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Cavite village releases sea turtle hatchlings

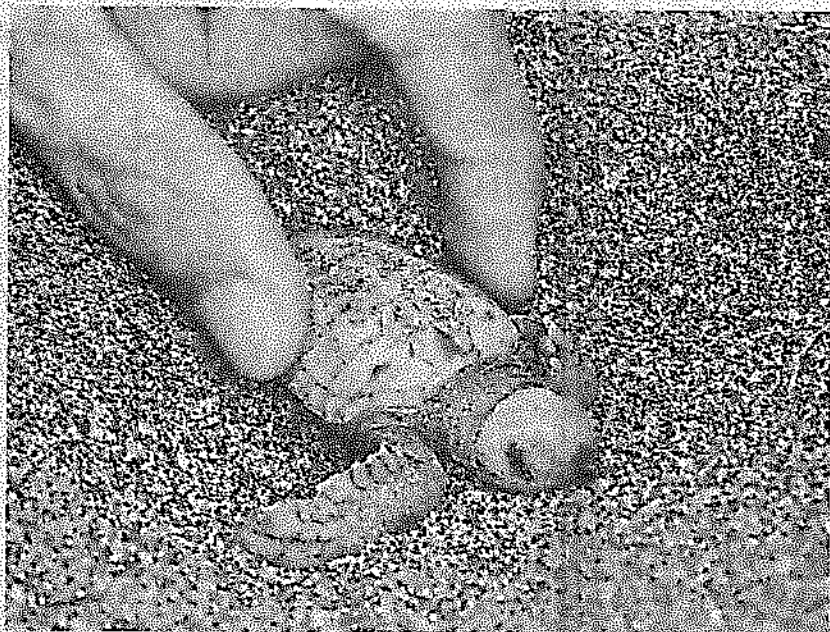
NAIC, Cavite—A *pawikan*, or sea turtle, conservation center released 78 olive ridley hatchlings late last month to their natural habitat in Barangay Labac in this municipality as the breeding season starts.

Municipal Councilors Tere Puno and Eimeren Nazareno, together with Naic Tourism Head Lady Anne Lopez, led the release of the hatchlings to the sea before sunset.

The Labac Conservation Facility was established to protect the *pawikan* eggs.

Olive ridley is one of the seven sea turtle species, which are now endangered. The others are flatback, green, hawksbill, leatherback, loggerhead and Kemp's ridley. Five of them can be found in the country.

According to Barangay Labac Chairman Roger Bilugan more hatchlings are scheduled to be released to the sea in the next few days although many were



MUNICIPAL leaders, officials of Barangay Labac in Naic, Cavite, and volunteers release 78 olive ridley sea turtle hatchlings to their natural habitat. DENNIS ABRINA PHOTO

affected by Typhoon Paeng on October 30.

The coastal villages of Naic, especially in Labac, were among the areas that were severely damaged

by Paeng, with a knee-high seawater rise on the beach.

More than 300 olive ridley sea turtle eggs were affected in the nesting area of the more than

2,000 eggs at the hatchery facility. They had to be cultivated to save from the wetting of the sand in their breeding ground. Some were broken due to the wetting caused by Paeng.

"Just last night, three turtles came to lay their eggs here at the facility, two of them with tags, while one had no tag. Meaning they came here to lay their eggs," Bilugan said in Filipino in an interview.

"The tags with dates written on them serve as signs that [the turtles] were from here," Bilugan added.

An egg takes 60 days in the hatchery before it finally hatches and is returned to its natural habitat in the ocean.

One Pawikan, an environmental conservation organization, donated 30 tonner bags to Labac Conservation Facility in order to create a revetment wall to hold and lessen the erosion of the nesting areas.



World's oldest tortoise turns 190



LONDON, United Kingdom (AFP) – He was born not long after Napoleon died, and is now officially the planet's oldest known living land animal.

JONATHAN the Seychelles Giant Tortoise (AFP)

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World's ...

(From Page 1)

Jonathan the Seychelles Giant Tortoise is celebrating his 190th birthday – more or less – on St Helena in the remote South Atlantic, where the defeated French emperor died in exile in 1821.

Jonathan, it is believed based on shell measurements, was hatched around 1832, and he was brought to the UK overseas territory from the Seychelles 50 years later.

He lives out a comfortable retirement in Plantation House, the official residence of the St Helena governor, where his birthday is being marked with events all weekend including the issuance of a special stamp.

The celebration climaxes Sunday with a "birthday cake" made out of Jonathan's favourite foods.

He is particularly partial to carrots, lettuce, cucumber, apples and pears, according to his handlers interviewed by AFP in 2017.

Despite his advanced years, he is also partial to a female tortoise called Emma, who is merely in

her 50s.

"He still enjoys the ladies and I have heard him quite regularly in the paddock with Emma and he grunts," then-governor Lisa Phillips said at the time.

"I have to keep an eye on him when he is doing that – it was not in the job description when I became governor."

At the start of this year, Jonathan was given the Guinness World Records title as the world's oldest living land animal, and this month was also named as the oldest tortoise ever.

"When you think, if he was hatched in 1832 – the Georgian era – my goodness, the changes in the world," said Joe Hollins, a retired veterinarian who is Jonathan's main carer today.

"The world wars, the rise and fall of the British Empire, the many governors, kings and queens that have passed, it's quite extraordinary," he said.

"And he's just been here, enjoying himself."

While they hope for many more years, St Helena authorities have already made plans for the venerable chelonian's eventual demise: his shell will be preserved for posterity.



BOC intercepts tarantulas declared as snacks at NAIA

CUSTOMS officers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) have foiled a recent attempt to smuggle wildlife after intercepting 23 tarantulas that were declared as "snacks and other food items".

In a statement Friday, BOC-NAIA District Collector Carmelita Talusan said the parcel that arrived from Hanoi, Vietnam which was consigned to a claimant in Makati City was seized at the Central Mail Exchange Center in Pasay City on Nov. 21.

The spiders were concealed in plastic containers labeled as potato chips and were discovered upon examination.

All 23 tarantulas were immediately turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for monitoring and safekeeping.

She added that the illegal shipment violates Section 1113 in relation to Sections 117 and 1401 of RA 10863, the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, and Section 27 of RA 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

This year, the Port of NAIA has seized several exotic aquatic wildlife species from different countries.

Talusan said the port is also one with the DENR in upholding wildlife protection and its conservation initiatives. (PNA)



A Customs officer accounts for the 23 tarantulas hidden in potato chips containers at the BOC-NAIA on Nov. 21. The BOC on Friday said all 23 tarantulas were immediately turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for monitoring and safekeeping.

(Photo courtesy of BOC)



10 illegal loggers nabbed in Quezon

TAYABAS CITY, Quezon - Ten alleged illegal loggers were arrested in an operation on Friday afternoon in Barangay Kanlurang Domoit, this city.

Police identified the suspects as chainsaw operators Romeo Napili, 50; Ariel Sumilang, 56; and Ubaldo Calabano, 59; and their helpers Ronnel Quinoñes, 30; Jackson Conde, 30; Reggie Napili, 25; Micheal Meñaz, 29; Arjay Begorian, 38; Jay-R Duran Ausa, 32, and Mark Ian Besa, 29. Suspects are all residents of this city.

Lawmen received a report that illegal logging activities were being conducted in the area.

The police intelligence unit here led by Senior Master Sgt. Bernardo Almariego and the Quezon Provincial Intelligence Unit mounted an operation that led to the arrest of the suspects and the recovery of illegally cut maulawin, also known as molave, tree with an estimated volume of 100 board feet and valued at P10,000.

Seized from the suspects were

three chainsaws without the necessary permits to operate from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources -Community Environment and Natural Resources Office.

Suspects were turned over to the CENRO-DENR in Barangay Potal here for proper disposition.

They are facing charges for violation of Republic Act 9175 (Chainsaw Act of 2022) and Presidential Decree 705, the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines. (Danny Estacio)



Financing biodiversity: Is mining a viable source?

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

SEVERAL countries are now straining their eyes on environmentally harmful subsidies, or programs that encourage unsustainable production or consumption and harm nature by exhausting natural resources, degrading global ecosystems and damaging planetary health.

These countries are hoping to narrow the huge budget gap in biodiversity to ensure sustainability.

As part of the United Nations Development Programme Biodiversity Finance Initiative's (UNDP-Biofin) Regional Dialogue that was held in the Philippines last month, selected Biofin member countries have presented potential biodiversity finance solutions during a special session at the Makiling Botanical Garden in Los Baños, Laguna.

Biofin members, represented by over 70 biodiversity finance experts from Europe and Asia, showcased various approaches, showing through posters, how they intend to address the huge biodiversity gap, and hopefully help avoid the extinction of global species.

Financing biodiversity

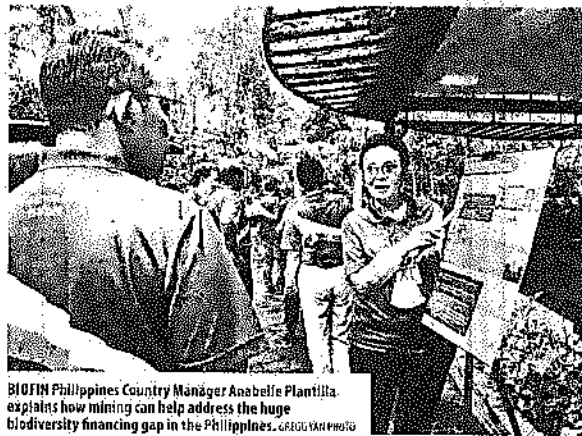
"BIODIVERSITY finance finds ways to raise and manage funds to sustainably manage biodiversity. The wealth of our participants' experiences presents an array of fundraising solutions for the post-Covid world," Biofin Global Manager Onno van den Heuvel said during the kick-off ceremonies of the three-day dialogue.

He said biodiversity investments can stave off extinction. In fact, he said every \$1 billion investment reduces the total number of threatened plant and animal species by 0.57 percent.

However, just 0.19 percent of the world's cumulative GDP is allotted for biodiversity, Heuvel pointed out.

More than halting extinction, biodiversity finance protects the natural systems people rely on, he added.

The dialogue sessions tackled results-based budgeting, public-private finance partnerships, nature financial disclosure, insurance, compensation mechanisms, repurposing harmful subsidies, debt instruments, Islamic finance, protected area finance, crowdfunding, lotteries, carbon-based finance



BIOFIN Philippines Country Manager Anabelle Plantilla explains how mining can help address the huge biodiversity financing gap in the Philippines. GREGG VARELA/PHOTO

instruments, offsets, task forces on nature-related financial disclosures, coral reef insurance, plus practical Covid-19 recovery strategies.

Unique biodiversity finance solutions

SEVERAL country representatives presented through creative posters how they intended to narrow the biodiversity financing gap, offer solutions to the challenge of funding biodiversity protection and conservation in their respective country and in others.

"Ten countries presented their biodiversity finance solutions in the session. All solutions were unique. This gives other countries new ideas and learning experiences that may help address policy issues in implementing their own biodiversity finance solutions," Ozlem Culbaçi of Biofin Global told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an interview on November 10.

She said to make the finance solutions work and become a reality, countries must work with policymakers, such as the national government's executive and legislative branches, local governments, and other stakeholders they intend to partner with.

Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

IN response to the alarming loss in biodiversity, the Philippine government has put in place the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP) 2015-2028.

It is a strategic instrument, which vision is that by 2028, the country's biodiversity is restored and rehabilitated, valued, effectively managed and secured,

maintaining ecosystem services to sustain healthy, resilient Filipino communities and delivering benefits to all.

The PBSAP integrates and mainstreams the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), an international treaty to which the Philippines is a party, into the national development and sectoral planning framework that includes measurable targets for CBD commitments.

The objectives include sustainable use of the country's biodiversity components, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Budget gap

TO implement PBSAP, the government said P24 billion is needed yearly to cover the costs of park management, personnel, equipment, research, operations, plus other overheads.

A baseline study conducted by the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources' Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) and Biofin, however, found out that from 2008 to 2013, just P5 billion was allotted for biodiversity initiatives, or a mere 0.31 percent of the national budget.

This means Philippine biodiversity projects are only 20 percent funded. Hence, this scenario presents a clear 80 percent financing gap that needs to be addressed.

Mining and biodiversity

AMUETHILLION DOLLAR industry, investment mining is now being eyed by the government to boost its post-Covid-19 recovery effort.

Biodiversity finance experts,



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a viable source?



A TAMARAW bull is photographed in one of the rare occasions for this critically endangered endemic species to be photographed at the Mounts Iglit Baco Mountain Range on Mindoro Island. Together with public and private sector allies, Biofin helps protect land and seascapes which harbor endangered and iconic wildlife. SHR/AG 11/16/2021

at the same time, are also looking into the steady flow of investments in mining for the protection and conservation of the country's rich biodiversity.

A country considered to be one of the megadiverse countries in the world but also a biodiversity hotspot due to the rapid rate of biodiversity loss, experts say the mining industry in the Philippines is a possible source of funds for biodiversity conservation and protection.

Its proposal, "Enhancing biodiversity conservation and protection in mining activities in the Philippines," tells of the huge potential of mining, a highly extractive industry and one of the biggest threats to the country's biodiversity, in addressing the huge biodiversity financing gap.

Huge potential

MINING has rich deposits of gold, copper, nickel and other minerals still waiting to be tapped.

Currently, there are 51 operating metallic mines, including 12 gold, 3 copper, 32 nickel and 4 iron in the Philippines as of January 2022.

There are also 56 operating nonmetallic mines that extract limestone, marbleized limestone, silica, aggregate quarries, dolomite, clay, sand and gravel, volcanic tuff and greywacke, a dark coarse-grained sandstone.

Mainstreaming biodiversity

"BY mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and protection in mining activities, half, or P20 billion or \$3.5 billion, can be redirected to biodiversity," said Anabelle Plantilla,

Biofin Philippines Project Manager told the BUSINESS-MIRROR on November 9.

"There's already a policy in place that can make this happen," she added.

Republic Act 7942, or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, is "one of the stringent mining law in the world."

According to Plantilla, through the development and approval of the DENR, the agency mandated to manage the country's natural wealth and its policy issuance, specifically Administrative Order 2022-04, adequate measures for responsible on-shore and off-shore mining toward ensuring biodiversity conservation and protection are provided.

This include progressive and final rehabilitation of mined-out areas that would help the mining sector easily narrow the huge biodiversity financing gap in the country.

Mining companies' commitment

MINING companies are required to implement various programs, such as Social Development and Management Programs (SDMP), in which it has to set aside a portion of the total project cost for programs that will benefit the host communities.

According to Biofin Philippines, the total cumulative mining company fund as of December 2021 stands at P416.29 billion (approximately \$71 billion).

For the SDMP alone, around P20 billion is committed to be spent.

Meanwhile, for the Environment Protection and Enhancement Program, mining companies are set to spend around P384.7 billion.



LOCALLY known as bagtikan, this gigantic tree is one of the oldest in Makiling Botanical Gardens in Los Baños, Laguna. It is considered critically endangered, the highest risk rating for any wild plant species. SHR/AG 11/16/2021

For the final Mine Rehabilitation and/or Decommissioning Plan, P5.51 billion is allocated by the industry.

Proposed biodiversity actions for miners

ACCORDING to Plantilla, mining companies can contribute to biodiversity conservation and protection by simply undertaking progressive rehabilitation at every stage of their operation.

She said they could employ full-time personnel with ecology and biodiversity conservation expertise.

"Of course, we know that completely restoring what was lost after mining is impossible. But somehow, we can still recover some of the biodiversity that was lost through progressive rehabilitation," she pointed out.

It was proposed to strictly set aside 5 percent of approved tenements as a reference ecosystem from which rehabilitation teams can get their idea of how much biodiversity is needed to be brought back.

At the same time, by integrating biodiversity conservation in the SDMP of mining companies' biodiversity friendly enterprises, in the propagation of native plants and in the promotion of agro-ecology, development of green parks, it can boost the country's effort of conserving and protecting its rich biodiversity.

The question is, Will it work to save the country's endangered flora and fauna from extinction?



MMDA inaugurates 2nd Adopt-A-Park project in Malabon

THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the local government of Malabon opened the rehabilitated Malabon People's Park in Barangay Catmon, the second site in the city under the agency's Adopt-A-Park project.

Covering more than 3,200 square meters, the new Malabon People's Park has colorful water fountains, playground equipment, landscaping, solar ground lights, an entrance arc, an artificial grass area, comfort rooms, and informative signage.

During its inauguration on Friday afternoon, MMDA Acting Chairman Atty. Romando Artes said that the agency rehabilitated the area to be enjoyed by more residents of the city, especially kids.

"We hope the people of Malabon will take good care of the park that has been developed for them. Through this park, we can give our children a space to play safely," said Artes.

Malabon City Mayor Jeanne Sandoval for her part expressed her gratitude to the MMDA as she underscored the importance of green space during the pandemic.

"Having open parks and spaces in the community would promote a healthy lifestyle among our constituents. Here, the kids can play while the adults can use the open area for wellness activities such as Zumba and exercise," she said.

The rehabilitated Malabon People's Park is the second park in the city under the MMDA's Adopt-A-Park Project, which is bigger and wider than Hulong Duhat Plaza, the first MMDA Adopt-A-Park site in Malabon. On September 8, the agency unveiled the plaza, which also features colorful water fountains, playsets, and open spaces.

To help curb urban decay and reduce the urban heat effect, its aim is to develop under-utilized parks in each of the Metro Manila local government units by improving their usability and transforming them into functional green parks.

The project, which started last year, was conceptualized by former MMDA Chairman and now Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos, Jr. **Edd Reyes**



MMDA opens 2nd 'Adopt-A-Park' project in Malabon

By **EDD REYES**

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The Adopt-A-Park project, which started last year, was conceptualized by former MMDA Chairman and now Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos, Jr.

Under the project, the LGU (local government unit) shall propose the location, design, and cost estimate, while the agency sets the criteria for site selection, provides funding, and implements the project's construction.



DSWD, Coast Guard partner to protect IPs

THE Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) have renewed their partnership to protect Indigenous peoples (IP) against human trafficking.

DSWD Secretary Erwin Tulfo earlier spoke with CG Commodore Marco Antonio Gines, PCC District Southwestern Mindanao commander, in Zamboanga City to discuss the need to safeguard Indigenous peoples from human trafficking.

The PCG's ongoing efforts to stop human trafficking and defend Zamboanga's Indigenous peoples were highlighted by Commodore Gines. They consist of thorough port inspections and cooperation with local government units (LGUs).

In a statement released on Friday, Secretary Tulfo stated that the DSWD continues to support LGUs in handling the surge of Indigenous peoples who engage

in mendicancy or begging on the streets in the National Capital Region and other areas of Luzon, particularly as the Christmas season draws near.

According to Tulfo, the DSWD has helped 158 individuals, or 47 Sama Bajau families, return to their homes. Afterwards, the concerned DSWD Field Offices will determine if they need support with their basic needs.

The department emphasized the importance of cooperation with other national government agencies, civil society groups and LGUs in order to protect the IPs, guarantee that they would receive the proper programs and services, and prevent them from any human trafficking operations. This also complies with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s mandate to bring the government and Indigenous people closer together.

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MWF eyes mining, nat gas royalties

BY EDJEN OLIVINO
@tribunephil_eao

I believe the Senate, has already constituted a study group on the matter.

Aside from contributions from revenue-generating institutions such as pension funds and state financial institutions, a House leader said the proposed Maharlika Wealth Fund will draw from revenues from exploiting natural resources.

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A proposal in the bill was for a certain percentage, at the minimum, of the fund should be invested in domestic investments.

From page 1

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, the House ways and means committee chairperson, told *Daily Tribune* that sourcing money from the government's share in the use of the country's riches including those from mining is "contemplated." Salceda said MWF may

even tap earnings from the Malampaya natural gas field.

Channeling the Malampaya share to the MWF, however, would need an amendment to Republic Act 11371 which specified that the fund can only be used for energy projects.

The bill, authored by Speaker Martin Romualdez and Deputy Speaker Sandro Marcos, recently hurdled the House committee and it will go through deliberations in the House plenary.

"I believe the Senate,

has already constituted a study group on the matter," according to Salceda.

The agenda for the coming House discussion of the MWF bill is the mix of assets the fund will invest in and the allocation level for foreign securities.

Salceda said including overseas stocks in the fund will diversify the portfolio and allows the fund to take positions in potentially higher-return investments.

Salceda before becoming a House member was among the highest-paid stock brokers of investment bank

unit Baring Securities.

Foreign securities included

"MWF grows faster with some exposure to high-return foreign investments, which is better than a smaller and severely constrained fund exclusively investing in domestic investments," Salceda explained.

That said, a proposal in the bill was for a certain percentage, at the minimum, of the fund should be invested in domestic investments.

Pooling of funds is a key

feature and advantage of the current proposal since it maximizes the impact of the funds that each institution holds compared to what they can achieve on their own.

Certain investments in agriculture, infrastructure, and healthcare get priority.

Under the bill, the investments of the state pension funds Government Service Insurance System, and Social Security System are risk-free through government guarantee.

Infusions in the form of preferred shares and

convertible debts would make the GSIS and SSS investments zero-risk.

Regarding the concern about BSP investments in the form of foreign reserves, the provision was amended so that the BSP's required investments come from declared dividends, not the currency stock from overseas Filipino workers and Business Process Outsourcing income.

"As Chair of the House TWG on the bill, I welcome continued discussion on the matter," Salceda indicated.



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BoC plants 4,500 trees nationwide



AMONG the seedlings planted during the BoC's nationwide activity were narra, molave, mahogany, and mangrove.



BY BERNIE ANABO

Employees of the Bureau of Customs from the Central Office and the 17 Collection Districts joined the nationwide simultaneous tree planting activity on 26 November.

A total of 4,500 seedlings were planted as part of the bureau's Customs Social Responsibility Program, with the theme "Ikaw, Ako, at ang BoC."

Customs Commissioner Yogi Filemon Ruiz led the joint tree-planting activity of the Central Office, Ports of Manila, Batangas, Ninoy Aquino International Airport and the Manila International Container Port at Sitio Bulihan, Barangay Tabangao Ambulong in Batangas City.

"Planting a tree is the most selfless act you can do," Ruiz said.

"You plant a tree for yourself and your children because you want to ensure the survivability of your lineage, but, in doing so, you also ensure that other people and species will benefit from it. *'Pag nagtanim tayo ng puno at inaalagaan ang kalikasan, para na rin nating inaalagaan ang ating kinabukasan.'*"

'Planting a tree is the most selfless act you can do,' Customs Commissioner Yogi Filemon Ruiz said.

The Ports of Tacloban, Surigao, Subic, Clark, Davao, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, Limay, Zamboanga, Aparri, Iloilo and Legazpi also held their tree-planting activity programs in their respective cities.

Among the seedlings planted during the simultaneous activity were narra, molave, mahogany, and mangrove.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed all government agencies to make tree-planting a part of their programmed environmental activities to help strengthen the country's flood resilience capability. Ruiz, as BoC chief, is aggressively pursuing innovations in Customs programs to boost employee morale and support the President's advocacies and priority programs.





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FIGHTING FOR MASUNGI

Despite threats, Ann Dumaliang and her community of rangers and volunteers are steadfast in their mission

By **Din M. Villafuerte**
@dinmvee

Ann Dumaliang knew that the area where Masungi Georeserve stands is vulnerable to land-grabbing and quarry operations. She also knew that it would be her life's biggest regret if she didn't do something about it.

"Environment Secretary Angel Alcala, who is a National Scientist and already in his 90s, stood up to protect the area in the 1990s," Dumaliang said. "In 1996 onwards, my dad and his small group of advocates and engineers have gone through so much and invested so much of their resources to restore the area, too, for over a two-decade period. I do not want this effort wasted and wish for this intergenerational care to continue," she added.

Looking after the geopark may have a lot of challenges and feel overwhelming at times but Dumaliang, who serves as managing trustee with her sister Billie, feels that they—Masungi's community of conservationists, rangers and volunteers—are lucky that they are given an opportunity to do good.

Threats

When the pandemic was at its peak, many of them made the difficult decision to stay within the georeserve or nearby. "We were wary that illegal groups would take advantage of a challenging time for law enforcement and governance," she explained. They wanted to make sure the reforestation site was not compromised and that they would be able to respond immediately should there be a need. Many rangers took stations in areas that were determined hot spots.

Masungi Georeserve was



Ann Dumaliang: "Working together can make ripples and movements for change."

threatened with more than five major attempts at encroachment during the past two years, even as everybody was dealing with the difficulties of an unprecedented health crisis. Two of their rangers were even critically shot while they were asleep in one of the remote ranger stations, according to Dumaliang.

"Our rangers and community members face intimidation on a regular basis," she added. "Multiple SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) suits at prosecutor office level and warrantless arrests were done on to us, many of these curiously moving despite the lack of evidence while our own complaints noticeably lag."

Masungi has been asking the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to once and for all remove the quarry agreements and land traffickers in the area. "They

do not only pose a threat to the environment but harm our environment front-liners and corrupt our communities," explained Dumaliang. To her credit, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga has announced the cancellation of two quarry agreements in the area.

"We look forward to her seeing that these orders are passed and put into motion," Masungi's managing trustee added.

Dumaliang, along with Masungi's team of conservationists, rangers and volunteers, asks for the continued support and vigilance of civil society, the private sector and ordinary individuals.

"We have seen how working together and contributing our own skills and capabilities to the cause can make ripples and movements for change," she said. "Finally, let's be wary of disinformation tactics. Let's see this through!" **INQ**



SHE ADVOCATES FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

For Chen Reyes-Mencias, local communities should also reap the benefits when protected areas become big tourist draws

By **Nastasha Verayo De Villa**
@tash_INQ

For Blue Water Consultancy, Training and Services tourism planning consultant and ecotourism enterprise development expert Chen Reyes-Mencias, local communities in natural and cultural heritage sites should not only carry the honor and responsibility of safeguarding these protected areas but also reap the benefits when these places become big tourist draws.

Often, tourism-related opportunities are seized by hotels, resorts, travel agencies and tour operators, pushing local residents—often members of marginalized groups—out of the picture. Reyes-Mencias believes this should not be the case.

An advocate of responsible travel and community-based initiatives, Reyes-Mencias believes marginalized sectors should have active involvement in local tourism industry to drive truly inclusive growth.

“Our mission is to promote the concept of community-based sustainable tourism,” said the environmental planner, adding getting residents involved in local tourism will improve the well-being of the majority of stakeholders; reduce criminality; reduce flocking to urban areas of rural residents looking for better opportunities; and provide stronger protection for natural and cultural resources by providing an economic incentive through enterprise development.

Her team collaborates with local governments in employing the framework she designed which engages fisherfolk, farmers, indigenous people and other marginalized groups in the provision of tourism services by



Chen Reyes-Mencias

training them to become guides for snorkeling, birding, paddling and trekking, as well as involving them in other tourism-related enterprises including souvenir production and food preparation.

Innovation

Conferred with the title Reader’s Digest Asia and Australia Hero for Today and a recipient of the Environmental Enhancement Award given by the International Underwater Foundation, former dive instructor Reyes-Mencias and her team have provided technical

assistance to various ecotourism sites all over the country, including Palau Island Protected Landscape and Seascape in Cagayan; Sagay Marine Reserve in Negros; Buntod Marine Sanctuary in Masbate City, Mt. Apo Natural Park in Davao del Sur; Taal Volcano Protected Landscape in Batangas and Batanes Protected Landscape and Seascape.

Some of these initiatives received recognition, including Association of Southeast Asian Nations community-based tourism award twice in a row for the protected area in Palau; an award from the Association of Tourism Officers of the Philippines award for the community in Suyac Island in Sagay City; and the Para El Mar award for Buntod Marine Sanctuary as one of the best marine sanctuaries in the country.

Reyes-Mencias believes that innovation is necessary when tackling the issue of sustainable tourism with the added benefit of boosting the local economy. She conceptualized Ecotourism Philippines for several natural sites all over the country, promoting sustainable tourism that heavily involve local communities in their respective natural and cultural heritage sites. *INQ*



Reyes-Mencias believes that marginalized sectors should have active involvement in local tourism industry to drive truly inclusive growth.



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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business



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WILDLIFE CONFERENCE BOOSTS PROTECTION FOR SHARKS, TURTLES

PANAMA CITY—An international wildlife conference moved to enact some of the most significant protection for shark species targeted in the fin trade and scores of turtles, lizards and frogs, whose numbers are being decimated by the pet trade.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) ended on November 26 in Panama.

In a record for the conference, delegates enacted protections for over 500 species.

The United Nations wildlife conference also rejected a proposal to reopen the ivory trade. An ivory ban was enacted in 1989.

"The Parties to CITES are fully aware of their responsibility to address the biodiversity loss crisis by taking action to ensure that the international trade in wildlife is sustainable, legal and traceable," Secretary General Ivonne Higuero said in a statement.

"Trade underpins human well-being, but we need to mend our relationship with nature," she said. "The decisions coming from this meeting will serve the interests of conservation and wildlife trade, that doesn't threaten the existence of species of plants and animals in the wild, for future generations."

The international wildlife trade treaty, which was adopted 49 years ago in Washington, D.C., has been praised for helping stem the illegal and unsustainable trade in ivory and rhino horns as well as in whales and sea turtles.

But it has come under fire for its limitations, including its reliance on cash-strapped developing countries to combat illegal trade that's become a lucrative \$10 billion-a-year business.

One of the biggest achievement this year was increasing or providing protection for more than 90 shark species, including 54 species of requiem sharks, the bonnethead shark, three species of hammerhead shark and 37 species of guitarfish.

Many had never before had trade protection and now, under Appendix II, the commercial trade will be regulated.

Global shark populations are declining, with annual deaths due to fisheries reaching about 100 million. The sharks are sought mostly for their fins, which are used in shark fin soup, a popular delicacy in China and elsewhere in Asia.

Kathia Martinez/Associated Press