



Creation of a local tree conservatory at the EcoPark

The “EcoPark” is a joint project between **the American University of Central Asia (AUCA)** and **the French-Kyrgyz Ecotourism Association** (Association Franco-Kirghize d’Ecotourisme - AFKE) in cooperation with **the Town Hall of Bishkek** and aimed at the rehabilitation of 41,1 hectares of the Elm Grove of Bishkek. This Elm Grove is unique and is one of the biggest and oldest urban forest in Central Asia. It was planted back in 1881 by the first students of the Agrarian Institute. Its contribution to the air purification of the city is outstanding as it serves as a biotic pump, developing a microclimate in Bishkek. Due to illegal cutting, settlements, grazing and car circulation in the grove since Kyrgyz independence in 1991, the area of the grove has significantly decreased from the original 216 hectares to the current 123 hectares. In order to prevent the total destruction of the grove and create conditions for its regeneration as an urban forest, AFKE and AUCA initiated the “EcoPark” project. In 2015 this initiative received a certification COP21 from the French Ministry of the Environment for its interest in the fight against climate change and the civic engagement induced by this project. To date, about 10,000 trees over 10 cm in diameter have been protected...Numerous activities and courses for the students of our **ESCS program (former EMSD)** are organized there.

On Saturday, April 03, 2021, AUCA students following the **Ecotourism and Environmental Conservation** course and the **International Environmental Law and Policy** course participated in the planting of **70 trees in the EcoPark**. Each student was able to plant a tree (*Exochorda* species) under the supervision of their professor Philippe Boizeau from the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Science (ESCS) program at AUCA, the EcoPark staff and an employee of the National Forestry Institute, partner of the project.

In the long run, the objective is to plant hundreds of local trees in danger of extinction to create a conservatory of rare trees in the EcoPark and thus participate in the protection of the country's biodiversity.



All the visitors of the EcoPark will have the possibility to discover trees registered in the Red Book of Kyrgyzstan of the endangered species, to learn more about these species, to understand the causes of their disappearance and we hope to contribute to their preservation by participating in plantations like this one.

Once again, a big thank you to all the students who participated in this action, to the whole teams of ESCS, AFKE and EcoParc as well as to Abdilabek uulu Eldiyar, from the Research and Production Center for Forest Research named after P.A. Gan of the Institute of Biology of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic (RPC IL IB NAS KR), partner of the action.

Other plantations should take place in spring 2021 and autumn 2021 to develop the conservatory of rare local trees.

Please contact our ESCS department to receive more information on this subject.



Tree planting at the EcoPark with Philippe Boizeau and his students

