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# Asean conservation officers undergo taxonomy training

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If awareness and knowledge are the backbone of informed and efficient action, then taxonomy is the pillar of successful biodiversity conservation.

Insufficient knowledge of species, lack of trained human resources and inadequate capacities in taxonomy have been stressed as among the obstacles to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. These are also identified as challenges to the implementation of the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly in the Southeast Asian region.

Recognizing the importance of taxonomy to biodiversity conservation, the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) continues to work with long-time partners to strengthen the awareness and knowledge of species found in the Asean member-states.

The ACB and the Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden (QSBG), with funding support from the Japan-Asean Integration Fund, East and Southeast Asian Biodiversity Information Initiative and the Ministry of Environment-Japan, held an intensive Internship-Training on the Taxonomy of High Elevation Vascular Plants from October 1 to 10 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The training program includes lectures and discussions on sample collection, processing and management of specimens and hands-on experience through field and laboratory exercises in collection, identification and development of a field guide book.

Doi Inthanon National Park: Studying plants on the roof of Thailand

Discussions with taxonomy experts from the Asean and Japan were complemented with research activities at Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden and Doi Inthanon National Park. Doi

Inthanon is the highest peak in Thailand at 2,565 meters, and is ideal for studying high-elevation vascular plants.

Established in 1972, Doi Inthanon National Park is the sixth national park of Thailand. It covers 482.4 square km of the Chom Thong, Mae Cham, Mae Wang and Doi Lor districts of Chiang Mai.

The mountain range is a watershed, and is the primary source of many rivers including the Ping River that fills the power-generating Bhumibol Dam.

The main forest types in the park are montane rain forest, pine forest, deciduous dipterocarp forest and mixed deciduous forest. They are home to important flora and fauna, particularly tiger, Southwest China serow, Chinese goral and northern red muntjac.

Recorded birds in the park include the green-tailed sunbird, chestnut-tailed minla, dark-throated thrush, chestnut thrush, ashy wood pigeon, Eurasian woodcock, rusty-naped pitta and ashy-throated warbler.

Since October still falls under the rainy season in Thailand, the field work was conducted under poor conditions with temperatures falling to 2°Celsius. Still, with the support of protected-area management, the group was able to photograph and document specimens of epiphytes and climbers, trees, small trees and shrubs, orchids, monocot herbs, dicot herbs and ferns from the Summit Trail, Ang Ka Nature Trail and Kew Mae Pan Nature Trail at Doi Inthanon National Park on October 4 and 5.

The peak of Doi Inthanon is easily accessible by car, although visitors can trek through the jungle from Mae Klang Waterfall and stay overnight in Karen village.

The short Summit Trail passes by the summit marker, an exhibition hall highlighting the features of the park, as well as souvenir and snack shops. Ang Ka Nature Trail features a short, circular boardwalk through a very dense and lush forest. The trail is highly recommended and quite popular with bird-watchers. The Kew Mae Pan Nature Trail is one of the most beautiful nature trails in Thailand, as it passes through montane rain forest and subalpine forest with a diversity of flora and fauna, waterfalls, beautiful viewpoints

and possible sightings of the rare Chinese goral. The hike is a moderate walk on clear and well-maintained trails.

The photographed specimens will be identified and studied at QSBG, and the results will provide inputs into a field guide to high- elevation vascular plants of the nature trails of Doi Inthanon National Park.

The field guide is the third in a series, following the conduct of trainings and development of guide books on ferns and mosses at QSBG, Thailand and plants along the Deer Cave Trail in Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak, Malaysia.

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