



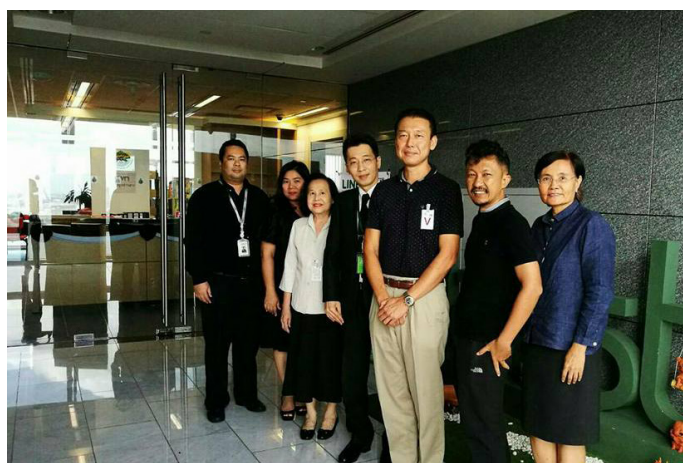
www.asianecotoursim.org

August-September 2017

Monthly Newsletter

### Message from AEN

It almost seems like yesterday that the kick off event of AEN took place on October 16, 2014 in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia in conjunction with the 8th Asia Pacific Ecotourism Conference. Since then, DASTA, a public organization in Thailand that specializes in the development of sustainable tourism destinations, have provided a great deal to AEN to enjoy the physical place to work. The official inauguration ceremony also took place at DASTA on June 2, 2015. During this 'incubation period', AEN has been strengthening bonds with the Asian Ecotourism leaders and affected regions in the Pacific and scrutinizing what kind of projects are needed in the region to link conservation with tourism and communities. During this period, we were able to grow to the extent that AEN board is determined to work to meet the missions and strategic plans set to improve the sustainability of the industry. While also endeavouring to provide a platform to work



with the long-needed bench-marking criteria for ecotourism destinations and accommodation that differentiates from authentic ecotourism and false claims. Over one year, AEN has been looking into to legalize herself to grow into a fully-fledged organization to provide more networking and business opportunities, significant information, educational materials and networking prospects to both small and large organizations within Asia and the affected regions. It has come near to the completion of a legal application and consequently some important meetings took place with DASTA and the AEN Thailand chapter to ensure the smooth transition. We will update the new membership category and benefits once all the formalities are completed.



Develop the skills needed to protect our global resources from the impacts of tourism.



### Sustainable Tourism on a Finite Planet Environmental, Business and Policy Solutions

By Megan Epler Wood - Book Review by Masaru

"Megan cares deeply about ecotourism where she started years ago. Her new book is a must read for any ecotourism practitioners who seek to create projects or businesses that fit into the larger world of sustainable tourism. It is an evidence-based, action-packed informative book relevant for all regions in the world, including Asia because it talks about the market realities. I could not agree more especially on the topic of tourism linked to economic development in emerging economies. Sustainable tourism does not simply happen..."

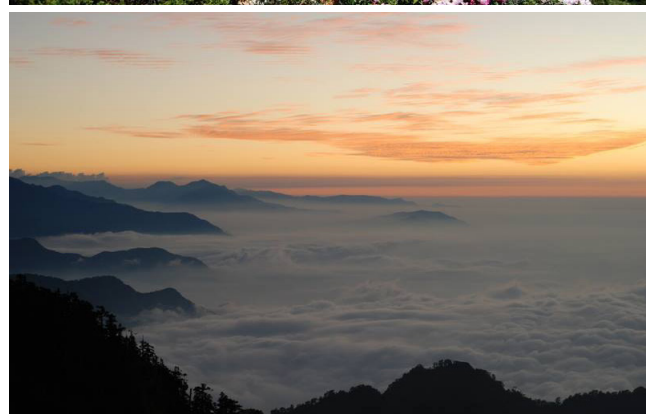
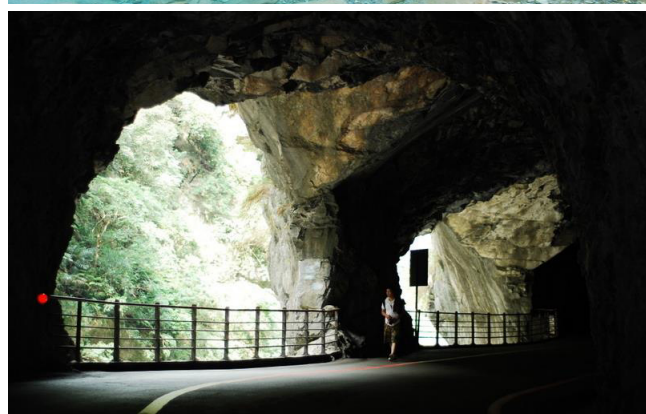
<https://www.routledge.com/Sustainable-Tourism-on-a-Finite-Planet-Environmental-Business-and-Policy/Epler-Wood/p/book/9781138217614>  
<http://bit.ly/2gByCoC>





*Taroko National Park,  
Hotspot of Ecotourism in Taiwan*

Taroko National Park, situated in the eastern part of the Taiwan and established on November 28, 1986, covers more than 92,000 hectares in the northern section of the Central Mountain Range. This park features high mountains and sheer gorges. Many of its peaks tower above 3,000m in elevation, with many natural wonders. The spectacular Taroko Gorge and the scenic beauty of Liwu River can be conveniently viewed from the Central Cross-Island Highway. The varied mountain peaks, numerous waterfalls, diverse plant forms and animal life, together with the indigenous Taroko people, create the rich texture of this unique natural ecosystem.



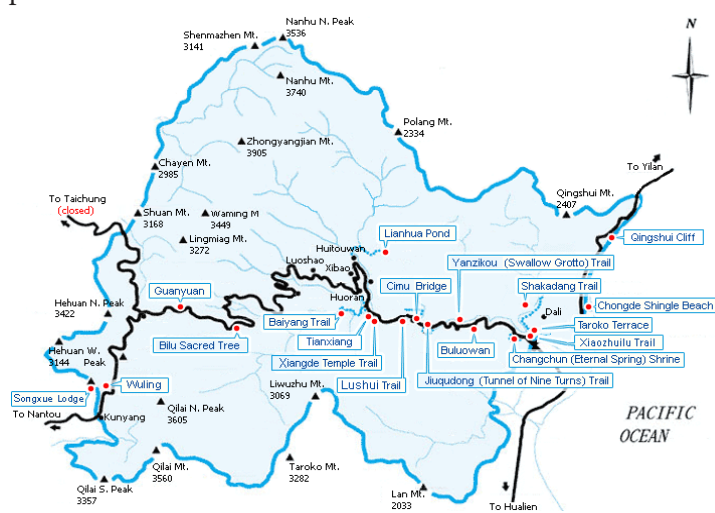
According to theory of plate tectonics, the Penglai Orogeny was caused by the collision of the Philippine Oceanic Plate and the Eurasian Continental Plate. The Penglai Orogeny occurred 4 million years ago. At that time, thick layers of calcareous rock that had been raised from the marine depths during earlier orogenies were now gradually pushed high above the ocean surface to form lofty peaks. During this period of immense tectonic forces, the high pressures and temperatures of compression folded and metamorphosed the original rock (limestone) turning it to marble. At present, this region is still being uplifted at the rate of 0.5cm a year. The area has experienced both geologic uplifting and river erosion by the Liwu River. This area is unique for its marble gorge that occasionally forms hundreds of meters high, a phenomenon seldom found elsewhere in the world. When Taroko National Park was established on November 28, 1986, it was of special significance for the environmental protection movement in Taiwan: it showed that both the public and the government agencies had realized that against the background of the nation's four decades of extraordinary economic success, serious damage was being done to its natural resources.

#### Fauna

There are 34 species of mammals found in the park, including the black bear, Formosan Macaque (rock monkey), Serow, wild boar, and sambar deer, etc. There are 144 species of birds, such as Yellow Tit, Formosan blue magpie, Finches, and Formosan Laughing Thrush, etc.

#### Flora

The elevation ranges from sea level up to 3700m and includes several different climate zones. The vegetation found in the park includes: alpine juniper forest, dwarf bamboo formation, fir, hemlock, spruce, pine and hardwoods, Taroko oak and Chinese photinia.





## Countries And Provinces

Member News

### Great Barrier Island New Zealand gains international dark sky status

Great Barrier Island, off the north-eastern coast of Auckland, New Zealand has become the first island in the world to be designated an International Dark Sky Sanctuary. Located 100km north-east of central Auckland, Great Barrier Island's night skies will now be protected for present and future generations. The Island becomes the first island and only the third place in the world to achieve this status. The other two sanctuaries are in New Mexico (US) and Chile.

A Dark Sky Sanctuary is public or private land that has an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural or educational value, cultural heritage and/or public enjoyment. With much of Great Barrier Island 'off the grid', light pollution is minimized on the island, allowing for great viewing of the spectacular night sky.

Auckland Mayor Phil Goff says Great Barrier Island is home to a community focused on protecting and preserving its stunning natural beauty which makes it the ideal location to receive International Dark Sky Sanctuary status.

"Great Barrier Island is a place of rugged beauty and untouched wilderness, and is one of the most tranquil and unspoilt places in the wider Auckland region," Goff says.

The island is accessible by air from Auckland, Coromandel, Northland, Tauranga and Hamilton, or by ferry from Auckland's downtown waterfront.

Great Barrier Island joins the Aoraki Mackenzie in the central South Island as a leading New Zealand astro-tourism destination. Aoraki Mackenzie is an International Dark Sky Reserve and must-do tourism experience for international visitors to New Zealand. Now with two recognised dark sky areas, New Zealand has become a bucket list destination for astronomers and lovers of the night sky.

A sanctuary differs from a Dark Sky Park or Reserve in that it is typically situated in a very remote location with few (if any) nearby threats to the quality of its dark night skies, and it does not otherwise meet the requirements for designation as a park or reserve.



### Great Barrier Island



Great Barrier Island, also known by its Māori name of Aotea, has a population of just over 900 people. More than 60% of the island's 285 square kilometres is public land administered by the Department of Conservation. The native forest is laced with beautiful walking tracks, which lead to secluded natural hot springs and an historic kauri dam. These wilderness areas, foreshores and estuaries are home to several unique plant and bird species. Rising 627 metres above the sea, Hirakimata (Mount Hobson) beckons the hiker with the promise of incredible 360-degree views.

Great Barrier Island is a popular destination for diving, fishing, surfing, kayaking, mountain biking, hiking and camping. Accommodation options range from tent sites to luxury eco lodges. Great Barrier is the fourth largest island in New Zealand's main chain behind the North, South and Stewart islands.



Korea Ecotourism Network (KEN) was established officially on the 31st of August 2017. Legally this sits under the Korea Ecotourism Society, however it is operating totally independently. There are currently 20 ecotourism destinations designated by the Korean Ministry of Environment according to the "Natural Environment Act" and 12 among them have joined already joined the network.

KEN held their inaugural meeting in Yanggu County in Gangwon Province. This is one of the member destinations. More than 100 people from Korean ecotourism destinations attended the meeting to celebrate its establishment and to discuss future strategies. Many VIPs from the county municipality and the Korean Ministry of Environment also attended and the AEN board member, Dr. Mihee Kang gave a keynote speech on the role of KEN in sustainable ecotourism development. She also encouraged KEN to work closely with international organizations including AEN.

KEN and the Korean Ministry of Environment agreed on collaborative projects from 2018. KEN is going to focus on developing a scientific monitoring system together this year.



Laos has 21 National Protected Areas (NPAs) covering some 15% of the country. Saravane is home to substantial parts of three diverse NPAs: Phou Xieng Thong, Xe Bang Nouan, and Xe Sap.

### Phou Xieng Thong NPA

Located between Lao National Highway 13 and the Mekong, the 2,100-km<sup>2</sup> Phou Xieng Thong NPA features rocky lowlands and flat-topped hills reaching 715 meters at Phou Nangam Mountain along with steep sandstone cliffs, caves, and curious-looking, wind-carved rock formations. Semi-evergreen forest covers most of the NPA, especially in the north.

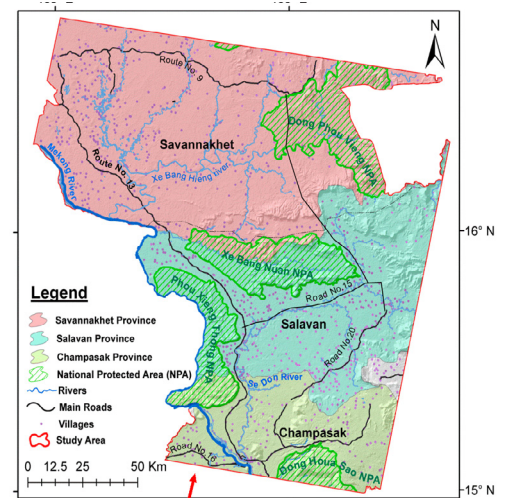


Phou Xieng Thong's past stretches back 1,000 years when ethnic Katang people began moving into the river valley. From 1965-1975, the US operated an airbase on the reserve's southern plateau, and insurgent activity continued until the late 1980s. In 1993, today's NPA was declared a National Reserve Forest.

Researchers have uncovered evidence of notable mammals in Phou Xieng Thong including endangered tigers, Asian elephants, and Banteng. Also found have been threatened long-tailed macaques and Sunda Pangolins, plus vulnerable Pigtail Macaques. Threatened birds including the Rufous-winged Buzzard, Bar-bellied Pitta, Sinkhole's mini vets, and Gray-faced Tit Babblers have also been spotted, as have the vulnerable Red-collared Woodpeckers.

**Access:** A few roads and old logging trails from Lao National Route 13 cut into the NPA, and only local Mekong boat traffic stops at its shore. However, permission is needed to enter the NPA, and there are currently no treks available.

## Xe Bang Nouan



The 1,260-km<sup>2</sup> Xe Bang Nouan NPA sits mostly in Saravane's northwest, but overlaps into Savannakhet Province's southwest. Rocky flats, grass and shrub characterize the NPA's west as the Xe Bang Nouan River heads to the Mekong, while gently rolling terrain and small hills mark its Northern and Southern borders. The river breaks through steep hills in the central area, and to the east, the NPA stretches into a wide valley rimmed by 1,000-metre high Mountains.

Evergreen and mixed deciduous forests dominate some 65% of the NPA, with other natural forest covering the rest. Most of the lowland evergreens have been logged. Some 65 villages sit within 3km of the boundary, and use its non-timber forest products especially Dammar Oil, fish, sticlac, and medicinal plants. Three enclaves of these villages mainly subsist on the sale of Dammar Oil, livestock and shifting cultivation.

Surveys of the NPA reveal endangered mammals such as Dour Lingers (a leaf monkey known for its red legs and porcelain face), Tigers, and Asian Elephants. Other threatened or vulnerable species include Rhesus Macaques, Silvered Langurs, Southern Serows, and East Asian Porcupines. Threatened birds include Brown Hornbills, Coral-billed ground Cuckoos, Rufous-winged Buzzards, and White-rumped Falcons.

**Access:** Access is possible on rough all-weather roads to within 1-15 km of the NPA's boundary. Seasonal branch roads provide closer access, and one leads to Ban Nalan Village in the NPA's heart. Permission is needed to enter the NPA, and currently there are no organized treks.

## Xe Sap

Situated in Saravane Province's east along the mountainous Vietnam border, the 1,498 km<sup>2</sup> Xe Sap NPA sits south of the road from Ta-Oy to Samouay, and on to the national border crossing at Dane Dalai. Its southern boundary is in Xekong Province, while mountain slopes shape its western and northern periphery.

The NPA's mostly steep terrain with plateaus, rising to about 1,400 meters, form part of the Southern Annamite Mountains, and its peaks rise to over 2,000 meters, with Dong Be being the tallest at 2,066 meters.

Ethnic Pako, Ta-Oy, Katang, Katu, and Ngae villages are located inside the NPA and/or around its periphery, as is a section of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and its war relics. Many practice Lao Theung culture with strong spiritual ties to the land, and thus the NPA has many funeral and sacred forests. Each ethnic group speaks a different Lao Theung dialect, of which one is known to be in danger of extinction.



Xe Sap NPA's climate is notable for its extensive low pressure region called an Inter-tropical Convergence Zone and the Monsoon Trough, which is caused by the sun heating the land mass during the summer (May – August). Warm southwest winds then carry moisture from the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand to this part of the trough, where the vertical convection triggers large amounts of rainfall.

**Access:** The main access points are along the Saravane -Ta-Oy-Samouay road, which is mostly unpaved and currently undergoing an upgrade, making it impassable during the rainy season, except for the most ardent motorbike riders. From this road, small access tracks lead to villages on the NPA's northern frontier.



Stung Treng is a province of Cambodia and located at the North-east of the country along the Mekong River. The Sekong Recreation Resort based in this region is a new ecotourism site created just last month with beautiful scenery that is already attracting both local and international visitors every day.

The main ecotourism site is located just 16 kilometers from the main town and is easily accessible all year round. The Ministry of Environment together with Ministry of Tourism are highly motivated to promote ecotourism in Cambodia as well as encouraging locals to visit all the natural parks under the management of Ministry of Environment.



### *A threat on wildlife, is a threat to Sabah's ecotourism industry*

Renowned for its lush biodiversity, Sabah's amazing wildlife is one of the major reasons tourists from near and far come to visit the state, making it a driving force for Sabah's ever growing tourism industry. With wildlife contributing to ecotourism, it is all the more reason for these creatures, especially those that are endangered to be protected at all cost. Currently, so much is being done in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo to sustain and further push the state's ecotourism efforts and one of it is conservation. Sabah's celebrated gentle giants, the Borneo Pygmy Elephants are presently paving the way to higher conservation efforts, and Elephant specialist and PhD researcher Nurzhafarina Othman has realized their importance in this role.

"Being a flagship species helps a lot in conservation. If we manage to protect more lands, more habitats for the elephants, that means other animals that live there could also benefit," said Nurzhafarina, better known as Farina.

Her work trailing elephants has become more vital in helping to shape conservation plans for all wildlife indirectly.

In Sabah's lower Kinabalu floodplains where wildlife is abundant, landscape fragmentation is one of the major issues, other than poaching, that threatens the animal's natural habitat and movement, Danau Girang Field Centre founder Benoit Goossens said.

Farina recommended that the public be more mindful in their choices and practices, like ensuring they use sustainable palm oil and encourage sustainable ecotourism like using homestay schemes rather than restricting the tourist economy to hotels and wildlife centres. "There is also a need for governmental support – so far there is no initiative or policies to help smallholders recover from the losses from when elephants damage their crops. Whilst elephant conservation is funded by a mix of government spending and global philanthropy, locals are forced to absorb the damage done by elephants trampling onto their plantations.

"We expect locals to understand why they need to live in harmony with the wildlife as if we are saying it is their responsibility to protect the elephants— while we, outsiders and tourists, including me— we live in the city, and don't really do much to support them," she said. Many species need a minimum amount of territory, or a habitat patch, in order to find enough food and resources to survive. Human conflict can be resolved but it takes a lot of communication between all stakeholders of the industry, she said.



Photo credit: Andy Chia



## Countries And Provinces

Member news

### Bentong declared as ecotourism destination



BENTONG, well-known as an ecotourism destination, has been declared as the first “Fresh Air Lung Washing” destination in the country.

Tourism and Culture Minister (Motac) Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz said the choice of Bentong as the Fresh Air Lung Washing ecotourism destination was in line with the Natural Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) approach to introduce tourism destinations with product plus factors that could spur local economic growth.

“Early this year I, on behalf of Motac, chose Bentong as the destination of Fresh Air Lung Washing. This is because of its geographical position on the slopes of the Tit-iwangsa Range, making Bentong a priceless treasure for the country.

“The landscape is hilly and surrounded by green jungle with waterfalls, caves and various other natural assets while the beauty of its nature, that is still preserved, has made Bentong synonymous with high quality ginger cultivation and a fruit paradise, especially the Musang King (durian),” he said. “The Bentong Gallery features the story of national figure Loke Yew, who transformed this district into one of his business operations centres. Bentong also has ethnic diversity, including the Orang Asli,” he said. – Bernama, August 28, 2017.



Photo after the signing of the sale and purchase of the 7.7 acre land on 1st August 2017.

### Borneo Land Conservancy (BLC): An initiative to buy back land for wildlife

The latest initiative of Borneo Eco Tours (BET) and Borneo Ecotourism Solutions & Technologies (BEST) Society is the Borneo Land Conservancy (BLC) project that aims to conserve land for wildlife habitat in Sukau, along the floodplains of Kinabatangan. Kinabatangan is renowned for its diverse wildlife and avifauna, however, their habitat is threatened by deforestation and the palm oil plantation endemic.

It was after much research and constant communication with their networks in 2016 that BET and (BEST) Society were able to identify a piece of land for such an initiative. The land size is 7.7 acres and is located in Sukau, just five minutes upriver from Sukau Rainforest Lodge. The land was up for sale at RM280,000.00 which BET and BEST Society decided to buy solely for the purpose of conservation and later, research and education.

TManaging Director Albert Teo flew to Sandakan on March 2017 and together with branch manager of Borneo Eco Tours, Fernando D. Rulloda, they met up with Datuk Lau to conclude the final negotiation and sign the sale and purchase of the land. The final price of RM220,000.00 is agreed upon by all parties to be paid by several instalments. It was also agreed that Datuk Lau will contribute another RM20,000.00 to the purchase of the 7.7 acre land while BEST Society will contribute through annual rental of RM18,000.00.



The Region Initiative (TRI)

