



# World Wildlife Day 2017 Listen to the Young Voices

**AIT-DNP Joint Event**

**Asian Institute of Technology  
and Khao Kheow Open Zoo**



*1 March 2017 and 4 March 2017*



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## BACKGROUND



*The Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) of the Royal Government of Thailand joined hands to mark the World Wildlife Day (WWD) 2017. The event was organized with the intention to emphasize the role of the younger generation as future leaders and decision-makers, in conservation of endangered wildlife and raise awareness on the intrinsic value of the biological diversity for the survival of future generations, which is in line with the theme for the WWD 2017 - “Listen to the Young Voices”.*

WWD celebrates the diverse wild fauna and flora that inhabit our world and benefit human life and the ecosystems. A large number of species are at risk of extinction due to multitudes of anthropogenic impacts on the biophysical world. Poaching and trafficking are one of the major causes of serious decline in biological diversity on earth. Safeguarding the future of the species is critical for securing our future and that of the planet.

The celebration was launched at AIT on 1st March 2017 as the ground to nurture future generations from the region and beyond. Representatives from governments, development partners and private sector joined the AIT community in an active dialogue to not only highlight ongoing endeavors in raising awareness among the youth and engaging youth for conservation of biological diversity but also identify roles that younger generations could actively pursue to secure the survival of species at the brink of extinction.

The event commenced with a short video titled “Listen to the Young Voices from AIT”, which demonstrated the level of awareness of endangered species of wild fauna and flora among the students from AIT and AIT International School. Through the video, the students expressed their personal messages and commitments towards conserving wildlife.

**Mr. Surendra Shrestha**, Vice President for Development of AIT, in his opening speech, indicated the value of WWD towards raising awareness on the issue at hand and the appropriateness of the theme to engage the youth. He highlighted AIT as a premier graduate institution operating in the interface of technology, knowledge and development that could significantly contribute towards the collective effort for sustainability through education, applied researches, extensions and trainings. He cited the establishment of the Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System (WEMS) Secretariat under

AIT Solutions as a proof of AIT’s engagement and emphasized on the need for innovation to address both supply and demand of wildlife and their products and effectively deal with wildlife crimes.

**Dr. Klairoong Poonpon**, Director of Administrative Services of DNP delivered the keynote address. She mentioned that WWD marks the value of the common heritage and also indicates the need to step up fight against wildlife crimes. She denoted that the youth should be incentivized, empowered and equipped with appropriate skills through education to enable them to appreciate the value of wildlife and vital services they provide and to engage them in carving a better world. Dr. Poonpon also recommended positive thinking, changes in lifestyles and thinking globally and acting locally to decelerate the human impact on the environment. She suggested a number of actions or choices at individual level to help conserve wildlife and select sustainable lifestyles.

The first presentation of the day was from **Dr. Robert Mather**, Chief of Party of the USAID Wildlife Asia Activities. Dr. Mather highlighted USAID’s support to counter-wildlife trafficking activities in the Southeast Asia and China, and introduced the Wildlife Asia activities and its key objectives and strategies. According to Dr. Mather, the objectives of Wildlife Asia revolve around changing consumer behaviors, strengthening law enforcement, enhancing political support and reinforcing judiciary, legal, regulatory, policy reforms, and improving coordination among US Government agencies involved in counter wildlife trafficking. Strategically, Wildlife Asia will build upon activities undertaken under previous USAID programmes

like ARREST and focus on social behavior change approaches; capacity building for law enforcement and institutionalizing capacity building efforts; initiating legal, regulatory, policy and judiciary reforms; strengthening collaboration within and between countries; raising political will and support; monitoring population of key species and threats like increasing use of social media; and coordination among the US government agencies on countering wildlife trafficking.

The second presentation titled “Illegal Wildlife Trade and Community Development” was delivered on behalf of **Mr. Doley Tshering**, Regional Technical Advisor for Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Bangkok Regional Hub of UNDP. The presentation delineated UNDP’s Global Environment Financing funded portfolio under Global Wildlife Program in Asia, which featured components to “stop poaching”, “stop trafficking”, and “reduce demand” to advance sustainable development in the region. With a focus on the outcome “increased community engagement to live with, manage and benefit from wildlife”, the presentation underscored the achievements of the projects in Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan in engaging school students and youth to advance conservation efforts in the respective areas.

The third presentation “Public Participation in Wildlife Management” was delivered by **Dr. Somying Thunhikorn**, Researcher of Division of Wildlife Research under DNP. Dr. Thunhikorn’s presentation provided an overview of the Wildlife Conservation Office, its structure and responsibilities for wildlife management in Thailand. Dr. Thunhikorn highlighted the research on tiger and elephants in Thung Yai-Huai Kha Khaeng Natural World



Heritage Site as examples of effective in site management for conservation of species, avoidance of human-wildlife conflicts and deterrence of poaching through awareness raising and promotion of community participation. For ex site management, Dr. Thunhikorn mentioned the databases of wildlife meat restaurants and captive tigers in addition to the joint work with CITES Management Authority for public awareness and law enforcement.

“Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System: A Multi-stakeholder Engagement Model” was presented by **Mr. Manesh Lacoul**, Deputy Director of WEMS Secretariat under AIT Solutions as the final presentation of the event. Mr. Lacoul introduced the Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System (WEMS) and its key collaborators and emphasized on the details of the WEMS Initiative as an information-sharing platform among enforcement agencies within a country, regionally and internationally that facilitates multi-stakeholder engagement through the database, capacity building and community of practice, research and outreach. The presentation also outlined some accomplishments of WEMS Secretariat including the outcomes of the UN/Kenya Conference on Space Technology and Applications for Wildlife Management and Protecting Biodiversity and Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade.

An Open Session provided the opportunity to listen to the views, concerns and queries of the youth present during the event and interact with them.

**Dr. Naveed Anwar**, Executive Director of AIT Solutions, in his closing remarks, underscored the value of engaging younger generations in conservation to propagate the messages to both older and newer generations and find innovative solutions to address challenges in conservation efforts.

The celebration continued on 4 March 2017 with DNP-organized follow up event at Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Chonburi Province. The event, in presence of international community, served as an opportunity to witness conservation at work, gain up-close understanding of endangered species of wild fauna and flora, and partake in interactive knowledge-sharing conservation acts like releasing species to the wild.

The two events successfully brought together governments, academicians, scientists, non-governmental organizations, development partners, youth and media to appreciate the significance of engaging youth as future leaders and decision makers of the world, to appreciate the intrinsic value of the biological diversity and the vital services that they provide and empower them to act at both local and global levels to protect endangered wildlife.



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