

Korea National Long-term Ecological Research (KNLTER)

Choe, Jae Chun and the KNLTER Group

Division of EcoScience Ewha Woman's University

Seodaemun-gu Daehyun-dong 11-1

Seoul 120-750, Republic of Korea

Abstract

The need and plan for the Korea National Long-term Ecological Research (KNLTER) was formed during the 8th International Congress of INTECOL held in Seoul, Korea, during 11-18 August 2002. Despite near total ignorance of the importance of LTER, the Ministry of Environment agreed to launch a 10-year project of national LTER project. The KNLTER project began in December 2004 and its first stage of 3 years has been completed by March 2007. We are in the first year of the second stage which will run until the end of 2009. Then, the 3rd and hopefully not the final stage will assume its 4 year run until 2014.

The main objectives of the KNLTER project are (1) to elucidate the effects of climate change on ecosystems, (2) establish ecologically sound management plan of natural resources and land use, and (3) construct national ecosystem database. There are 4 research units (terrestrial ecosystem, freshwater ecosystem, coastal ecosystem, and animal ecology) and more than 200 researchers are involved in the project. In addition to conducting field studies, we also have researchers in charge of analyzing climate data, taking care of international relations, and constructing and managing the national database.

The terrestrial ecosystem research is carried out at 4 representative mountain sites. Recently a site for a frequent forest fire was added in order to assess the damage of fire and monitor regeneration process. There were 3 sites where freshwater ecosystem was monitored. Again, we recently added one more site, a reclaimed mudflat of Saemankeum, to study an ecologically disturbed region. Unfortunately, however, there is only one coastal site and we plan to add more sites in the near future. The animal ecology group monitors the populations of birds and insects.

Through the second stage of the KNLTER project we plan to establish a database that can promote better collaboration and public understanding. We also work to provide foundations to switch the system to site-based system like a basic system of the ILTER.