



Dr. Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian (right) leads the oath-taking of Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim as the new ACB Executive Director

ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity welcomes new Executive Director

After half a decade, a new Executive Director for the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) has been named—Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim.

On 17 April 2018, the Turnover and Oath-taking Ceremony for the new Executive Director was held at the ACB Headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines. Dignitaries from various organisations, such as Dr. Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian, Undersecretary of the Biodiversity and Forestry Management Division of Malaysia’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Dr. Vong Sok, Assistant Director for the Environment Division of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, ASEAN Secretariat; Mr. Aian Caringal, Director of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Office of ASEAN Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs; Hon. Caesar P. Perez, Mayor of Los Baños, Laguna; Dr. Portia G. Lapitan, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Ms. Nonita M. Caguioa, Assistant Secretary for Mining Concerns, Department of Environment and Natural

Resources (DENR); Dr. Bighani M. Manipula, Assistant Director, Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB); and Mr. Giovanni Serritella, Attaché Manager for Environment and Climate Change, Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines, were present during the ceremony.

The event was also attended by staunch supporters and partners of ACB from various local and international organisations, such as Dr. Berthold Seibert, Programme Director of GIZ; Ms. Crisanta Rodriguez, OIC-Director of the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau; Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Director of Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA); Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA); and Mr. Oliver Frith, Head of Business Development, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), to name a few.

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ACB joins call for collective efforts in conserving marine biodiversity

Led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), the Fourth Asia-Pacific Coral Reef Symposium (APCRS) was held from 4 to 8 June 2018 in Cebu City, Philippines.

With the theme, *Coral Reefs of the Asia-Pacific: Working Together Amidst Contemporary Challenges*, the APCRS encouraged collaborative actions among scientists, educators, managers, environmentalists, and relevant local stakeholders from key organisations in the Asia-Pacific in conserving and sustainably managing the region's marine resources.

The four-day symposium sponsored by the Asia Pacific Coral Reef Society (APCoRS), featured plenary speakers, mini-symposia, workshops, oral and poster presentations, and latest researches in all aspects of coral reef biology, ecology, management, and conservation.

Safeguarding the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape (TSPS)

As part of the APCRS, Oceana Philippines, an international marine conservation and advocacy organisation, and Rare, a non-profit environmental service organisation, commemorated the developments in the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape (TSPS) as a fully functioning protected

seascape and the efforts in marine biodiversity conservation on 5 June 2018 at Parklane Hotel, Cebu City, Philippines.

The TSPS is one of the proclaimed Protected Areas in the Philippines under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) and is considered the largest marine protected area in the Philippines. It is a migration corridor for whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*), dolphins, and other marine mammals, and provides shelter for 26 species of mangroves, seven species of seagrass, and more than 18,000 hectares of coral reef.

One of the highlights of the event is the recognition of the Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, whose leadership as then-Director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the DENR was instrumental in the protection of the TSPS and in the advancement of marine conservation efforts for important coastal ecosystems.

Oceana Philippines, Rare, and the BMB worked together in crafting and implementing strong laws and policies that address problems in the oceans and building lasting solutions to protect marine habitats and rebuild the fisheries sector. Their advocacy approaches focused on behavior change, community engagement, establishing networks of marine

protected areas, habitat protection, institutional strengthening, and coastal resilience.

Among their undertakings was the SMARTSeas Philippines project funded by the Global Environment Facility and executed by the United Nations Development Programme. This venture worked with the Protected Area Office and 17 Local Government Units in promoting sustainable fisheries inside a marine key biodiversity area.

Additionally, the General Management Plan of Tañon Strait was developed, which ensured that no commercial fishing operates within the area, and that illegal encroachment of commercial fishing vessels within TSPS was curbed.

Present in the event was Norlan Pagal, a resident of a fishing village in Cebu and is a recipient of the 2016 Ocean Heroes Award. He was recognized by Oceana Philippines for risking his life to stop illegal fishers from pillaging his village's waters. He is now paralyzed from waist down but his condition did not stop him from continuing to watch for violators and illegal fishers along Tañon Strait. "On behalf of the small-scale fishermen, I would like to thank you for this partnership. We have learned a lot from our meetings and from your shared knowledge on how it is to be good stewards of our environment. Thank you for the support you have given us, which will help us improve our means of protecting our environment," said Pagal in his local language.

The collaborative activities and strategies at Tañon Strait addresses the challenge of "severe under-representation of marine habitats and ecosystems" reported by the ACB in the Protected Areas Gap Analysis in the ASEAN region. These activities are also in line with the resolution on a network of marine protected areas initiated by the ACB and passed by the Philippine government during the Twelfth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP12)



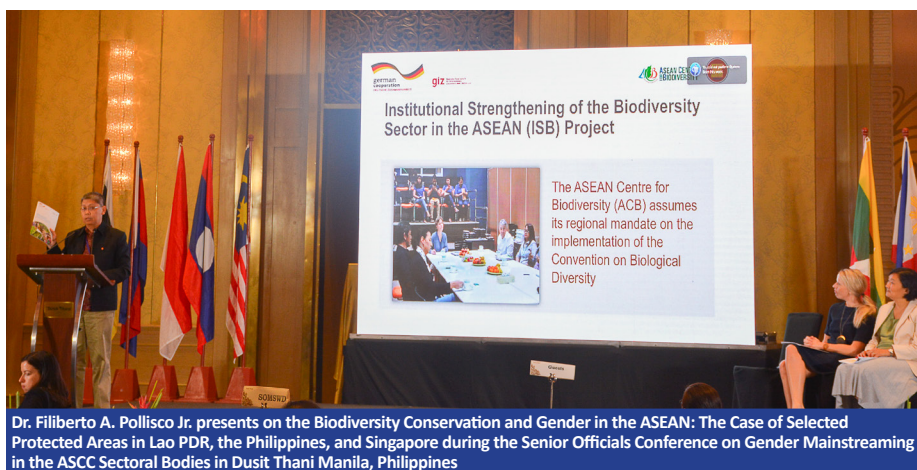
Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, ACB Executive Director (middle) was recognized for her exemplary efforts in the protection of TSPS as the then-Director of the DENR-BMB (Image courtesy of Oceana Philippines)

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ACB joins other ASCC bodies in Gender Mainstreaming Conference

Participants from the ASEAN Member States (AMS) and representatives from the different sectoral bodies from the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) gathered together at the Dusit Thani Manila in the Philippines for the Senior Officials Conference on Gender Mainstreaming in the ASCC Sectoral Bodies. Organized by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), the event, which was held from 27 to 29 June 2018, aimed to increase the practice of gender mainstreaming in ASEAN Sectoral Bodies to achieve ASEAN's goal of gender equality and women's empowerment. Apart from increasing the understanding on gender mainstreaming among the ASCC sectoral bodies, the conference also targeted to increase the knowledge of the ASCC sectoral bodies of available methods and tools to mainstream gender equality in their policies and projects, and gather recommendations to include gender perspectives in the plans and activities of the ASCC sectoral bodies.

The participants to the conference were welcomed by Civil Service Commission Chairperson and former Deputy Secretary-General of the ASCC, Alicia dela Rosa-Bala. On



Dr. Filiberto A. Pollisco Jr. presents on the Biodiversity Conservation and Gender in the ASEAN: The Case of Selected Protected Areas in Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Singapore during the Senior Officials Conference on Gender Mainstreaming in the ASCC Sectoral Bodies in Dusit Thani Manila, Philippines

behalf of His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi, the Secretary-General of the ASEAN, Dr. Sita Sumrit from the ASEAN Secretariat also delivered a brief message during the opening ceremony.

“We are proud to share with our ASEAN counterparts the mechanisms we have institutionalized in the Philippines relative to mainstreaming Gender and Development,” said Dr. Rhodora M. Bucoy, PCW Chairperson and the current chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW). “By working together, we can establish a strong fabric of

the Community that binds us to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, which is Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 - Inclusive Society promotes high quality of life,” she added.

The conference also served as the venue for the launching of the “Progress Report on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality” which was prepared by the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children

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held from 23 to 28 October 2017 in Manila, Philippines. The resolution urged governments to “continue development of transboundary area-based conservation measures including marine protected areas, particularly in the ASEAN Region,” and encouraged them to uphold the development and implementation of ecological networks.

Pushing to conserve ASEAN’s marine biodiversity

The ASEAN region is home to a third of the world’s coastal and marine habitats that include coral reefs, mangroves, estuaries, sandy and rocky beaches, seagrass and seaweed beds and other soft bottom communities. These habitats and their resident species provide breeding, nursing, and feeding grounds for marine plants and animals, food, and

resources important to livelihoods of coastal communities.

The economic benefits of ASEAN’s marine biodiversity are immense. It is estimated that the total potential sustainable annual economic net benefits per square kilometer of healthy coral reefs alone in the region ranges from USD 23,100 to USD 270,000 arising from fisheries, shoreline protection, tourism, recreation, and aesthetic values.

However, the continuous overexploitation of coastal and marine resources, habitat change, pollution, and climate change, among many other drivers of biodiversity loss threaten the rich marine resources of the region.

“As I take on the challenge as the Executive Director of the ASEAN

Centre for Biodiversity, I hope to encourage more collective efforts in protecting and conserving the rich marine resources, not just of the Philippines, but of the entire ASEAN region. If we can establish the interconnectivity of the ASEAN marine ecosystems, it would be easier to support it at the regional level,” said Dr. Lim. “We have to scale up our efforts, and learn from the experience in Tañon Strait where three provinces came together for its protection; because vital marine resources, such as fisheries and other migratory species, transcend political boundaries. It is similar to the ASEAN, where cooperation is needed among ten countries to protect common sea areas, for marine biodiversity to thrive and better benefit the people of the region,” she added.

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“The threats to biodiversity continue. We cannot rest. We have made significant steps in combatting biodiversity loss. Let us keep moving forward and seize the moment,” said Atty. Roberto V. Oliva, the outgoing ACB Executive Director during his final speech.

“It is hard for me to do justice to all that he has achieved during his term,” remarked Mr. Serritella as he delivered his message during the Ceremony. “Mr. Oliva leaves a huge legacy behind, a legacy of an ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity that transformed over the years. From a project, into an agency, and under his leadership, into a sustainable institution,” he continued.

Representing Dato Sri Azizan Bin Ahmad, Malaysia’s Secretary General of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) Chairperson and Chairperson of the ACB Governing Board, Dr. Megat Sany expressed his gratitude to Atty. Oliva and welcomed the new Executive Director. “Simply, the fate of ASEAN biodiversity rests in your hands. We look up to your directions of putting the Centre at venues on which it will rise up against challenges and put to work solutions for the myriad of environmental problems that beset us. On behalf of the 10 ASEAN Member States, we commit our support to your leadership as the new ACB Executive Director,” said Dr. Megat Sany.

Dr. Sok also extended his congratulations to the new Executive Director. “We firmly believe in your capability, given your previous experience and familiarity with the issue of nature conservation and biodiversity in ASEAN and global fora. We are confident that you carry the torch with your passion and commitment.”

To formally turnover the Centre’s leadership, Atty. Oliva handed a symbolic key to Dr. Lim. This was followed by the oath-taking ceremony, which was officiated by Dr. Megat Sany.

Dr. Lim, in her acceptance speech, chose to share to the guests the plans she has for ACB, and how she intends to perform her duties. “We need to continue our resiliency in our conservation efforts,” she said, as she named the thrusts of her administration. “We should innovate on how we can mainstream biodiversity, how we can reach out

and engage as many sectors as we can, and how we can influence our leaders to use science as basis for policy and decision-making.”

Previously the highest official of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of DENR, Dr. Lim went through a selection process that involved officials from the ASEAN Members States and ASEAN Secretariat and lasted for several months.

A licensed veterinarian from the University of the Philippines, Dr. Lim started her career at DENR with the Marine Turtle Conservation Program. After years of hard work, she rose to the position of Director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau, where her responsibilities included guiding national directions on protected areas and wildlife conservation, and closely working with the Philippine Congress on legislative priorities for conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in the country, among others.

Dr. Lim also has extensive international experience on technical and policy advisory for biodiversity and environmental management, with recent ones including chairing the 18th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME) in May 2017, as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (CBD SBSTTA) for 2017-2018.

Dr. Lim is the fourth Executive Director of ACB, and is the first female leader to take the position.



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to the delegates.

Invited as one of the speakers, Dr. Filiberto A. Pollisco Jr., Programme Specialist for Conservation and Policy Research of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, delivered a presentation on the “Biodiversity Conservation and Gender in the ASEAN: The Case of Selected Protected Areas in Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Singapore”. In his presentation, Dr. Pollisco

highlighted the objectives of the Institutional Strengthening of the Biodiversity Sector in the ASEAN (ISB) Project that were targeted at gender mainstreaming in the ASEAN. Dr. Pollisco’s talk was delivered at the same segment as that of Ms. Annette Wallgren and Ms. Inkar Kadyrzhanova of the United Nations Environment Programme Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Women Regional Office for Asia and the

Pacific, respectively. The segment, called “Gender in Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change” was moderated by Dr. Dicky Simorangkir, Project Director of the ISB Project from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Questions were entertained after the three presentations.

ACB joins Cambodia in celebrating International Day for Biological Diversity

In celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDBD), dignitaries from the Government of Cambodia, the ASEAN Secretariat, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) gathered in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on 22 May 2018.

Held at the Wat Bo Primary School, the annual event, which carried the theme, “Celebrating 25 years of action for biodiversity,” served as a venue for representatives of the government, international organisations, youth, media, and other sectors to come together, not only to celebrate this milestone, but also to show their commitment to biological diversity conservation. Officials who attended include His Excellency Eang Sophallete, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Environment; His Excellency Pin Prakort, Deputy Governor of Siem Reap, Province; His Excellency Tin Ponlok, Secretary-General of the National Council for Sustainable Development; His Excellency Sou Sovuth, Undersecretary of the State, Ministry of Environment; Her Excellency Somaly Chan, Deputy Secretary-General of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment, Dr. Vong Sok, Head of Environment Division, ASEAN Secretariat; and Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, Executive Director of ACB. The event was hosted by Secretariat of Cambodia’s National Council for Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Environment.

“Challenges on biodiversity conservation are far from over. As we continue to accomplish significantly in the forefronts of environmental concerns, problems continue to arise and persist—with this, a lot still needs to be done. As we speak, the trash isles or garbage patches in the North and South Pacific oceans continue to increase in size; killing aquatic life and endangering the marine food chain which includes us, humans in the process. The rapid loss of species we are seeing today is estimated by experts to be between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. Our population number puts so



Executive Director of ACB Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim with other invited dignitaries during the celebration of the 25th year of the International Day for Biological Diversity in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

much pressure on the environment that its carrying capacity is at the brink of collapse,” said Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). “Twenty-five years of action for biodiversity speaks of the shared vision, and passion translated into coherent initiatives towards aligning ourselves on the noble cause to take care of our natural heritage,” she added.

To highlight the actions that have been taken by the Centre and the ASEAN Member States (AMS) in actively promoting biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources, ACB held an exhibition featuring the Second Edition of the ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook, a publication on the progress of the AMS in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes, 10 outstanding individuals from each AMS, who have contributed significantly to biodiversity conservation.

Other highlights of the IDBD 2018 celebration in Cambodia is the conduct of the Sixth ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) Committee Meeting and the European Union-ASEAN Youth Video Competition Awards

Ceremony. With biodiversity as the overall theme, the video competition aimed at showcasing the importance of preserving the rich biodiversity of Southeast Asia and to strengthen joint actions for protecting the environment. Krittin Laohawarutchai of Thailand emerged as the grand prize winner who won an all-expense-paid trip for two to an AHP. AHPs are the best of the best national protected areas in the ASEAN region in terms of biodiversity and ecological richness.

Another commemorative activity for this year’s IDBD celebration is the staging of the “Zooming in on Biodiversity,” an ASEAN-wide photo contest that aims to promote biodiversity conservation and appreciation through powerful photographs. Details about the contest can be accessed at www.aseanbiodiversity.org/zoomingin.

IDBD 2018 coincides with the silver anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity. May 22 was proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Day for Biological Diversity to raise awareness and understanding of the public on biodiversity issues.



The Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Philippines conducted a workshop on Biodiversity Expenditure Review at the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines.

Speakers during the event included Ms. Annabelle Trinidad, Senior Technical Adviser of BIOFIN Philippines, and Ms. Anabelle E. Plantilla, Project Manager of BIOFIN Philippines. Ms. Trinidad provided the participating ACB personnel from the different units an overview of the Biodiversity Expenditure Review.

Biodiversity Expenditure is defined by BIOFIN as any expenditure whose purpose is to have a positive impact or to reduce or eliminate pressures on biodiversity. Its review aimed to use detailed data on public, private, and civil society budgets, allocations and expenditures to inform and promote improved biodiversity policies, financing, and outcomes.





On 9 May 2018, the annual Europe Day was held in Jakarta, Indonesia. The event, which was attended by over 800 guests including representatives from European embassies and other countries' embassies in Indonesia, European companies based in Indonesia, and other international organisations, featured an EU-ASEAN Cooperation Avenue, where cooperation projects between the European Union (EU) and the ASEAN were showcased.

One of the booths featured information materials on the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP)*, a project that is being implemented by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), with support from the EU. Ms. Mika Tan, Coordinator for the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme (AYBP), represented ACB and the BCAMP Project and discussed the project to dignitaries who stopped by the booth, such as the Ambassador of the European Union to ASEAN, H.E. Francisco Fontan (pictured left).

Under the BCAMP Project's Component 2, Result 3, *Conservation and protected area management mainstreamed in development plans and educational system in ASEAN*, ACB is implementing the AYBP in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network Southeast Asia (GYBN SEA), a regional chapter of GYBN, the official youth constituency to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) participated in the celebration of the 2018 International Day for Biological Diversity held on 22 May 2018 at the newly opened National Museum of Natural History in Manila, Philippines. The event was spearheaded by the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the National Museum.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of Hon. Roy A. Cimatu, DENR Secretary; Mr. Jeremy Barns, National Museum Director; Ms. Crisanta Marlene P. Rodriguez, BMB Officer-in-Charge Director; Mr. Howie Severino, GMA 7 Broadcast Journalist; and Dr. Arvin Diesmos, National Museum; among other special guests from different environmental organisations and universities.

The highlights of the event include the following: (1) Ceremonial Launch of the Guidebook to Protected Areas of the Philippines Volume 2; (2) Awarding of the Winners of the Philippine Junior Marketing Association's 2018 Annual Marketing Competition; (3) Ceremonial Turnover of Lolong's Replica to the BMB; and (4) Tour of the National Museum of Natural History.



ACB joins in monitoring the Asian Terrestrial Soundscape for biodiversity conservation

Recent studies have shown that long-term monitoring of soundscape across sites, countries, regions, and the globe is crucial for studying the changes in environment and biodiversity across scales. Sound can be visually represented through a spectrum of frequencies as they vary with time. This visual representation is called a spectrogram.

Audio spectrograms can be used to identify various calls of animals, and analyzing changes in animal sounds across an area through time with the stable support of information technology can contribute to long-term biodiversity monitoring.

Long-term soundscape monitoring will generate huge amounts of acoustic data and associated metadata. It raises the big data challenges to persistent archiving, visualising, analysing, and sharing the soundscape data. An open platform based on distributed storage and computing can be a good way to solve these challenges. An open soundscape archive with web applications is also an ideal platform for collaborative research across disciplines, such as biodiversity, nature conservation, aesthetics, socio-economy, environmental psychology, and environmental education by sharing the soundscape data and using the provided application services.

This year, from 29 to 30 May, representatives from the Biodiversity Information Management Unit of the ASEAN Centre of Biodiversity (ACB) attended the Workshop on Joint Monitoring of Asian Terrestrial Soundscape in Academia Sinica in



Dr. Yu-Huang Wang guides participants in using the sound recorders during the Workshop on Joint Monitoring of Asian Terrestrial Soundscape

Taipei, Taiwan. The workshop, which was also attended by participants from the Walailak University of Thailand, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, and the Southern Institute of Ecology of Viet Nam, achieved the following goals: a) introduced the project to the invited partners to collaborate on expanding the network; b) introduced the progress on improving biodiversity monitoring through soundscape information retrieval from the network; c) shared experiences on soundscape monitoring from established partners in Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam; d) re-examined and revised the protocol for monitoring the terrestrial soundscape in the network; and e) trained current partners on deploying the new sensors in the field and archiving acoustic data to the open platform.

advanced skill will benefit the ASEAN Member States in terms of improving the monitoring of its soundscape, the resulting information of which will inform policy and decision makers and the public in understanding the impacts of extreme weather events, progress of conservation through time, and animal-habitat dynamics, among others.

The first Asian soundscape workshop was organised by the Taiwan Forestry Research Institute and the Grid Computing Center of Academia Sinica (ASGC) in 2014; this was also the year when the Asian Soundscape Network was initiated. Since then, more than 20 terabytes of soundscape recordings have been collected and archived by the network with partners from Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, and Viet Nam.



The Song Meter SM4 Bioacoustic Recorder

At the workshop, ACB staff were trained to set up and use the sound recorders, deploy and retrieve them from the field and analyse the data. Such soundscape information is envisioned to be relevant beyond the monitoring of animal sounds, extending to animal dynamics, synchronisation of predator and prey relationships, pollinators and flowering seasons, impacts of human activities, sounds and climate changes and other applications. This

To further extend the Asian soundscape monitoring network, the Asia@Connect project of the European Commission continues to support training events to expand the monitoring network by inviting more partners from ASEAN countries to deploy new acoustic sensors in each partner country. This project also supports ASGC to develop an open platform based on Grid infrastructure facilitating the open science of soundscape research.