAL FOR ASEAN AND THE WORLD

Abstract

Whether in school or university, integrating STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) into educational frameworks is vital for the wellbeing of any nation. The future of work is changing so rapidly that interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning will become the norm. To be successful, graduates must also be creative, innovative and analytical thinkers with good communication, problem-solving and collaborative skills. This is why an A (Arts) is often incorporated into STEM to form STEAM as this brings in the elements of creativity, empathy, resilience and purpose to the learning. Educating students in STEAM disciplines prepares them for life, regardless of the profession they choose and the economic, social and environmental sustainability of ASEAN and the world will depend on how successfully they translate their education into action and commitment.

Speaker's biography

Professor Leo TAN Wee Hin is a much lauded educator and scientist who played a pivotal part in the development of STEM education in Singapore. A marine biologist, he started his teaching career in the university, before going on to be the Director of the Singapore Science Centre. He transformed the Centre into an international centre of excellence for science education. Next, he helmed the National Institute of Education, growing an already reputable teacher education institute into an organisation excelling in teacher education, school leadership, and both content and pedagogical research. He also played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum and fulfilled Singapore's dream for a natural history museum. He has received many awards at local and international levels and is recognised as a champion for biodiversity and science education, not only in Singapore but also in ASEAN.

<https://heroes.aseanbiodiversity.org/2017/09/07/asean-biodiversity-hero-prof-leo-tan-wee-hin-singapore/>

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/LicChula/photos/a.485730834841394/4180162805398160/>

"11 years of Vietnam Heritage Tree Conservation Event"

19 March 2021 | 07:30:00 AM

(VACNE) -On March 18, 2021, VACNE held an 11-year meeting of the Vietnam Heritage Tree Conservation Event at the office of the Association.

Attending the meeting were leaders of the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations, Department of Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, representatives of the Association's Standing Committee, members of the Vietnam Heritage Tree Council, representatives of the Heritage Tree site Hao Nam Temple, Biking Club connecting heritage trees.



Dr., Prof. ASEAN Biodiversity Hero Dang Huy Huynh, Chairman of the Vietnam Heritage Tree Council, made a speech



Source: <http://www.vacne.org.vn/some-photos-of-the-meeting-11-years-of-vietnam-heritage-tree-conservation-event/e3767.html>

Winners of ASEAN's 6th Zooming in on Biodiversity bared

January 2022

LAGUNA -- With the ongoing pandemic, photographs of nature have the power to inspire and cultivate a deeper appreciation for biodiversity and its protection.

On Monday afternoon, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) announced the winners of the ASEAN-wide photography competition, Zooming in on Biodiversity via Zoom and Facebook live, after a thorough evaluation of photo and digital content entries.

Organised by the ACB in partnership with the European Union (EU) through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) Project, the competition was opened in November 2021 to all amateur and professional photographers and creatives in the ASEAN region.

It is part of a regional campaign # WeAreASEANBiodiversity campaign, which aims to raise awareness and mobilise support for biodiversity conservation in the region.

“(An image) can tell us a compelling story and even bring us to places we haven’t seen, heard, or experienced. Such power of photography has become even more important today, as our movement continues to be limited due to the continuing threat of COVID-19 and its emergent variants,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in a recorded video message.

She said the photographs of land- and seascapes, plants, and animals are reminders of the essential role of biodiversity in our daily survival.

The sixth staging of Zooming in on Biodiversity has two categories: the general category, # WeAreASEANBiodiversity: I am part of the solution, which focuses on the richness of ASEAN’s rich biodiversity, and the active role of people, as part of nature, as a vital part of the solution to conserving this rich natural heritage, and the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) special category, which highlights the natural and cultural richness of the 50 AHPs.

The finalists were judged following a set of criteria: relevance, composition, creativity, and technical excellence. The panel of judges was composed of ACB’s Lim; Ileana Mirutescu, programme manager of the EU Delegation to the Philippines; and professional photographer Sheryl Aguiba.

Aung Chan Thar of Myanmar bagged the grand prize in the general category and the People’s Choice Award for the AHP category.

The second place and third place of the general category went to Kyaw Zay Yar Lin of Myanmar and Arturo B. De Vera Jr. of the Philippines, respectively.

Aung Kyaw Zaw of Myanmar is the People’s Choice Awardee garnering the highest number of likes on Facebook.

For the AHP category, Kyaw Kyaw Winn of Myanmar won first place while Tran Viet Linh of Viet Nam and Danny Ocampo of the Philippines came in second and third.



(L-R) Pavina Vongsouvanh, Lao PDR; Maria Fe Felicilda, Philippines; Fishing the Traditional Way by Kyaw Kyaw Winn, Myanmar (top); Together by Aung Chan Thar, Myanmar (bottom)

Meanwhile, in, the #WeAreASEANBiodiversity Tiktok Challenge, Pavina Vongsouvanh of Lao PDR won the Creativity Award. Maria Fe Felicilda of the Philippines had the most liked entry and bagged the People's Choice Award.

Winners took home prizes between USD 300 and USD 1500.

"We saw powerful messages, stunning landscapes, and superb wildlife captured in your photos. They show us the many creative perspectives highlighting the natural and cultural richness of ASEAN Heritage Parks and interactions of humans with biodiversity," Miritescu of EU said in a video message.

Moderated by Antoinette Taus, UN Environment Programme Goodwill Ambassador and one of the voices of the ACB's #WeAreASEANBiodiversity campaign, the awards ceremony also featured one of the first environment champions hailed as ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes.

ASEAN Biodiversity Hero of Cambodia Sophea Chhin, one of the founders of Birds of Cambodia Education and Conservation, in a conversation with Taus, talked about his passion for photography and wildlife conservation and his community's appreciation for wildlife.

"Before, a lot of people (in my community) were using slingshots to shoot birds. Wildlife was bushmeat for them then. It changed when they started using a camera," Sophea Chhin said. (ACB)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/press-releases/2022/02/01/winners-of-aseans-6th-zooming-in-on-biodiversity-bared>



Being a conservationist and a businessman, Mr. Nitsavanh Louangkhot Pravongviengkham believes that while businesses can have direct or indirect impact on biodiversity, they also have relevant biodiversity-related knowledge, expertise, and resources needed to conserve biological resources. The business sector is an integral part of the solution to biodiversity loss.

[#ABH](#) [#LaoPDR](#)

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/phaengbankerd/videos/1807602772612930>