

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 16 No. 4



Dec. 2008



Published by Society for Wildlife and Nature

Regulations Imposed on Investment and Running Non-Taiwan Registered Fishing Vessels

The legislature passed third reading of the Statute for Management of Investing and Running Non-ROC Registered Fishing Vessels on December 2. ROC citizens investing and running non-ROC registered fishing vessels are, therefore, subsumed into regulation.

The Executive Yuan-proposed Statute for Management of Investing and Running Non-ROC Registered Fishing Vessels was passed in the Legislative Yuan Sitzings. The legislation was made to meet with requests from the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCA). It ensures that ROC citizens who invest and run non-ROC registered fishing vessels are properly managed through transparency, avoiding further sanction imposed on Taiwan's fishing quota.

According to articles stipulated in the statute, ROC citizens involved in "fish

laundering" activities face six months to three years' imprisonment, or NT\$30 million penalty. If ROC citizens, who engage in oversea fishing activities without prior permission, are also found not complying with competent authority's regulations, they are subject to imprisonment up to three years, or NT\$10 million penalty. Those rules cover the following: operation permits, the waters they are working, work periods, issuing vessel location report, as well as their fishing tackles, fishing methods and catch quota.

The article also stipulates that ROC citizens committing the two crimes are subjects to penalties of the statute whether they face punishment by the laws in the place where they commit the crimes or not. However, if they serve all or part of the sentences overseas, they will be exempted from further execution of all or part of the sentences.

Facing recent depleting tuna resource, international fishing management body in the region has adopted strict quota regulation. Some people in Taiwan's fishing industry went to

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register their vessels, or what they call, the expedient vessels, in less strictly-regulated countries or locations and continued to fish quota-regulated species illegally in the High Seas.

The ICCA has imposed sanction against

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北市局版誌字第貳捌陸號

Taiwan's large scale longline tuna fishing industry on Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) quota and vessel number for two consecutive years, starting in 2004. Taiwan faced 160 vessel cuts from 2005 to 2006, and has reinforced its fishing management towards the high seas fishing sector. In 2006, the ICCA finally lifted its ban on Taiwan and restored its Bigeye tuna quota in the Atlantic.



Taiwan Sponsored the Asian Forest and Climate Change Project

Representative Siao-Yue Chang from Taipei Representative Office in the UK granted US\$50,000 dollars on behalf of the government to sponsor BirdLife International on its "Asian Forest and Climate Change Project." She signed a sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding on December 24 with head of the BirdLife International, Richard Grimmett.

Representative Chang said in her speech that Taiwan has put great endeavors in international bird and nature conservation. BirdLife International has worked very hard for bird conservation, she pointed out. Taiwan wishes, by provide funding to the organization, to make direct contribution to the international community of conservation.

Richard Grimmett said in an interview that

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Taiwan has made its achievements in bird conservation. He expressed his gratitude and stressed donation from Taiwan meant a lot to BirdLife International.

BirdLife International will use the fund, according to Richard Grimmett, in forest conservation. He hoped to achieve the goal of cutting CO₂ emission in Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia. To praise Taiwan government's effort, BirdLife International will make Taiwan's sponsorship known in the international venues and its future periodical issues. To facilitate Asian forestry conservation and to slow down climatic changes caused by deforestation, Taiwan provides a total of US\$100,000 grant in two years' time to BirdLife International's "Asian Forest and Climate Change Project."

BirdLife International, according to the memorandum signed by both parties, will have to submit its implementation report to Taiwan government once the project is completed.



Taiwan Donates to Fund Israeli Wildlife Conservation

Terry G.C. Ting, representative of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Tel Aviv, on behalf of the Executive Yuan's Council of Agriculture (COA), made a sum of donation on

Dec 9 to an Israeli conservation group "Sparrow" for its efforts and achievements in wildlife conservation.

"Sparrow" has made considerate efforts in wildlife conservation. It often takes on private air jet patrol for protected wildlife. Dr. Bill Clark, the foundation's CEO, is affirmative of Taiwan's effort in conservation. He wrote to express his support for Taiwan, whom often meets rejection from international organization.

Ting, on behalf of the COA, presented the grant to the foundation to thank it for supporting Taiwan and its achievement in conservation. Ting said Taiwan has shown its support for the Israeli conservation group for three consecutive years now. Taiwan's efforts on conservation and contributing to sustainable welfare of the mankind should not be neglected by the international society, Ting added.



Survey Report Says Taiwan's Coral Reef Coverage Declining

Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) has issued warning in its latest report on coral cover decline tendency in Taiwan. Coral reefs in Taiwan's southern and south-eastern waters either faced damage or have been under serious threats.

According to the most authoritative report

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on global coral reef status, there are still places in Taiwan that have over 50% hard coral and soft coral coverage. From survey conducted between 2004 and 2007, these examples can be found in Sanxiantai, Orchid Island and Dongsha Atoll.

The GCRMN report also pointed out that among 49 surveyed locations, 24 has less than 30% of coral cover, indicating that these coral reefs have suffered damage.

Chang-feng Dai, Professor of the Institute of Oceanography at National Taiwan University, said Taiwan's coral reef suffered great damage from over-fishing and heavy sedimentation. He also pointed out fish bombing has caused extensive damage to coral reefs.

In addition, the report reveals mass construction projects off the coastal regions and human expansion moves, such as aquaculture, farming and resort hotel developments all resulted in land erosion. In rainy seasons and when typhoon occurs, it often causes landslide, resulting into large scale sediments going into coral reef areas.

The report also shows macro-algal cover has increased in half of the surveyed locations. Higher sedimentation loads and water turbidity in these areas reveal coral reefs have faced constant threats. It is also possible that coral-dominated reef communities are shifting into that of algal-dominated ones.

Chang-feng Dai said macro-algal appearances indicated the fact of eutrophication which occurs more seriously in the north than in south. Eutrophication often happens when waste water goes into ocean without proper management.

When it comes to coral reef conservation, the report recommends close monitoring launched in ecological and social levels to get more reliable source for coastal management. In addition to that, suggestions are made in expanding coral reef monitoring mechanism. For it will be of help for policy decision makers to propose proper conservation methods.



Smallest Wildlife Refuge in Taiwan Taking Shape

The smallest wildlife refuge in Taiwan, goes to “Gaorong Wildlife Refuge” in Yangmei Township, Taoyuan County.

The Council of Agriculture's (COA's) Sixth Wildlife Advisory Council in its fourth meeting agreed to announce the 1.1-hectare pond (also known as Yangmei 731 pond) to be the first wildlife refuge in Taoyuan, which brings the total number of refuges in Taiwan to 18. The newly promulgated “Gaorong Wildlife Refuge” is also the smallest wildlife refuge in Taiwan. The county government will be responsible for

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the management of this wildlife refuge.

Chen Li-ling, Director of the Department of Agriculture, said “though the Gaorong Wildlife Refuge is small, it plays the milestone in Taoyuan’s nature conservation.” She stressed that “the wildlife refuge not only protects the Taipei frog (*Rana taipehensis*), but also its habitat, the wetland, especially when wetland has no legal basis to be protected.”

The Yangmei 731 pond was in the possession of Taiwan Water Corporation (TWC). In early years, the pond was for irrigation purpose. Recently, frequent fallows have wasted the pond away. Taipei Zoo, starting from 2001, had a series of conservation plans for Taipei frog and its habitat, the wetland.

In 2002, researchers from the zoo found out that in Yangmei 731 pond has the greatest and the most stable population of the Taipei frog. They also discovered, by DNA analysis, that the Yangmei Taipei frog is genetically different from its Sanzhi, Guantian and Pingtung counterparts. The researchers had started a five-year observation on the wildlife. They discovered, by the 731 pond, as many as 137 Taipei frogs in only two days were observed, hitting the monthly record.

In 2006, the TWC was involved in pond construction. Environmental groups have called upon to keep the Yangmei 731 pond intact. TWC

chairperson Hsu Hsiang-kun agreed. The county government started to organize public hearings and to propose a refuge plan to the central government. On 17th, the Council agreed on its final resolution to announce it a wildlife refuge.



Taiwan Successfully Tracks the Winter Migration Route of the Grey-faced Hawks

Around 42,000 Grey-faced Hawks migrated to Taiwan this winter alone, hitting historically high. Taiwan has become the first in the world to deploy GPS tracking on three Grey-faced Hawks to monitor the bird’s winter migration route. It will help to plan future conservation plan for the hawks.

Guan Li-hao, Director of the Conservation Division of the Forestry Bureau, said around 20,000 to 30,000 Grey-faced Hawks normally stop over on its migration in Taiwan each year in the past. This year, because of anti-poaching campaign and more steady weather, the number of Grey-faced Hawks stopping over in Taiwan for the first time hit record high in 20 years.

Ruan Jin-chi, Forest and Nature Conservation Brigade Leader, said the Grey-faced Hawks often rest on lower coconut palms near Lide village and Gangkou village in Manjhoun, Hengchun. Shooting of the hawks

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sometimes occurred. Hengchun Police Office, Kenting Police Corps and Forest and Nature Conservation Brigade have made more police force available and recruited local hunters to patrol, making the situation a lot better.

The Forestry Bureau has worked with the Academia Sinica and the Raptor Research Group of Taiwan (RRGT) this year. They chose three Grey-faced Hawks and deployed on them, each with an NT\$100,000 worth GPS tracking device. Their migration route is closely monitored. At present, two stay respectively at west and north of Luzon in Philippines, the other continues its path south.

Lin Wun-hong, Secretary General of the RRGT, said that Japan had made attempts to track the bird, but the bird stayed without leaving the Japanese territory. To implement the bird tracking experiment is costly. What makes the plan difficult to follow is that migrating birds fly at long distances. Accidents happen along their migratory route.

Guan Li-hao expresses his hope for the tracking program to continue for at least a whole year. He wishes to map out the hawks' northern migration route and to work closely with China and South-east Asian countries on the species' habitat and its conservation.



Sheding Triumphs for Its Sustainable Projects

The long hostile stance, once held by Kenting's Sheding tribe toward the Kenting National Park, has now changed to that of the partnership. The Kenting National Park Headquarters has teamed up with the Sheding tribe for three years now, making ecotourism there thrive. Sheding was awarded this year the Executive Yuan's leading prize in sustainable projects. It is the first community service to triumph in the award with its ecotourism projects.

For years, local residents of Hengchun and Manjhou agonized over being under the jurisdiction of the Kenting National Park. Because of restrictions imposed on them, they had taken up opposing stance against the Kenting National Park Headquarters.

The headquarters started planning of the ecotourism in Sheding as early as 2004. It held briefing and started talks with the community residents in 2005. Residents started their training as future tour guides and they founded a community development organization. They learned about the natural resources at hand and started patrol and conservation of the tribal ecosystem.

The Sheding tribe is home to the only Taiwan ebony (*Diospyros philippensis*) parent

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stand in Taiwan, rare appearances of *Mycena chlorophos*, Formosan sika deers (*Cervus nippon taiouanus* Blyth) and uplifted coral reefs. The Kenting National Park Headquarters has teamed up with local hotels, started series of media campaign on its events and package tours. These efforts had won them feedbacks from tourists.

In addition, it has encouraged Sheding residents to carry out a 24-hour patrolling of the tribal resources in attempt to stop plucking and poaching. A local resident in his 70s has contributed to 30 days of night patrol for a one month period. The Sheding tribal eco-tour has been carried out for three years now. The natural resources and visitor base have become more stable as a result.

In addition, its successes of balancing conservation and ecotourism have attracted others to follow suite. Manjhou Township as well as communities, such as Daguang, Shuicyuan, Puding and Shanghai in Hengchun, all come down to the Kenting National Park for advices.



Satellite Tagging Tells Secrets of the Sailfish Migration

The Fisheries Research Institute's Eastern Marine Biology Research Center (EMBRC) runs a joint tagging experiment on sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) with University of

Hawaii. Years after pop-up satellite archival tags (PSATs) were deployed on sailfish, they have found out that sailfish have followed the Kuroshio to arrive at eastern part of Taiwan and then to migrate on north-eastern bound direction back to Japan. The fact that their migration route is parallel to that of the Kuroshio points to close ties between their lives and the Kuroshio.

The sailfish plays a vital role in the livelihood of people in eastern part of Taiwan, according to the EMBRC. Its harvest time runs all year-round with clear seasons. The sailfish season starts around April every year. From May to July is the peak season when schools and schools of migrating fish come to eastern Taiwan. This contributes greatly to the economy of eastern Taiwan. For years, researchers have attempted to figure out the sailfish's exact migration route for fishery management. Now they seemed to have found out the answer.

The EMBRC said the study results provide valuable information on conservation and management of the international fishery resources. The research center will continue to work with international expertise on tagging experiment. Besides that, the center makes appeal to fishermen who find out satellite tagging devices while working at sea to remember to notify the EMBRC to collect them.



Mountain Hawk-eagle Population Is Declining to Less Than 500

Mountain Hawk-eagles (*Spizaetus nipalensis*) -- the largest residential birds of prey in Taiwan-- face serious threats of going extinct with its population dwindling to less than 500. A four-year survey carried out by the Forestry Bureau and the Taitung Wild Bird Society pointed the reason behind to loss of habitats.

Mountain Hawk-eagles, or Hodgson's Hawk-eagles, can grow to 150-60 cm in full length. They are often on top of the food chain. For lack of information on their natural history, the Forestry Bureau asked, four years ago, the Taitung Wild Bird Society and ecophotographer Liu Yan-ming to carry out a survey on the Mountain Hawk-eagle population in Taitung County. The survey was to map out, in the first two years, where the Mountain Hawk-eagles are located and, in the following years, to study their breeding and population number.

Taitung Wild Bird Society has recently terminated the project and found out there are only around a hundred Mountain Hawk-eagles left in Taitung, compared to 140 recorded two years ago. It estimated a sharp decline of the total population in Taiwan to around 500.

The Mountain Hawk-eagles have no natural

enemies. Their population decrease may have something to do with their habitat being destroyed. Taitung Wild Bird Society called on authorities concerned to draw up conservation plan as soon as possible. It pointed that once damages are done to their habitats, it would take decades more for recovery.

According to Liu Yan-ming's survey, Mountain Hawk-eagles are often active in steep areas. They build their nests on steep slopes of over 40 degree angle. They dwell mostly on natural forests, which account for 46% of their overall habitats, and secondly in plantation forests (27%).



International Conservation Newsletter

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