



Asian Ecotourism Network

www.asianecotoursim.org

June 2017

Monthly Newsletter

News from AEN



Organised by the International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST), the first of its kind in Asia Pacific headed by former Philippines Tourism Secretary Dr. Mina Gabor, Subic Ecotourism Festival was organized from May 28 to June 1 to celebrate the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development declared by UN World Tourism Organisation. Together with board members of the Global Ecotourism Network (GEN), we, the AEN board members, Tony, Albert, Ary, enjoyed a turnout of 335 delegates from all over the Philippines and beyond. It was extremely opportunistic event for AEN as we celebrated our second anniversary on June 2.

Masaru from Japan said "It was a true celebration of authentic ecotourism where we could feel the need to help grow the ecotourism industry and destinations to the next level while combating against the false claims, global warming, garbage issues, etc. that we see problematic on our day-to-day life". Tony from Australia added, "The Festival was an outstanding opportunity to bring together practical specialists from across the globe and leading Filipino ecotourism players to examine key issues that underpin the Ecotourism sector. It was incredibly rewarding as a speaker and co-convenor of the conference to see the level of interest from the 335 delegates". Ary from Indonesia felt that "The Festival, not only bringing together national of Philippine and international tourism practitioners, government officers, and academics in one forum; but also presenting contemporary topic on policy, trend, good practices, indigenous people & tourism, networking and marketing. Albert from Malaysia was impressed by saying, "The three days conference was one of the best conferences I have attended in my 26 years in ecotourism with experts drawn from around the world. Simply one of the best places to gather resources and get inspiration in a short period. The presentations will provides me with valuable resources for a long time to come".

At the end of the festival, ISST agreed to function as a satellite office for AEN and the MOU was signed to foster mutual partnership. It was generally agreed that ISST helps facilitate the communication between the (potential) members in the Philippines and AEN, endorses ecotourism dissemination in the region, jointly advocate policy proposals, etc. while AEN recognizes ISST as one of the leading organizations for true ecotourism practitioner in the Philippines. Now AEN has the satellite offices in India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines.



Member News

AEN News Japan



Daisetsuzan Grade for walkers

The Ministry of the Environment launched the new trail grading system in the national park, which is called 'Daisetsuzan Grade'. This indicates that each of the trail sections (in total 330 km in length) has different management conditions and offers different levels of difficulty for hikers. Understanding the Daisetsuzan Grade will be essential for all visitors to spend their time in a comfortable and safe manner.



There are variety of tours on offer such as visiting the local farms or sake factories concentrating on the conservation aspects. June is the start of mountain climbing season in Daisetsuzan. The opening ceremony, praying for a safe mountain season to gods and goddess of mountain, will be held in Ainu way on 17th June at Mt. Asahidake. We should be aware that everyone in the community are getting benefit from the mountains.

Mekong Tourism Forum

AEN News Laos



The Nam Et-Phou Louey National Protected Area is pleased to introduce new ecotourism attractions "The Nests" and "The Cloud Forest Climb"! These new hiking/trekking tours are a unique opportunity to visit and stay overnight in the protected area's core zone. The tour length varies between 2 to 5 days and along the trail clients will have the opportunity to help to check the wildlife camera traps and will receive electronic copies of the photos from their trip.

Countries And Provinces

Wise use in the Daisetsuzan National Park

Daisetsuzan National Park is located in the central part of Hokkaido. Sometimes referred to as the roof of Hokkaido, the area designated as a national park includes the Daisetsuzan volcanic group that culminates in Mt. Asahidake (Hokkaido's highest peak at 2,291m above sea level), other peaks such as Tokachi and Ishikari Mountain Ranges are representative landmarks of Hokkaido. The vast mountain belt is covered with colorful alpine plants including endemic species. The area is referred to by the Ainu people, the Hokkaido's indigenous people, as Kamuy Mintar or "the playground of the Gods," and its beautiful landscapes are a treat for mountain climbers.



Community involvement

Higashikawa town, one of eight local governments which hold Daisetsuzan National Park set up Higashikawa Ecotourism Council to enhance the visitors' awareness by working with the wider community. The concept of 'management by users' encourages all the park users to practice 'wise use'. The users don't only mean direct visitors to the park, but also farmers and sake companies which use water resources from the mountain indirectly. The indirect users also participate in conservation volunteering and also providing tours.

The Mekong Tourism Forum provides a cooperative platform for public and private sector stakeholders in the tourism industry to discuss the development, marketing and promotion of travel to, from and within the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), and monitor sustainable and responsible tourism growth. Mekong Tourism Forum 2017 (MTF) will be hosted by the Lao Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism (MICT) in UNESCO World Heritage Town Luang Prabang from June 6-9; the three-decade old event is now free of charge for all tourism professionals. After inspiring keynotes in the morning, MTF2017 will feature eight topical tracks with two sessions each in experiential venues all around Luang Prabang. MTF2017 is under the theme: Prosper with Purpose. Source: <http://www.mekongtourismforum.org/>

Countries And Provinces

Member News

These new tours located in different part of the National Protected Area than the Safari tour aim to distribute the visitor flow to reduce the negative impact to the protected area and to offer an economical alternative for new villages. The treks are operated in collaboration with surrounding villages and will directly benefit 12 villages through a village development fund. The amount of money received by the villages depends on the number of photos of rare wildlife taken by camera traps along the trail. The project is designed to create a direct link between conservation and tourism so that the money that guests pay has a positive impact on encouraging local people to protect endangered wildlife. Source: <http://www.namet.org/wp/trekking-wildlife-watching-north-laos/>



AEN News Laos

New Zealand Tourism Forum



In summary:

- \$23m for increased maintenance, cleaning, tracks and facilities, improving the quality of roads, and compliance activity
- \$12.7m towards expanding the Great Walks network of premier multi-day tracks
- \$9.1m for exciting new products Great Short Walks and Great Day Walks
- \$11.4m for new customer focused technology including improving booking systems, marketing and better understanding visitors
- \$19.8m to improve visitor experiences in regions.

The total above is a mix of new operating and capital funding over four years as part of Budget 2017.

Where will the two new Great Walks be?

It's too soon to tell, because there is a lot of work to be done to identify the best locations. We will run a contestable process and engage local Maori tribes to select the most beneficial locations, and encourage co-funding with regional authorities and partners.

What is the difference between a Great Short Walk and a Great Day Walk?

Great Day Walks are full day experiences such as the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (usually more than 6 hours). We are developing 10 Great Day Walks to showcase exceptional places with the aim of spreading the visitor load away from busy visitor hot spots. The development of these walks will offer greater opportunities for regions, as a Day Walk encourages visitors to extend their stay. Great Short Walks will be a selection of around 20 short walks (usually less than 2 hours) that visitors with shorter itineraries can enjoy. Regions will be able to promote these walks as one of their must-do activities, and as part of a package of attractions enticing visitors to visit and stay longer.

When do you expect to have new Great Walks and new Short and Day Walks in place?

We are aiming to have Short and Day walks up and running by the end of this year. We expect to select where the new Great Walks will be this year but development will take some time.

How many international vs domestic visitors currently visit our Great Walks?

Last year 118,000 people visited the Great Walks. Of these, 71,000 (60%) were international visitors and 47,000 (40%) domestic visitors. Many more visit the Great Walks as a day experience.

How do you propose to manage increasing numbers of visitors?

Most places on public conservation land have very low use, and thus have capacity to accommodate the number of visitors we anticipate in the next five years. Only a small number of places are experiencing significant pressures.

The budget package will help us to ease those pressures by supporting infrastructure needs and further development of viable and attractive alternatives to our flagship experiences.

/Source: New Zealand Department of Conservation/

AEN News New Zealand

Member news

Wildlife at Ulu Muda Reserve Kedah under threat

Besides facing risk as a water catchment area, the Ulu Muda Reserve in Kedah is also currently being threatened by poaching activities. It was identified that poachers and hunters from Laos and Myanmar have been in the reserve, which is one of the two places in Peninsular Malaysia where clouded leopards are found. The 163,000ha Ulu Muda forest complex, covering seven forest reserves, is a vital water catchment forest for three states; Perlis, Kedah and Penang. There was evidence of poaching found by researches from the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) from Oxford University during their recent 18-month study on the population of the leopards in the area.



WildCRU's researches had encountered multiple signs of illegal poaching and harvesting activities in the reserve. WildCRU have written an open letter urging the Kedah government to accord official protection to the area which said: "In total, we found 20 gun shells and probably, six to seven felled agarwood trees. Our camera traps have revealed multiple detections of people from Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and Laos, armed with harvesting and hunting tools." Pictures of poachers caught in WildCRU's camera traps were also attached with the letter.

The destruction of salt licks, on which animals depended for their essential mineral nutrients, would also negatively disrupt their population, said WildCRU.

"Opening up logging roads will increase accessibility for the already existing illegal activity," it said, adding that this would further decimate the wildlife population and jeopardise the ecosystem as well as ecotourism activities in the Ulu Muda area.

It was recently reported in The Star that a new trail for timber lorries had been found almost a year after the rampant logging near the Ulu Muda Reserve had affected the water catchment area, leaving the dam there exposed. The new trail at the catchment area in the forest reserve near Sik is believed to have been used by loggers since early this year. Stretching from the Malaysian border with Thailand at Yala to Baling in the north of Perak and about twice the size of Singapore, it is said to be a paradise for nature and wildlife lovers. However, logging is legal.



WildCRU is part of the Zoology Department in Oxford University, founded in 1986 with members from more than 30 countries. Asked how they knew that the poachers were foreigners, its main researcher Dr Cedric Tan said they had found packages of instant noodles with Thai language as well as based on personal communication with local villagers.

"There was no report lodged," he said to a question whether WildCRU had reported such intrusions to the authorities.

An e-mail of the letter was sent to the Department of Town and Country Planning in Kedah on April 20, added Dr Tan.

/Source: The Star/



The Region Initiative (TRI)



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