

### **Two Meetings Held to Promote Use of Long Term Ecological Research Sites (LTERS)**

Two meetings were held earlier in the year with the purpose of promoting increased research on and coordination of long term research and monitoring activities. The first, held on 18 May 2002 at the KU Home Guest House at Kasetsart University, was a **“National Seminar on Long Term Ecological Research Sites for Monitoring Ecosystems.”** It was sponsored and supported by a grant from the Biodiversity Research and Training (BRT) Program which is supported by the National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC) and the Thailand Research Fund. This seminar had the fairly limited but difficult objectives of (1) urging the establishment of long term funding in Thailand for LTERS; (2) convincing the Thai Government of the importance of long term research and monitoring to the nation; and (3) clarifying the objectives of LTERS. LTERS serve important purposes in monitoring biodiversity and ecosystem function, but require relatively large initial investment and have long term management costs that are not easy to cover with the usual short term research grants. The meeting featured presentations by scientists active in LTERS research in various types of ecosystems. Preliminary talks were delivered by Prof. Visut Baimai, Director of the BRT Program, Dr. Suthat Sriwatanapong, Director of the Thailand Biodiversity Center, Dr. Utis Kuntintara, Dean of the Faculty of Forestry at Kasetsart University, Prof. Sanit Aksornkaeo, Head of Thailand’s Mangrove Research Project, and Prof. Warren Y. Brockelman of Mahidol University. Other speakers discussed monitoring activities in various different types of ecosystems: Dr. Kansri Boonprakob on ecosystems and climate change, Mr. Banchup Boontawee on long term research in Forest Department areas, Dr. Sarayudh Bunyavejchewin on research in Forest Dynamics Plots, and Dr. Hansa Chansang on long term marine and coral reef research. A final discussion concerned the need for a national agenda for supporting long term ecological research and monitoring for national needs.

The second meeting was a **“Regional Conference on Long-Term Ecological Research in East Asia,”** held at the Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University, during 29-30 July, 2002. This meeting was designed to serve as a focal point for all scientists interested in long term ecological research (LTER) in East Asia to gather together and share their experiences. The conference provided an opportunity for LTER Network members in countries of the East Asia – Pacific Region to collaborate with other countries and share their experiences. The conference was opened by Privy Councilor Ampol Senanarong, Chairman of the Kasetsart University Council. The Keynote Speech was given by Prof. Dr. Hen-biau King of the Taiwan Forestry Research Institute, on “Development of regional collaborative projects on long-term ecological research.” The first session, chaired by Dr. Utis Kuntintara, Dean of the Faculty of Forestry of Kasetsart, was on “Progress of LTER implementation in East Asia. Subsequent sessions were on: (2) Techniques and tools for management and maintenance of LTER; (3) Spatial and temporal distribution of populations in selected ecosystems; (4) Patterns and control of organic matter accumulations and decomposition in surface layers and sediments; and (5) Monitoring natural disturbance and consequences from LTER. In all, about 23 talks were given on topics related to long term ecological research. Participants in this conference included representatives from Cambodia, China, Japan, Laos, Malaysia and the Philippines. After the meeting, a field excursion was

made to Doi Inthanon–Pui National Park, Chiang Mai, to visit the 15-hectare upper montane forest LTER, and also the 1-ha watershed LTER and Huai Kog Ma Biosphere Reserve.

This meeting was highly successful in promoting international exchange of knowledge on a wide range of topics, and participants look forward to the next meeting of the East Asia Network on LTER.

### **Flora of Thailand Meeting at Royal Forest Department, 25–29 November 2002**

During 25–29 November the Forest Herbarium of the Royal Forest Department hosted the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Flora of Thailand project. These meetings are held every three years and usually alternate between Thailand and other countries active in studying the Thai flora. This meeting was held in the meeting room of the new herbarium building of the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presided over the opening on Nov. 25, and demonstrated her keen interest in Thai natural history by staying after the ceremony to examine all the posters displayed for the meeting, and the new collection facilities. Prof. Dr. Thawatchai Santisuk, co-editor of the *Flora of Thailand*, reported on the meeting to Her Highness.

The principal purpose of Flora of Thailand meetings is to plan and report on the publication of the *Flora of Thailand* monographs which inventory and provide identification keys to all the families of vascular plants growing in Thailand. This is truly an international effort. The meetings have become popular scientific and social events where systematic botanists meet and exchange research findings, and this one drew 145 registered participants from Thailand and abroad. This meeting featured 26 oral scientific presentations and 22 poster presentations. On Wednesday (Nov. 27), participants were led on a field trip to Kaeng Krachan National Park.

A meeting of the Editorial Board of the *Flora of Thailand* was led by Prof. Kai Larsen, long-time editor, who reported on progress back to the plenary session. Volume 7 just appeared and was distributed at the meeting. Two parts of Volume 8 will appear in the next year or so with the Euphorbiaceae, a large family with some 420 species. Part 3 will appear soon with Sapotaceae, Dipterocarpaceae, Anacardiaceae, etc. The *Flora of Thailand* series is now about 40 percent complete, including parts now in manuscript. Large families still to be treated include Orchidaceae with about 1200 species, Poaceae (grasses) with about 600 species, Leguminosae-Papilionoidae with about 400 species, Zingiberaceae (270), and Annonaceae (about 170), and Lauraceae (> 100).

Prof. Larsen estimated that the *Flora of Thailand* will contain about 8000–9000 species in all when completed. This is less than previous estimates of other people in Thailand (who generally like to inflate the number), but revision and publication of the *Flora* does not increase the number of species—it usually reduces it. This is because when all the original literature of descriptions is searched, and voucher specimens in the herbaria are compared, it is found that there has been duplication of work, and many species are judged to have been given different names by workers in different countries. Therefore the number of “synonyms” usually exceeds the number of new species discovered by the person monographing the flora. The flora is constantly increased, however, by botanists who make collections and inventories of areas of the country that have never been looked at thoroughly.

Thailand is one of the most lightly collected countries in the world, and more intensive search is sure to yield a significant number of new species and new country records.

Documentation of the flora is vital to research in all areas requiring plant identification, including ecological surveys, natural product research, economic plant development, wildlife ecology, etc. It is encouraging to see many young Thais wanting to become involved in plant systematics.

Dr. Kongkanda Chayamarit of BKF is to be congratulated for her hard work as coordinator of this productive and enjoyable meeting. The Flora of Thailand meeting will be held again in Thailand in 2008, and we all look forward to a successful repeat.

*W. Y. Brockelman*

