

# INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

## NEWSLETTER

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### **Aogu Wetland Forest Park won the first prize from the ASLA**

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), considered the Oscar award of the landscape architects community, announced the winners of the 2011 Professional Awards. The Aogu Wetland Forest Park, commissioned by the Council of Agriculture (CoA) and designed by a team from National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYSU), won the Award of Excellence in the Analysis and Planning category. This is the first time for Taiwan to win such an honor in this worldwide competition. The ASLA considered the Aogu Wetland Forest Park to be among the best water planning initiatives seen by the juries. It involves guiding reclaimed shoreline to return to nature, taking into consideration the global route of migratory birds. It is a clearly thought out master plan which resonates well. The park has opened in

Dec, 10<sup>th</sup> 2011, hosting holiday bird-watching trips and ecotourism activities, immersing the people with a real experience at this world class award-winning wetland park.

Founded in 1899, ASLA is a worldwide professional association with more than a century of history. There are more than 17,000 members in 48 professional chapters and 68 student chapters around the world. It represents landscape architects of all 50 states in the US and 42 countries around the world. Every year, ASLA gives out awards for globally outstanding works in the ASLA Professional Awards and Student Awards. The ASLA Professional Award is now the definitive standard for professional landscaping. The Houtan park in the Shanghai World Expo and the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in Singapore were both honored by the award.

The CoA enlisted a large coalition of international experts to complete this master

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plan, including the NSYSU team lead by Prof. Shiau-Yun Lu, Prof. Lei Yang, and Prof. Jason Yu; the Sasaki Associates from the US, and other global members of the team. This is a rare large-scale landscaping plan in Taiwan in recent years. After three years of endeavor, the plan shone through 567 entries to this year's competition, and won Taiwan' first ASLA Professional Award in the Analysis and Planning category.

The jury of ASLA in this year wrote a comment, stating: "Among the best water initiatives we saw. It's interesting that they took

the approach that a previously reclaimed shoreline should go back to the natural--what a radical move. The scale was amazing; instead of just looking at the landscape, they looked at global flyways. A really clear presentation that resonates." This shows the creative thoughts and hard work of the planning team, and affirmed the endeavor of the CoA.

Aogu Wetland Forest Park is located in the Dong-Shih Township in Chiayi County, right across the Dong-Shih fishing harbor. The area encompasses 1,600 hectares, which was reclaimed in the 1960s by a C-shaped seawall constructed by the Taiwan Sugar Corporation. This land was used by the Taiwan Sugar for agricultural uses such as sugar cane, rice, and livestock farming. Following land subsidence and the accompanying salinization, the land was no longer suitable for farming. The subsided coastal soil gradually turned into a wetland and returned to nature over time. This created a surprisingly important habitat for the migratory birds and water birds on the southwest coast of Taiwan, and became a renowned bird-watching spot. There are birds aplenty in the wetlands of Aogu. Over the years, more than 221 species in 49 families were recorded here, including forest birds, water birds, resident birds, and migratory

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birds. Among them are rare or protected species such as black-winged kite, little tern, and black-faced spoonbill.

Encouraged by the results from flatland reforestation, CoA pushed for the creation of three large flatland forest parks in 2008. Aogu Wetland Forest Park is one of the chosen. CoA has commissioned the NSYSU team to draw a development plan of the area since 2009. The goal is to make use of the unique complex landscape including shorelines, wetlands, grassy marshlands, farms, and forests. Positioning this area as a world-class wetland park, it is hoped that this will become a showcase of coastal to forest resources on the tropic of cancer while developing environmental education and empowering wetland conservation. The minister of CoA Wu-Hsiung Chen professed the core value of low density development, low commercial use, and low carbon operation in a forum on park development.

Discarding the myth of “Man over Nature”, the plans from CoA showed an unprecedented progressive view. Replacing the old concepts of water exclusion and flood prevention with water conservation and water purification, the park is properly partitioned for segregated development zones to cater to the needs of both wildlife

conservation and eco-tourism.

After the aggressive restoration by the CoA, the Aogu Wetland Forest Park has opened on Dec, 10<sup>th</sup> 2011. The Dong-Shih Ecological Museum and Seaview house are the main tourism facilities in the park. Originally there were only salt water habitats in the park area. Five hectares of artificial fresh water wetland is built to increase the diversity of water bird habitats. Bikes trails 19.1 kilometer in length and wooden or paved walking paths totaling 6.9 kilometer are also included in the plan. Complete facilities for bird-watching and environmental artworks will properly link the original Aogu Wetland, farms and forests, and the religious temples and cultural facilities at the harbor to help local development. Public facilities are expected to be improved upon in the future. The wetland environment will be maintained to keep this area a renowned wetland park and educational area on the southwest coast of Taiwan.



## Taiwan supports international feline studies

The Representative of ROC in Switzerland offered a donation of 10,000 USD to the Cat

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Specialist Group on behalf of the Forestry Bureau, CoA. The funds will support the research project on the current status of distribution and conservation of Southeast Asian small felids.

The cat specialist group is a part of the Species Survival Commission (SSC), which belongs to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is formed by more than 200 global experts on feline animals. Members include scholars, wildlife managers, and conservationists. Members come from 57 countries, whose primary work is to promote research and conservation of the 37 feline animals of the world.

The cat specialist group helps local governments in conservation projects all over the world. This includes gathering statistics, promoting conservation, and conducting reintroduction of endangered cats such as tigers, clouded leopards, and lynx.

Taiwan has long been an active participator of international conservation conventions, meetings, and activities. Since 2006, donations are made every year to the cat specialist group, which sponsors works such as the feline digital library, a special issue of CatNews which updates the classification of feline animals, a

compendium of conservation methods for feline animals, a special issue of CatNews focused on the cats of the world, and a special program on educational materials for feline animal conservation.

The Representative of ROC in Switzerland offered the 10,000 USD donation in the annual meeting of cat specialist group on behalf of the Forestry Bureau, CoA. This highlighted Taiwan as a member of the international conservation society which is willing to abide by its social duty and actively participates in international organizations.



## **Taiwan Helps Assam province in conservation**

Taiwan's representative to India, Wen-chyi Ong, met the Chief Minister of Assam Gogoi on Nov 29<sup>th</sup>. A donation to the conservation groups in the province is made on Nov 30<sup>th</sup> on behalf of the CoA to further the international conservation work there.

On a three day tour of the Assam Province, Representative Ong met the chief minister Tarun Kumar Gogoi at the official residence on Nov 29<sup>th</sup>. Both sides believed that there are rooms for cooperation in industries such as food processing and fresh water aquaculture. Gogoi also hopes

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for Taiwan to help the province of Assam to enhance the professional and technical education to train professional technical talents.

Representative Ong mentioned that the per capita consumption of fish in Assam is the highest of all provinces in India, yet all the fishes are imported from outside provinces. The world-class aquaculture industry in Taiwan makes cooperation in this area potentially beneficial. Gogoi also understands that food processing and aquaculture are both strong industries in Taiwan. He hopes to organize a visiting group as soon as possible to learn about the aquaculture and bamboo processing industries in Taiwan.

Representative Ong also donated a total of 11,000 USD on behalf of the Forestry Bureau, CoA to the conservation groups in the Assam province, Aaranyak and the Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India, for their conservation projects.

The Forestry Bureau began donating to conservation projects proposed from the two groups since 2008. They will conduct the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary project, the Gorumara National Park Indian Rhino monitoring project, and a project to edit and publish research articles on Northeast Indian mammals.

Representative Ong said that the delegation

visited Kaziranga National Park and saw large herds of Rhino in the park. Park authorities said that there are around 2000 rhinos in the national park and the population is steadily growing. Even so, every year 8 to 10 rhinos are still lost to poaching in the Kaziranga National Park. Strong enforcement and continuous conservation work is very important.



## **The network for National Geopark is established**

On Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011, academic organizations, local county governments, Forestry Bureau of CoA, and Tourism Bureau of Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MoTC) jointly announced the establishment of Taiwan National Geopark Network. The Taipei Declaration for Landscape Conservation was announced to show the resolve to protect precious landscapes in Taiwan.

Geopark is a concept which took form as a bottom-up movement in the local communities in Europe. Regions with unique and important geological formations are designated for conservation by civilian groups to push for conservation. It involves sustainable use of the natural landscape, historical background and cultural heritage for tourism. UNESCO

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positioned the geopark idea around the four core concepts of landscape conservation, environmental education, community development, and landscape recreation. Prof. Wen-Shan Chen from the Department of Geosciences in National Taiwan University (NTU) stated that due to the different customs between countries, these projects are still best spearheaded by the government in Taiwan.

Forestry Bureau indicated that the “Taiwan National Geopark Network” is an approach which links the registered landscape conservation sites together. By involving local residents and listening to their feedback, four demonstration sites are planned in the first stage, namely Penghu Marine Geopark, Yunlin Caoling Geopark, Kaohsiung Yanchao Badland Geopark, and Taitung Liji Badland Geopark. Further promotion of the geoparks in Taiwan will be conducted by the Taiwan Geopark Network to achieve the ultimate aim of landscape conservation, sustainable resource utilization, and local prosperity.

Penghu County government is the most proactive county in promoting national geoparks. The Penghu archipelago comprises more than 90 islands. Except Huayu island, all of the islands are formed from basalt. Such precious geological

landscape is made even more well-known by the recommendations from renowned travel publisher Lonely Planet. The northern coast geopark and Matzu geopark managed by Tourism Bureau are also included.

According to Forestry Bureau, there are more than 300 registered precious landscape conservation sites in Taiwan. Aside from the 20 sites which already receive protection by virtue of being assigned as natural reserves according to the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act, many other landscapes are still ignored and under pressure of degradation. These include the soaring peaks of Dabajian Mountain, the high-altitude Yuanyang Lake, steep seaside cliffs of the east coast, and the marble valley in Hualien.

To learn from the conservation experiences of the international community and promote the endeavors of landscape protection of Taiwan to the world, the International Conference of Landscape Conservation is held in NTU on Oct 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Various topics are explored in the conference, including landscape conservation, geological heritage, geological disaster, geological tourism, and landscape diversity.

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The famous tourism sight “Ten Views of Caoling” in Yunlin County has long been a favorite of Taiwan. After the severe damage of the 921 earthquakes in 1999, the natural landscape evolved in to a different manner with an increase in flora and fauna. According to the Yunlin County government, local involvement in decision making is the key factor during the organization of the geopark. The planning office in county government held multiple meetings with local residents to reach the consensus, and gained support from residents of the two main local settlements, Caoling and Shibi villages. This finally enabled the geopark to join the national network.



### **Butterfly from Japan found across the ocean in Lanyu islands**

On Nov 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, butterflies belonging to *Parantica sita nipponica* from the Yakushima island in Japan, situated 1260 kilometer away, are discovered again in Lanyu. Local resident Gui-Ching Wang, long time natural observer and conservationist, found a butterfly marked with YAKU YK-107 upon the ventral surface of the left wing. The words 11.08 were marked upon the right forewing, whereas the numbers “2011.11.06” were marked upon the right back

wing. It is later confirmed that this particular *Parantica* was captured for tagging on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> by Yoshinori Kubota, and again captured 100 meters away on Nov 8<sup>th</sup>. It covered 1260 kilometers before the discovery in Yeyou village in the Lanyu Island.

In contrast to the *Euploea sylvester* which travels around in Taiwan, the *Parantica sita nipponica* is among one of the long distance traveling butterflies known to go back and forth between Taiwan and Japan. Each June, some of the *Parantica sita nipponica* from Taiwan fly to Japan riding the southwesterly winds. After mid-September, the *Parantica sita nipponica* from Japan spread south to Taiwan on the backs of the Northeasterly monsoon winds.

Among all the butterflies tagged and released until the present day, 4 of the *Parantica sita nipponica* marked in Taiwan are found in Japan, whereas 10 of those marked in Japan are found in Taiwan, 5 of which are recovered in Lanyu.

The long-distance cross-ocean movement by the *Parantica sita nipponica* may be affected by air currents. Large numbers of volunteers in Taiwan and Japan continue tagging and releasing more butterflies to map out the migratory patterns, in the hope that the accumulated data will solve the mystery of *Parantica sita*

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*niponica* movements between Taiwan and Japan. If any tagged *Parantica sita niponica* is photographed or captured by the people, please contact the Taiwan Tag and Release center of *Parantica sita niponica*.

Email: basintp@tmue.edu.tw or (02)-23113040 ext. 3901



## 2011 Forum on Mangrove Ecology and Conservation

The 2011 Forum on Mangrove Ecology and Conservation was held in the National Cheng Kung University on Dec 9<sup>th</sup>. Academician Chang-Hung Chou from Academia Sinica mentioned in the speech he gave in the forum that Taiwan is an important area of mangrove distribution around the world. Without mangroves and swamps, there will be no habitat for fish, shrimps, and bivalves. This will in turn affect mankind itself. The importance of mangroves warrants more attention on its conservation by our people.

Global experts are invited to share experiences in mangrove conservation at the forum, including biological resource specialist Shigeyuki Baba from Japan, estuarine mangrove

ecology system expert from Australia Shing Yip Lee, ecology conservation scholar from Malaysia A. Sasekumar, and leading mangrove ecology scholars around Taiwan. Eight focused speeches are given at this forum regarding topics such as the ecological and economical value of mangroves, management strategies, wetland biodiversity, fauna community structure, and planting and restoration techniques. The diverse facets led to passionate discussions among the participants.



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