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17-year-old Earth Prize winner Proud Tangkaravakoon brings nature conservation to 200+ Thai students



- Proud (Yanin) Tangkaravakoon is the founder of Homes for Hornbills, a project protecting Thailand's large native birds
- Artificial hornbill nests are made from upcycled materials and communities are educated to protect the birds' habitats
- Proud further developed the solution during The Earth Prize 2026 and was awarded the title Regional Winner for Oceania & Southeast Asia
- Proud's educational activities have reached 210 students across three schools in southern Thailand, combining tree planting, biodiversity art and nature photography

GENEVA, Switzerland - Just months after winning The Earth Prize 2026 for Oceania & Southeast Asia, 17-year-old Proud (Yanin) Tangkaravakoon is putting a key part of her project Homes for Hornbills into action. In just a few weeks, 210 students have

participated in the Young Hornbill Guardians programme, inspiring and educating the next generation of Thai youth.

Homes for Hornbills aims to protect hornbills - the large tropical birds known for their long, down-curved bills and unique nesting habits. The project achieves this in multiple ways, by creating artificial nests from upcycled materials like plastic bottles, while working with schools and communities to protect hornbills and the forests they help regenerate. The project has already installed 26 artificial nests in southern Thailand, with 35 hornbill chicks successfully fledged. The project has also notably partnered with TOA Venture Holding to support the use of upcycled materials in nest production.



▲ A hornbill sits outside one of Homes for Hornbill's upcycled nests



▲ Proud inspecting the artificial nests made from upcycled plastic bottles



▲ Proud presents to a class of students

A key part of the project, the Young Hornbill Guardians programme, involves educational activities for the next generation. So far, three elementary schools in Southern Thailand have participated, with around 210 students. To kick off the activities, each student received Proud's bilingual Thai-English My Wild Wonder

Journal, designed to encourage children to observe, ask questions and sketch the biodiversity around them.

From here, students planted seeds that provide food for hornbills, learnt about the birds' role as “farmers of the forest”, completed a photography project showing connections between people and nature, and worked with local Yao Noi batik artists to create a mural celebrating the island's biodiversity. Each session ended with a certificate of completion and commitments to take everyday actions for nature.



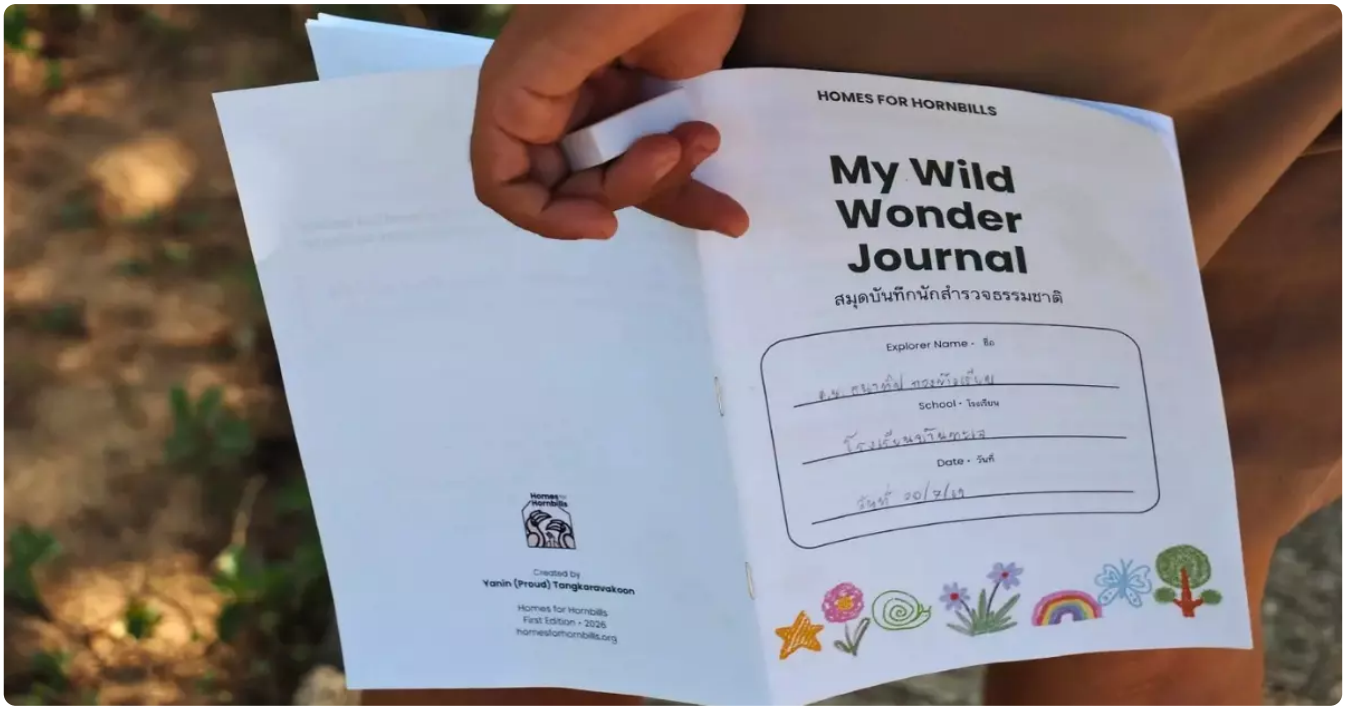
▲ A student writes while a grasshopper sits on their hand



▲ Two students use photography to consider the nature around them

Proud understands how impactful activities of this kind can be for young people. She first encountered hornbills on a fourth-grade school field trip to Khao Yai National Park and became fascinated by their behaviour. After learning about the threats facing hornbills from deforestation, habitat loss and poaching, she worked with the Thailand Hornbill Research Foundation to develop her solution.

After submitting the concept to The Earth Prize, Proud was selected as one of 35 Scholar teams across the world to receive mentoring and resources to develop their project further. In May 2026, she was named Regional Winner for the Oceania & Southeast Asia region and won $12.5K to scale the project. She has since been recognised in publications such as National Geographic Thailand, the Bangkok Post and The Optimist Daily.



▲ A student's workbook

Like many students taking part in The Earth Prize, Proud turned her personal experiences into a practical solution. Now in its fifth year, The Earth Prize has reached over 21,000 students across 169 countries and territories. Previous winners have been featured in leading international media including Forbes, BBC, the Financial Times, CBS, Business Insider, Euronews, and UN Today, with several teams advancing their ideas through patents, partnerships and commercial pilots.

The Earth Prize is run by The Earth Foundation, a non-profit based in Geneva, Switzerland, founded during the School Strike for Climate in 2019. At a time when climate anxiety affects a majority of young people - with 59% reporting they are very or extremely worried about the environment - the Prize provides a pathway from concern to action, equipping students with the tools to develop tangible, real-world solutions.

About The Earth Prize

The Earth Foundation is a Geneva-based non-profit that empowers, educates and inspires young people to tackle environmental challenges. Founded in response to the 2019 student-led climate rallies, it launched its flagship initiative, The Earth Prize, the world's largest environmental competition and 'ideas incubator' for young people. The competition aims to inspire and empower the next generation of environmental innovators, supporting participants with the tools they need to develop eco solutions for real-world impact, including one-on-one mentoring, learning resources and $100,000 shared funding for the winners. Since 2019, The Earth Prize has reached over 21,000 students across 169 countries and territories, and awarded over $500,000.

The Earth Prize: https://www.theearthprize.org/
The Earth Foundation: https://www.earth-foundation.org/
Impact PDF: https://tinyurl.com/tep2026

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