

84 university students from seven Asian countries to study “Biodiversity”

The Fifth Asian Students Environment Platform (ASEP) to Be Held in Japan

AEON Environmental Foundation (Chairman Takuya Okada; hereinafter, “the Foundation”) will host the Fifth Asian Students Environment Platform (ASEP) in Japan over six days, starting August 3, 2016.

ASEP is an environmental education program that was formed by the Foundation in 2012, with the aim of developing human resources capable of contributing in environmental fields on the global stage. This year’s theme is “Biodiversity and Wisdom”, with participants from China, South Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Japan for a total of seven nations and 84 university students invited to participate in the program that will be held in Tokyo, Chiba, and Hokkaido. The students, with their different natural environments, histories, cultures, and values, will conduct fieldwork and exchange views in order to learn about the relationship between biodiversity and humans.

The students will visit registered UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) world natural heritage site Shiretoko Peninsula, and observe brown bears that coexist together with humans without growing accustomed to eating food given by humans. They will observe the conservation activities underway for Blakiston's fish owls, a critically endangered species, and conduct fieldwork to learn about ecosystems. The students will also go to Nijibetsu, in Shibecha-cho, Kawakami-gun, Hokkaido, to plant indigenous tree saplings in order to help protect the forest habitat of the Blakiston's fish owl, and learn about traditional Ainu symbiosis with nature that continues to the present day. Then they will go to the Eco Store, Aeon Mall Makuhari New City, to learn about Aeon's environmental efforts to deepen their understanding about harmony between tourism and conservation, and wild sensitivity and human wisdom.

The Foundation continues to proactively undertake a variety of initiatives to deliver beautiful nature which is full of life for the next generation through tree planting activities and other environmental conservation initiatives.

The Fifth Asian Students Environment Platform (ASEP) 2016

1. Date and time: August 3 (Wed) to August 8 (Mon) ,2016
2. Locations: Tokyo, Chiba, and Hokkaido
3. Organized by: AEON Environmental Foundation
4. Co-organized by: Waseda University
5. Participating Schools: (in alphabetical order by country) Total of 84 students from Royal University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Tsinghua University (China), Universitas Indonesia (Indonesia), Waseda University (Japan), Korea University (South Korea), University of Malaya (Malaysia), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (Vietnam)
6. Sponsors: Mainichi Shimbun, China Youth Daily, Chosun Ilbo, Tuoi Tre
7. Major Attendees: (planned)
Kaoru Kamata, President of Waseda University
Shuji Hashimoto, Vice President of Waseda University
Takuya Okada, Chairman of AEON Environmental Foundation Chairman
(Honorary Chairman and Advisor, AEON Co., Ltd.)
Motoya Okada, Trustee of AEON Environmental Foundation
(Group CEO, President of AEON Co., Ltd.)
8. Program:
August 3 (Wed) Opening Ceremony (Ono Memorial Hall, Waseda University)
August 4 (Thu) Lectures from experts, observation of wild brown bears (Shiretoko)
August 5 (Fri) Nature observation at Shiretoko Goko Lakes (Shiretoko)
Lectures from experts, fieldwork, Blakiston's fish owl observation, etc. (Nijibetsu)
August 6 (Sat) Tree planting activity, fieldwork (Nijibetsu), lectures from experts
(Kushiro)
August 7 (Sun) Study about AEON's environmental initiatives (AEON Mall Makuhari New City)
August 8 (Mon) Final Reports, Closing Ceremony (Makuhari)

For Reference

ASEP Activities from 2012 to 2015



ASEP 2012 (Host country: Japan)
Theme: "Changing the Environment through Culture"
60 participants from China, Japan, and South Korea



ASEP 2013 (Host country: South Korea)
Theme: "The Environment and Humans"
79 participants from China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam



ASEP 2014 (Host country: China)
Theme: "Water and Humans"
80 participants from China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Vietnam



ASEP 2015 (Host country: Vietnam)
Theme: "Biodiversity and Humans"
72 participants from Cambodia, China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Vietnam

The Foundation's tree-planting activities in Hokkaido

■ 2002 – 2006 Hokkaido Shiretoko Reforestation

In 1977, Shari Town Hall in Hokkaido bought a former development site in Shiretoko that was in crisis from environmentally damaging development, and set the goal to reforest and restore the site with the Shiretoko Hundred Square Meter Movement that then spread across the nation. The Foundation endorsed this movement and planted an accumulated total of 9,003 trees with 1,610 people for five years from 2002 to 2006. In 2004, in order to restore habitat for the Blakiston's fish owl which is currently facing extinction and once lived in Shiretoko in great numbers, Aeon held a Christmas gift wrapping campaign called "Let's give the woods back to the Blakiston's fish owl!" which gathered donations from customers and added them to a 10 million yen contribution from the Foundation, resulting in a total donation of 19,208,134 yen to the Shiretoko Nature Foundation. In 2005, a campaign called "Let's protect the Shiretoko forest world natural heritage site!" resulted in donations from customers and an additional 10 million yen from the Foundation to make a total donation of 21,871,917 yen to the Shari Town Shiretoko National Park Forest Preservation Foundation.

■ 2007 – 2011 Hokkaido Lake Shikotsu Reforestation

On September 8, 2004, Typhoon Songda travelled north up the Japan Sea coast, including Hokkaido in its storm area, and destroyed forests in many places across the Prefecture. Damage to national forest on Mt. Tarumae was exacerbated due to the flat areas of forest and volcanic soil, making it the worst-hit area in the Prefecture. In order to help reforest this life-giving woodland, a total of 5,203 people planted an accumulative total of 39,600 trees over a five-year period.

■ 2012 – 2014 Hokkaido Mukawa-cho Reforestation

Approximately 80% of the town of Mukawa is made up of forest, and most of the jobs in the town are related to making use of this rich natural resource. The town planning is based on making use of its connections with the forests, rivers, and sea. In recent years, forest destruction has progressed in the mountainous regions, inspiring the "Let's protect our fish-breeding forest" concept, where 1,735 people planted a total of 16,000 trees over a three year period in order to protect the forest and thus protect the rivers and ocean.

■ 2015 – 2017 (planned) Hokkaido Atsuma-cho Reforestation

The town of Atsuma, located in southern Hokkaido, is made up of 70% forest, and the central area is home to beautiful rural landscapes centered on the Atsuma River. The reforestation area around the headwaters of the Atsuma River includes a former site of a leisure facility where the topsoil was destroyed and the land's ability to store water resources was diminished. The town of Atsuma together with the Foundation set the goal of revitalizing the forest in order to support industry and local lifestyles, beginning a three-year reforestation activity plan in 2015. The goal is to plant 17,400 trees over a three-year period. Last year and this year (on July 2), two tree-planting days resulted in 1,132 people planting 11,400 trees.

Biodiversity-related Endeavors

■ The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity (international award)

The MIDORI prize for Biodiversity was established in 2010 at the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Foundation, which coincided with the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity. The prize honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions to conservation and sustainable use at local and global levels. The goal of the prize is to raise awareness about biodiversity, support proactive activities related to biodiversity, and make excellent efforts more widely known. This year, the Award will be presented in Cancun, Mexico in December to coincide with the Conference of the Parties 13th Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 13).

■ Biodiversity Japan Award (domestic award)

The Japan Awards for Biodiversity was established in 2009, in commemoration of the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) in Nagoya, Japan. The goal of the prize is to promote preservation of diversity and sustainable use. Groups, organizations, companies, and individuals located in Japan who are making outstanding efforts are presented with the Award.

*The international award and domestic award are presented on alternating years.