

## Professor Leo Tan lauded as Asean Biodiversity Hero at inaugural awards



Professor Leo Tan was one of 10 people who were named Asean Biodiversity Heroes at an award ceremony in the Philippines. PHOTO: WILLIAM OH

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SINGAPORE - Professor Leo Tan is a known figure among nature conservationists in the Republic, but the marine biologist was on Monday (Aug 7) lauded at a regional level.

The 72-year-old was one of 10 people who were named Asean Biodiversity Heroes at an award ceremony in the Philippines.

The inaugural award aims to recognise individuals from the Asean region who have contributed to biodiversity conservation and advocacy efforts in their respective countries.

Prof Tan, who is director of special projects at the National University of Singapore's science faculty, was instrumental in several conservation initiatives in Singapore.

He had, for example, campaigned for the designation of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve and Labrador Nature Reserve as protected areas. In 2002, both were declared nature reserves.

The septuagenarian, together with his former student, crab expert Peter Ng, had also played an important role in the setting up of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum - Singapore's first and only natural history museum, where Singaporeans can learn about creatures ranging from dinosaurs to dodos and komodo dragons.

For his efforts, Prof Tan was nominated for the award by Dr Lena Chan, group director for the National Biodiversity Centre at the National Parks Board (NParks).

NParks chief executive Kenneth Ee congratulated Prof Tan on his win. He said: "(Prof Tan) has played important roles in conserving our natural heritage as a marine biologist, an educator as well as the former chairman of NParks.

"As chairman of the Garden City Fund, (he) continues to tirelessly bring together partners, including corporations, to complement government and community efforts to co-create a City in a Garden that is rich in biodiversity."

The Asean Biodiversity Heroes award ceremony was held in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of Asean in Manila, the Philippines.