

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

NEWSLETTER

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New Mile Stone of the Environmental Trust Fund

“Everyone Buys In, Safeguard White Dolphins” movement, which called for the public to buy stake or land to safeguard the eco-corridor for the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Scousa chinensis*) living near the wetland which is proposed to be developed by the plant of Kuokuang Petrochemical Technology Co. (KPTC), has over 35 thousand people participating with more than 1.5 million shares bought.

The environmental groups that organized the campaign had appealed to Ministry of the Interior on 7th of July. This marks not only the first environmental trust fund application, indicating that people are willing to spend over 180 million NT to purchase the protection rights along the Chang Hwa coastal areas, but also marks a new milestone for the trust fund movement in 10 years.

Taiwan Environmental Information Center (TEIC), who had been promoting the trust fund idea for years, said that if the bill would pass or not remains unknown, but the ideology of “rising conscience of environmental protection of the people” behind the movement is more meaningful. It is especially important that this will take place before the destruction of the environment, unlike in the past, all the effort happened after the destruction occurred.

TEIC concluded the reasons for the success of the movement as follows: 1. Low barrier of participation, with only 119 NT per share for the public to join. 2. White Dolphin is a very likable creature, and draws attentions and publicity easily. 3. Various groups with different backgrounds all pitched in their resources to work for the common goal of environmental protection, creating a social commodity.

TEIC also reminded the public though white dolphin was the main focus this time, the real goal was to protect the wetland and the prosperity of its species.

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Meanwhile, the Taiwan academia also joined the environmental protection movement against the building of the new KPTC plant. Academia Sinica academicians Chang-Hung Chou and Chien-Jen Chen indicated that 18 academicians jointly proposed against the building of the plant. The academican council had finalized the proposal on Dec. 7th, and will deliver the proposal to Executive Yuan.

The proposal stated, “In order to maintain the health of the public, quality of the environment, and to carry out the Save Energy/Cut Emission national policy, we suggest

the government to stop building the 8th Petrochemical Plant that wastes energy and emits loads of carbon.” The proposal also stated 3 opposing opinions, including appealing government to seriously consider the fact that the future site of the plant had caused wetland protection group to start the movement.

Furthermore, a scientific investigation has been going on to look into how the Yunlin Sixth Naphtha Cracker Plant had created damages and seriously threatens the health of the local residents. Lastly, Petrochemical industry is the leading cause of global warming. In order to carry out the Kyoto Proyocol and the common consensus of lowering emissions, the government should not build anymore petrochemical plants.



Taiwan New Top 100 Landscapes

The Forest Bureau and the National Taiwan University (NTU) hosted “2010 National Landscape Preservation Forum.” Landscape Preservation specialist Professor Shin Wang was invited to introduce special landscapes of Taiwan and the importance of preserving them. The Forum also elected the top 100 valuable landscapes in Taiwan. “Taiwan Top 100 Landscapes” was also published on July 28th.

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Forest Bureau stated that because Taiwan is situated on where two tectonic plates meets, millennia of orogenesis and erosion has created the diverse geological features and landscapes today. However, Taiwan is highly crowded and under the development pressure of many industries, many unique landscapes had been destroyed. To preserve Taiwan's unique landscapes, the Forest Bureau joined with NTU, National Dong Hwa University, and National Kaohsiung Normal University to form a landscape preservation team. The team had explored 320 spots all over Taiwan. These spots are all precious and unique. They not only bare the esthetic, scientific, and educational values, but also are the precious natural treasures of the planet.

This Forum not only showcased the results of Taiwan's unique landscapes, but also stimulated further discussion on other topics, such as community participation, landscape preservation strategy, cultural landscapes, and sustainable development. The team also identified the top 100 landscapes with "Taiwan Top 100 Landscapes" published. The book mainly described the unique landscapes of each county, including Shimen, Landslide of Tsaoling, the New Yangnu Lake Mud Volcano, the Moon World, Columnar Basalt of Tongpanyu, sand cape of Nanfanao, Indian Head

Rock, Shitiping, and Liji Badlands, etc.

The Forest Bureau stressed that "Natural Landscape Preservation" is an important chapter of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act. The survey of the landscape is ongoing. Currently, the Miaoli Sanyi Huoyanshan Nature Reserve, Penghu Columnar Basalt Nature Reserve, Wushanding Mud Volcano Nature Reserve, Wushibi Coastal Nature Reserve, and the Mt. Chiu-chiu Nature Reserve are already protected by laws. It is prohibited to alter or destroy their natural status. Some other landscapes are located in other protected areas or national parks, for example, the Taroko gorges and Yelou. Some are very close to residential areas or may even be in private properties, which are under greater threats of disturbance. After the survey is completed, the Forest Bureau is planning to select landscapes with "most natural landscape value" based on the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act and to further protect them. In the future, not only the government agencies, the communities and public can preserve the landscapes together.



Green Turtle Lay Eggs on Shores of Little Ryukyu and Benan

Little Ryukyu of Pindong County and

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Benan of Taidong County were sites where green turtles were found laying eggs on the beach. Specialist found more than a dozen green turtle laying eggs at Little Ryukyu. When the eggs hatched, it produced 1 to 2 thousand little green turtles.

Little Ryukyu is composed of coral reefs, and is only 14 km from mainland Taiwan. Its marine life is abundant and diversified. Assistant professor Dr. Liuchi Lo of National Kaohsiung Normal University Geology Department along with volunteers conducted research on Little Ryukyu's ecosystem and found out that most of the sea turtles around it are green turtles. They feed on marine vegetations around the coral reefs, and come onto the shore to lay eggs every year.

Green turtles normally mate from May to July. Sea turtles are very particular about the site where they lay eggs. The sand has to be more than 50 cm deep, and has to be at the cross over line of grass and sand. It has to be free of artificial lights and human interference. Little Ryukyu fits all the criteria.

However, green turtles have been affected heavily in recent years by human setting fish net in the reef, placing wave energy dissipating concrete blocks on the beach, and manmade wooden board path. Sea turtles are easily blocked

and die in the nets, and not able to reach nesting sites. The typhoon Morakot last year had brought large amount of drifting woods along the coast, which blocked the path of newly hatched green turtles to the ocean, and they ended up dead on the beach. Dr. Lo stated that the government should draft a protection act for the green turtle and its habitat, and not let them die in vein in the fishing nets.

Furthermore, green turtles were also seen laying eggs at Benan of Taidong County! When volunteers were patrolling late at night on July 28th, they rescued a little green turtle caught in fishing net. Later on they also found 4 carcasses bitten by crabs. Following the path of crawling, they finally found a nesting site that was 60 cm deep, which still harbored one green turtle. The volunteers used lighting to guide it towards the ocean, and planed to stand guard to ensure the successful hatching of others.

National Taiwan Ocean University Institute of Marin Biology Dr. I-Jiun Chen indicated that the production of eggs in Penghu County has decreased this year, but production at Lanyu Island is 2 to 3 time of the past years. It is highly likely that green turtles will lay eggs on the eastern coast.



International Conference on Marine Environment and Biodiversity Conservation in the South China Sea (MEBC-SCS)

The marine environment and biodiversity of the South China Sea had long been a hot topic. It relies on surrounding countries to work together and find ways to protect the marine ecosystem, and to conserve and utilize the resources of the South China Sea sustainably. To reach this goal, the International Conference on Marine Environment and Biodiversity Conservation in the South China Sea (MEBC-SCS) was held in Kaohsiung on July 16th and 17th, and specialists, foreign and domestic, from associated fields and surrounding countries were invited to share their research results.

This conference is divided into 4 main topics. “Marine Biodiversity,” “Marine Environmental Changes,” “Marine Science and Technology and Environmental Sustainability,” and “Management and Operation of Marine Protected Areas.” Fifteen specialists, including Dr. Henrik Schmidt from MIT, specialist from USA, Japan, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, China, and Taiwan were invited to give keynote speeches. There were also more than 30 research papers published, which marked the biggest event of South China Sea research recently.

At the end of the Conference, a declaration was announced, which stated that “the participants of the conference emphasize the crucial importance of conserving the marine environment and biodiversity in the South China Sea, and emphasize its significance to the sustainable development of the region. Due to its abundance of marine habitat and associated biodiversity, and its strong economic significance to the surrounding countries, the South China Sea is particularly sensitive to global climate change and human resource exploitation.

Based on the conclusive scientific consensus on the need for a reversal of the dramatic environmental changes observed in the South China Sea, the conference urges all surrounding and interested countries, to cooperate in a positive and rational spirit, and take firm action towards the preservation of the marine environment. Only through such international collaboration will we succeed in protecting the marine environment and conserving the biodiversity in the South China Sea, crucial to the mutual prosperity and long-term welfare of all nations. Equally important, the success of such a regional effort will serve as a powerful example for the rest of the world on how to make concrete steps towards the preservation of our blue planet for the generations to come.”



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Taiwan to become a member of IATTC

On August 27th when the Antigua Convention entered into force, Taiwan became a member of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).

The Fishery Agency indicated that Antigua Convention was held by IATTC to strengthen and replace the 1949 Convention in response to the changes of international fishing environment and increasing number of members. In 2003, this new treaty was revised and opened for signatures. Because the new treaty was passed by Legislative Yuan and was signed by the President, which means that Taiwan agrees to be governed by its regulations according to the treaty, and thereby effective immediately to become a member of IATTC.

Currently, the conservation and management of the tuna in eastern Pacific is the duty of IATTC. This area is the prime fishing ground for the Taiwanese oceanic tuna fishing. The targeted groups are those of high economical value and supply to raw fish exporting market, such as bigeye tuna, and yellow fin tuna. There were as much as 90 fishing boats working in the region, and harvest about 10 to 20 thousand metric tons per year.

Currently, aside from IATTC, Taiwan had also gained membership of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO), who govern marine resources outside of tuna family, after it is effective. Taiwan had also gained a seat in Western and Central Pacific Fishery Commission (WCPFC).

The Fishery Agency explained, under the regulation of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 3 oceans all have governing body targeting tuna. Through scientific meetings, specialists could evaluate the tuna resources. For example, the WCPFC limits the number of fishing boats from each country targeting black tuna. Taiwan had referenced the Pacific black tuna management model, first implemented reporting system for catching black tuna, as well as the tagging and providing proof of catch. Due to the low production of black tuna in the Pacific, Taiwan had seized to fish in the region automatically, and had not used any of the quotas which had accumulated to 700 metric tons.



The Fifth International Fishers Forum

The Fifth International Fishers Forum on Marine Spatial Planning and Bycatch Mitigation, co-hosted by Taiwan and the United States took

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place on August 3rd to 5th. The 28 countries and 138 organizations participated together declared the Taipei Declaration. It supported many marine space planning and management measures, as well as ensuring the long term socioeconomically development.

This forum was jointly hosted by Fishery Agency and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC). Participants came from USA, Japan, Canada, Mexico, and Australia who are all important fishing countries. Ministers from 5 South Pacific countries also joined the council. Many other organizations also participated, such as IATTC, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), and Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA). World Ocean Council, Cetacean Society, Wild Bird Association of Taiwan, Green Peace, WWF, TRAFFIC, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) were among the participant list as well. There were a total of more than 300 people discussing the marine space planning and bycatch management.

During the 3 days forum, the fishing industry and management team discussed on marine resources utilization and its space planning, as well as the types of operation and

changing fishing style. The effects of using gears and methods that reduces bycatch to fishermen was also part of the discussion. There were a few disputes, mainly due to the unclear definition of bycatch. Species defined as bycatch varies from country to country, and led to different views. Moreover, fishermen worried about the overly emphasis on bycatch gave fishing industry a bad name. Some of the developing countries also worried about that tuna fishery had been confined by international regulations, which limits the ability for the countries to grow or to feed themselves. After thorough discussion and consolidation, Taipei Declaration was formed.

The declaration will be transmitted to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Executive Director of the World Ocean Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the five tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, for their consideration, and participants of the meeting request that Governments, including the Governments of Taiwan and the United States, support fishers worldwide to implement this declaration.

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It clearly showed that IFF5 was the true international platform for fishermen to communicate with managers. It enabled fishery industry willing to participate in marine space planning and management. It also marked the regions that need the most urgent conservation to ensure the long-term protection of the environment and socioeconomical stability.



Alliance Formed Between Yushan National Park and Italian Natural Park

Due to the similarities in their ecosystems, Yushan National Park and Italian Adamello Brenta Nature Park had formed an alliance on August 9th, which served as a platform of cooperation.

Adamello Brenta Nature Park is located in western Italy, covering Tolentino Brenta and Adamello mountains. It ranges from 400 to 3,500m above sea level, and covered by multiple ecosystems such as forests, grasslands, and glaciers. The abundance in wildlife and geology are its specialty, and is also the prime conservation area of the Alps brown bears.

As for the Yushan National Park, aside from the highest peak, 3,953m, in Taiwan, the park is

covered by all sorts of vegetation ranging from tropical forest to high altitude tundra. It is not only the vault for Taiwan's biodiversity, but is also the prime habitat of the Taiwan black bear.

Currently, Yushan is competing with other 28 famous places such as Mt. Vesuvius in Italy, Matterhorn in the Alps, and Table Mountain in South Africa to be one of the "New 7 Wonders." Through this opportunity, the Yushan and Mt. Vesuvius, work alongside to become two of the New 7 Wonders together.



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