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LANDBANK honored as first DENR Gawad Kamagong awardee

By LBPPublished on January 10, 2021



Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) was conferred with the Gawad Kamagong award by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its valuable contributions to the environment and active participation in volunteer projects. LANDBANK Corporate Affairs Specialist Arnold Aldaba received the award on behalf of the Bank from DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda on December 15, 2020. (LBP Photo)

MAKATI CITY, Jan. 10 -- State-run Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) was awarded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) with the first-ever Gawad Kamagong award for the Bank's unwavering support to environmental advocacy through long-term volunteer work.

Considered as the highest recognition for volunteer partners, the Gawad Kamagong was awarded to LANDBANK for implementing volunteer programs that support the protection and rehabilitation of watersheds and for uplifting the livelihood of its partner community organizations.

"LANDBANK has been a longstanding advocate for environmental preservation and sustainable development. We will continue to support inclusive countryside development by joining government partners in promoting environmental awareness, protection, and conservation," said LANDBANK President and CEO Cecilia C. Borromeo.

LANDBANK was among 49 organizations from government and private institutions, local government units, non-government organizations, academic institutions, cooperatives, and community and civic groups who were recognized for making outstanding contributions in support of the DENR's programs, projects, and activities.

Since 2001, LANDBANK has partnered with the DENR for various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs for the environment, which includes the Manila Bay SUNSET Partnership Program, Inc. (MBSPP), the Gawad Sibol Program (formerly Adopt-A-Watershed Program), and the "50@50" Program (50,000 trees for LANDBANK's 50th anniversary year).

LANDBANK Corporate Affairs Specialist Arnold Aldaba—who received the award as the Bank's representative—also became the first recipient of the Gawad Masigasig, a special individual award for demonstrating exceptional work in linking the Bank's environmental programs with the DENR.

DENR Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda led the awarding ceremonies held at the DENR Central Office on December 15, 2020. The recognition program was in celebration of the National Volunteer Month which promotes volunteerism as a tool for development in both the government and the private sectors. (LBP)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1063461>



The garbage conundrum

Two decades after the enactment of a Solid Waste Act, compliance with waste handling, disposal law remains wanting

By Jonathan L. Mayuga

January 10, 2021



ENACTED on January 21, 2001, Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, declaring a state policy the adoption of a systematic, comprehensive and ecological solid waste management program in the Philippines, remains poorly implemented.

Officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC), which was created specifically to oversee the implementation of solid waste management plans and prescribe policies to achieve the objectives of the law, reported the poor compliance of concerned local government units (LGUs).



Department of Environment and Natural Resources Calabarzon officials conduct a surprise inspection at a sanitary landfill operated by S.B. Hain Enterprises & General Services Inc. in Purok 1, Barangay Kay-Anlog, Calamba City, Laguna, in August last year. The DENR issued a show-cause order for a number of alleged violations committed by the operators of the sanitary landfill operation.

The Philippines is producing too much garbage that is way beyond its solid waste management capacity.

The Philippines, with a population of over 100 million, is producing over 21 million metric tons of garbage every year.

The country's weighted average per capita generation is 0.4 kilos, or close to half a kilo. Based on the projected 2020 waste generation, the Philippines has produced a total of 21,4265,676 metric tons of garbage last year.

The National Capital Region (NCR), with its estimated population of over 12 million, is the biggest producer of garbage.

Based on the projected 2020 waste generation, Metro Manila produced 3,466,469 metric tons of garbage last year.

This is because the estimated weighted average per capita in Metro Manila is almost 0.7 kilos per day.



This means that Metro Manila residents are producing almost twice the volume of garbage produced by those living in other areas.

Maria Delia Cristina M. Valdez, officer in charge chief of the Solid Waste Management Division of the National Solid Waste Management Commission, said in her report in an online meeting with sanitary landfill owners and operators on December 28 that municipal solid waste are composed of 56.7 percent household or residential waste; 27.1 percent is commercial 12.1 percent institutional; and 4.1 percent, industrial.

Of the commercial waste generated, 18.3 percent comes from markets across the country and the remaining 8.8 percent are produced by other commercial establishments.

By weight of municipal solid waste fractions, more than half or approximately 52.31 percent of the total are biodegradable waste, 27.78 are recyclable waste, and 17.98 percent are residual waste, which include plastics, paper and cardboard, metals, glass and textiles, leather, and rubber. The remaining 1.93 percent are so-called special waste.

Poor compliance

In her report, Valdez underscored mandatory requirements under the law. These are waste diversion target, 10-year solid waste management plan, materials recovery facilities, and disposal facility—all of which remain poorly complied with, particularly by LGUs.

She defined waste diversion as activities which aim to reduce or eliminate the volume or amount of solid waste from waste disposal facilities.

Under Section 20 of RA 9003, which calls for the establishment of mandatory solid waste diversion, each LGU plan shall include an implementation schedule, which shows that within five years after the law took effect, the LGU shall divert at least 25 percent of all solid waste from waste disposal facilities through reuse, recycling and composting activities, and other resource recovery activities. The waste diversion goals shall be increased every three years thereafter.

However, based on data collated from 10-year solid waste management plans approved by the DENR and NSWMC, the diversion target by the end of last year is only 68 percent. Even this has yet to be verified by the NSWMC.

As for the mandatory 10-year solid waste management plans, the NSWMC has only approved a total of 1,064, or 58.6 percent compliance. A total of 521 plans, or 37 percent of the total, are under evaluation, while 76 LGUs have not submitted their 10-year solid waste management plans.

Meanwhile, Valdez reported that as of October 2020, there are 11,558 materials recovery facilities (MRFs) servicing 14,483 barangays, a far cry from the 42,000 or more barangays in the entire country that need servicing by a fully functional MRF.

As for LGU disposal, she reported that there are now 189 sanitary landfills servicing a total of 399 LGUs all over the country; and that there are still 261 open dumps that need to be shut down.



This is a far cry from the number of sanitary landfills needed to be established.

In Luzon alone, she said 140 sanitary landfills are needed to serve a total of 772 LGUs. A total of 32 sanitary landfills are needed for the Visayas to serve 408 LGUs, and 34 sanitary landfills are needed to serve 337 LGUs in Mindanao.

She noted, however, that the DENR and the NSWMC, in consideration of the lack of capacity of many LGUs to establish their own disposal facility, allows the clustering of LGUs for the establishment of a single sanitary landfill.

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny Antiporda said the DENR will launch an “all-out war” against garbage as the DENR takes the lead in celebrating January as Zero Waste Month.

“This Zero Waste Month, we want to start our campaign for a zero open dump,” Antiporda said. Antiporda warned that some LGUs that refused to cooperate with the DENR and the NSWMC in enforcing the garbage law will face criminal and administrative raps, lamenting the fact that the DENR and NSWMC’s leniency may eventually come to an end.

On the other hand, he said, the DENR and the NSWMC will continue to work with LGUs who are willing to cooperate and solve their respective garbage problems.

The DENR is eyeing the establishment of 300 more sanitary landfills nationwide through public-private partnership. The target is to do it in the next two years, or hoping to complete the feat by the end of 2022.

This is why Antiporda said he reached out to sanitary landfill owners and operators to set aside their differences and work together by organizing themselves and to work in harmony with the national and various local governments to help address the looming garbage crisis.

“...[The] initiative [is] for them to organize themselves to have a voice in the NSWMC,” says Antiporda. The official said the establishment of more sanitary landfills will require private-sector investment in solid waste management and disposal to meet such “ambitious” target.

Sanitary landfill is the primary long-term method of solid waste disposal allowed under Republic Act 9003.

During the meeting, Antiporda noted that the current number of sanitary landfills in the Philippines remains wanting.

He encouraged sanitary landfill owners or operators to look into the viability of offering their facilities to LGUs with illegal dumpsites, in anticipation of an aggressive campaign by the DENR to close down open dumps starting this month as required by RA 9003, which marks its 20th year as a law on January 26, 2021.

Image credits: [Jerome Ganzon | Dreamstime.com](#), [DENR Calabarzon](#)



Budget of P405M set for garbage collection

January 09, 2021

BARANGAYS can resume disposing of their garbage in the transfer station in Barangay Inayawan, Cebu City before the end of this month.

Department of Public Services (DPS) head John Jigo Dacua said a P405 million budget had been allocated for garbage collection in 2021.

He said the contract between the City Government and the operator of the transfer station ended in the second week of December 2020 as the budget intended for it had all been utilized.

Dacua's office is now working on the renewal of the contract.

The termination had inconvenienced barangays and the public, prompting Inayawan Barangay Captain Kirk Bryan Repollo to file a complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman against Dacua and Mayor Edgardo Labella over the non-collection of garbage.

However, Dacua pointed out that barangays are responsible for collecting their own garbage, especially if the garbage is in the interior portion of the barangay.

"He (Repollo) knows that it is the barangay's responsibility because, for the longest time, the DPS has only been collecting garbage along the main road," Dacua said in Cebuano.

Dacua said he had anticipated the previous budget to be used up by last December, but it was too late for a supplemental budget as the annual budget for 2021 was about to be approved during that time.

"That's why amo lang sa gyu'ng giantos ang pila ka semana nga ang DPS lang jod ang gatrabaho (the DPS has endured several weeks of collecting garbage)," Dacua said.

While the transfer station in Inayawan is closed, garbage has been disposed of at the sanitary landfill in Barangay Binaliw.

Dacua said they've deployed 25 garbage trucks to collect garbage along the main roads and even in some inner portions of some barangays.

He said he is in close contact with barangays in case they need help transporting garbage to the Binaliw landfill. He said they've extended the same assistance to Inayawan.

Of the city's 80 barangays, only Inayawan has filed legal action over the matter, he said.

"We've never neglected Repollo's barangay. In fact, we sent trucks to Inayawan to collect garbage," Dacua said in Cebuano.

Repollo filed his complaint before the anti-graft office on Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021, against Dacua and Labella for their alleged failure to implement provisions of Republic Act (RA) 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, and the General Welfare clause under RA 7160, or the Local Government Code. **(JLL)**



2020 a bright year for PHL biodiversity

By Jonathan L. Mayuga

January 10, 2021



Biak-na-Bato National Park in San Miguel, Bulacan, consists of a cave network and a system of rivers and trails of both historical and ecological importance. It is one of the ecotourism areas nearest to Metropolitan Manila.

Amid the fatal Covid-19 pandemic with the strict quarantines imposed to prevent its spread, and the destructive typhoons that occurred in the Philippines in 2020, the year was considered bright in terms of protection and conservation of the country's biodiversity.

In its year-end report, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reported the increased number of protected areas covered by law under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas), and the Expanded-Nipas increasing land, coastal and marine areas set aside for conservation.

More importantly, the DENR, through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), reported dramatic improvement in the conservation status of endangered Philippine species.

DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon said the downgrading of the status of 12 threatened species is proof that under the leadership of Secretary Roy A. Cimatu the DENR is on the "right track" as far as protecting and conserving the country's rich biodiversity is concerned.

244 protected areas

In a news statement, Cimatu attributed the BMB's success to its unwavering commitment to making sure the country's flora and fauna are well protected even during the Covid-19 lockdown when people's mobility is limited and environment-related crimes are rampant.

"The effects of the community quarantine did not dampen the spirits of our people at BMB. They made sure that the agency's mandates are still fulfilled to the fullest extent possible," Cimatu said.

The BMB reported that a total of 244 protected areas covering more than 7.1 million hectares of land and water have been either legislated or proclaimed in 2020 pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 11038, or the Expanded-Nipas Act of 2018.

Calderon, the concurrent BMB director, said the importance of designating protected areas could not be overemphasized, with the serious threats posed by habitat loss to the country's threatened species.

Bigger area coverage

Anchored on effective protected-area management, the government has put in place various measures to ensure the protection and conservation of the country's rich biodiversity.



As a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the DENR, through the BMB, continuously works toward the achievement of the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Target. These are global targets under the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

Thanks to the passage of the Expanded Nipas, additional 94 Protected Areas are now protected by legislation making a total of 107 covering a total of 7.76 M hectares, the DENR report said.

Of the 244 protected areas under the Nipas, 107 are legislated (4.38 million hectares), 13 are proclaimed (1.11 million has), and 124 are remaining initial components (2.27 million has).

To date, the 244 protected areas make up 15.40 percent (4.62 million has) of the Philippine land area, and 1.42 percent (3.14 M has) of territorial waters, contributing to the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 by increasing the percentage of protected areas in the country.

The Philippines is considered as a champion in Asean by achieving nearly its contribution to the Aichi Biodiversity Target 11.

Protected areas management body

According to Calderon, the DENR-BMB will work this year to activate and ensure a dynamic Protected Area Management Office (PAMO), especially for the 107 legislated protected areas.

A protected area needs a Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), the highest policy-making body for the area, and headed by a superintendent.

This means institutionalizing the funding for the entire PAMO, or field office, that will cover the staffs' salary and allowances, and other operational costs.

"This will help ensure we have a working protected area management body on the ground," he said.

"Each of the 107 legislated protected areas also need park rangers to protect the parks," he said.

Defense against calamities

Maintaining a healthy ecosystem effectively carried out through a constructive protected area management system, according to Calderon, comes with enormous benefits. It includes human survival against the threat of natural calamities.

Without the legislated and proclaimed protected areas in the Cagayan Valley and Marikina River Basin, the devastation of Typhoon Ulysses could have been worse for communities that are dependent on these natural ecosystems, said Calderon, a forestry expert.

The official said that the no-take policies in strict protection zones ensures the integrity of the natural ecosystems to remain intact and functional, thus providing ecosystem services that benefit the people and the environment.

Home to threatened wildlife

Protected areas, where forests are allowed to thrive, serve as home to plant and animal species, including those that are threatened with extinction.

In its report, the BMB said that 12 species are no longer on the brink of extinction, crediting the effective protection and conservation measures put in place in various conservation partners.



The conservation status of the species was either down-listed from endangered to vulnerable or from vulnerable to other threatened species (OTS).

OTS, a classification under DENR Administrative Order 2019-09, refers to species or its varieties that is “not critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable” but is still under threat from adverse factors, such as over-collection throughout its range.

Turtles, frogs, lizards

The Asian giant softshell turtle was down-listed two levels from “endangered” to OTS.

Other species that were down-listed from “endangered” to “vulnerable” are the Negros forest frog, Mount Data forest frog, Mindanao bleeding-heart, and Luzon water redstart.

Down-listed from “vulnerable” to OTS are the Mindanao fanged frog, Basilan island caecilian, Todaya caecilian, yellow-headed water monitor, marbled water monitor, large-scaled water monitor, and Mount Isarog shrew-mouse.

Welcome development

Calderon said the effective protected area management and the down-listing of the 12 threatened species proves that the DENR is on the right track.

“This is a welcome development because it only means the population of these threatened species is decreasing,” he said.

More importantly, this means their habitat is protected, too, he added.

The down-listing of the species to their improved conservation status stands on solid ground, Calderon noted.

A population count or estimate of their distribution is considered carefully before deciding to down-list a species, he said.

“We have the biodiversity monitoring system transects in all protected areas. Second is the wildlife population monitoring being undertaken by our [DENR] regions, Penro and Cenro [Provincial and City Environment and Natural Resources Offices]” Calderon explained in an interview by the BusinessMirror on December 28, 2020.

Wildlife law enforcement

He attributed the improved status of this species in general to the unwavering commitment of the DENR’s forest protection officers and Bantay Gubat (Forest Guard) volunteers.

He said despite the pandemic, the aggressive wildlife law enforcement thwarted attempts by illegal wildlife traders to conduct their activities, such as harvesting plants and animals, or destroying their habitats, particularly in areas that are home to species that are considered critically endangered.

These operations led to the confiscation of 53 wild fauna and 27.36 kilograms of agarwood or derivatives of Aquilaria species with an estimated cost of P5.6 million.

Moreover, a total of seven new cases against wildlife criminals have been filed last year.



As of September, the DENR secured 30 convictions out of 32 criminal cases it had previously filed against violators of RA 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.

Encouraging development

The reported down-listing of 12 species in the Philippines to an improved conservation status is an encouraging development, said Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

The ACB is still monitoring the efforts of Asean member-states and their respective biodiversity protection and conservation efforts as part of their commitment to the CBD and in hitting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Weighing in on the down-listing of 12 species in the country, Lim said that while the criteria used by countries vary and may not necessarily be exactly the same as those of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, countries adopt some parameters that are more applicable to their specific situation and best available information.

“But whatever process is applied, the downgrading of species from a higher threat category is always encouraging, especially for those who are at the frontline of protecting our wildlife habitats, our protected areas,” Lim told the BusinessMirror via Messenger on December 30, 2020.

Positive indicator

“Generally speaking, downgrading of species in relation to conservation efforts, especially if such efforts are within protected areas, is a positive indicator and a reflection of the good work that PA [protected area] managers, rangers and staff do,” she added.

However, Lim, a former DENR-BMB director, cautioned that “such progress should by no means be a reason for relaxing or reducing seriousness in the application of biodiversity protection policies and related actions.”

She added: “Downgrading does not mean that threats to the species are no longer present and their conservation should no longer be addressed.”

In fact, it should be considered “a challenge for everyone to continue their efforts until such time that the species’ population status become healthy enough to eventually be taken out of the threatened species lists at the national, regional and global level,” she said.

Calderon agreed. He said that even with last year’s achievements the BMB should not be complacent, knowing that those species under improved conservation status might revert to its vulnerable or endangered level if left as they are.

He said the DENR-BMB will continue its aggressive wildlife law enforcement and campaign against the illegal wildlife trade.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/01/10/2020-a-bright-year-for-phl-biodiversity/>



PLDT-Smart's 2020 alliances reveal its commitment to environmental care

By [BusinessMirror](#)

January 10, 2021



Connected Mangroves uses wireless connectivity to collect critical data relevant to mangroves survival such as water level, temperature, soil moisture, and other hazards in the site.

Telecoms is inherently a green business. It helps people and industries reduce their carbon footprint, connecting people through technology and eliminating the need or use of travel.

Through teleconferencing, live streaming, e-commerce and more, the industry connects and helps minimize greenhouse-gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

As the country's largest integrated telecommunications company, with energy as a necessary resource to deliver their services, PLDT Inc. (PLDT), along with its wireless unit Smart Communications Inc. (Smart), actively ensures that it uses energy responsibly, a PLDT-Smart news release said.

As greenhouse-gas emissions arise from energy consumed by its network in operation, in the establishments they run, and emissions from transport, the group aims to protect the planet through technology-based carbon footprint offsetting programs.

"To achieve this, we formed environmental alliances with government, academe, and NGO [nongovernment organization] partners throughout 2020, for initiatives that leverage on digital technology and PLDT-Smart's robust network," PLDT Chairman and CEO Manuel V. Pangilinan was quoted in the the news release.

Under its environmental stewardship program, Gabay Kalikasan, the alliances aimed to champion eco-efficiency while helping various communities curb the effects of climate change.

"We, at PLDT-Smart, believe that everything is interconnected when it comes to the environment, and that business response to climate-change issues will have an effect on how the present and future generations will live their lives," said Chaye A. Cabal-Revilla, PLDT Group chief sustainability officer.

Marine protection with UPMSI

The company kicked off 2020 with a partnership with the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UPMSI) and Marine Environment and Resources Foundation (MERF), the news release said.

Under the project, PLDT supports research studies for 24 marine protected areas nationwide and a marine renewable-energy program with UPMSI and MERF scientists, in collaboration with local government units.



The research program aims to help develop activities to enhance the conservation of marine protected areas.

Moreover, the research also provides scientific basis so that the enhanced marine protected areas will have the added benefit of helping fight climate change by acting as carbon sinks.

IoT solutions to protect forests and mangroves

In reforestation, Smart launched in summer a landmark initiative with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Huawei Technologies Philippines (Huawei) for an Internet of Things (IoT) solution that taps mobile technology to detect and record rainforest sounds.

This can help prevent illegal logging and poaching in the country's rainforests, the news release said.

Developed by a US-based NGO of the same name, Rainforest Connection (RFCx) makes use of old cell phones to monitor and record illegal logging sounds of priority forest areas identified by the DENR.

The bio-acoustics are then uploaded to a cloud service using Smart. The information can be accessed via the RFCx mobile application.

RFCx is similar to Connected Mangroves, developed by network partner Ericsson and deployed in Sasmuan Bangkung Malapad Critical Habitat and Eco-tourism Area in Pampanga.

This IoT for mangroves protection uses wireless connectivity to collect critical data relevant to mangroves survival, such as water level, temperature, soil moisture, and other hazards in the site.

The information, which is being collected by the mangrove sensor system, is transmitted over a cloud system to a dashboard accessible to the local communities and authorities.

Initially launched in 2017, Gabay Kalikasan will scale up Connected Mangroves. Along with RFCx, it became a case study in the 2020 Digital Dividends report of GSM Association.

The group previously recognized Connected Mangroves in the 2019 Case for Change initiative as the global mobile industry's solution to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Pioneer partnership for peatlands conservation

PLDT-Smart signed another pioneer initiative in 2020 for its partnership with DENR, through its Biodiversity Management Bureau and Caraga Regional Office to protect, conserve and restore the Caimpugan Peatland in the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS).

Located in Agusan del Sur, the Caimpugan Peatland holds the only recorded remaining intact peat swamp forest—the largest of its kind—in the Philippines.

“As the first private company in the Philippines to engage with DENR on peatlands conservation, we at PLDT will contribute our expertise to produce innovations that can help conserve and restore these ecosystems,” Cabal-Revilla said.

Designated as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention inter-governmental treaty on wetlands, AMWS is also recognized as a Heritage Park by the Asean and legislated as a National Park by the Philippine government.

Peatlands can store twice as much carbon as all the world's forests combined. However, its crucial role in mitigating climate change, as well as the huge costs that arise when these natural carbon sinks are damaged, remains largely overlooked.

“Now is the time to change the course of conversation and steer our collaborative efforts toward creating a climate-resilient future,” said DENR Assistant Secretary for Climate Change Ricardo Calderon.



PLDT-Smart's sustainability framework

Gabay Kalikasan represents PLDT-Smart's Effective Environmental Stewardship sustainability pillar, one of the seven that make up the company's Sustainability Framework.

The other pillars are Awesome Customer Experience and Quality of Service, Growth-driven Innovation, Responsible and Efficient Operations, Excellence through Human Capital, Positive Community Impact, and Good Governance & Ethical Business Practices.



Residents rescue pelican in Aurora river marsh, hand it over to DENR

By Ashley Manabat

January 9, 2021



Aurora residents rescued a “distressed” Great White Pelican, a migratory bird species who somehow landed on marshy Dilasag River. Local environment officials has taken custody of the unexpected visitor for proper care and handling. Photo courtesy of DENR Regional Public Affairs Office 3

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Three local residents have recently rescued a weak and exhausted migratory bird at a marshy river in Masagana Village in the northernmost town of Dilasag, Aurora, environment officials here reported on Wednesday.

Francisco Calinog, Andy Ortiz, and Francia Dasillo, residents of Sitio Mahogany, Barangay Masagana, found the bird along the Dilasag River. Unsure why the bird is in their area, they immediately contacted the local office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for proper handling and care.

Wildlife personnel of the DENR-Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) based in Casiguran, Aurora identified the migratory bird as Great White Pelican, or *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. It has a total body length of 87 centimeters, 35-cm veil, 61-cm wing span, 15-cm tarsus, and 21-cm tail.

According to Mercedita Bata, head of the CENRO in Casiguran, the pelican is in frail condition but does not have any sight of injury and may have been left behind by its flock while on migration.

CENRO Casiguran transferred the pelican to Global Zoo, a DENR-accredited wildlife rescue center here where it would be temporarily sheltered and released back to the wild upon recovery.

Paquito Moreno Jr., executive director of DENR in Central Luzon, explained that the Great White Pelican is a migratory bird species that commonly lives in the swamps and shallow lakes in southeastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

“The migratory population of pelicans inhabits eastern Europe and Asia during breeding and winter season, and usually dwells in freshwater lakes, marshes, swamps, or deltas,” he said, adding that one possible reason on why a pelican landed within the area was the presence of tropical freshwater and the sufficient amount of fishes, grasses, and reed beds, which breeding pelicans usually prefer for nesting.

Moreno urged the public to turn over migratory birds or any captured and rescued wild animals to environmental authorities for proper handling and care and to report also to the nearest DENR office in their area any illegal wildlife trade and online selling.

“Our migratory birds are critically at risk due to the negative consequences of human activities, especially poaching and illegal hunting,” he explained.



Moreno noted that migratory birds play an important ecological regulating service, especially in seed dispersion and flower pollination, and stressed that killing, trading or hunting this wildlife is a violation of the Section 27 of the Republic Act 9147, otherwise known as the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.

Any person found doing these unlawful acts may be imprisoned or be fined with a penalty ranging from P100,000 to P1 million, he said.

Study shows that the Great White Pelican is capable of long flights and swimming and can live up to 50 years. It can grow as big as 180 cm in length and as heavy as 15 kilograms, while its wingspan can grow as up to 360 cm.

Its unique characteristic is the “gular pouch” inside its beak while the legs are short and strong with fully webbed toes that allow it to propel itself in water, and to take off from the surface.

They are powerful fliers and often travel in flocks in a V-formation to reduce drag for the group, the study added.



A good year for the Philippine eagle in 2020, but not for its supporters

by Bong S. Sarmiento on 8 January 2021



- *The country's pandemic lockdown, among the longest and strictest in the world, curtailed field expeditions in the southern Mindanao region, impacting the conservation of the critically endangered Philippine eagles (*Phitecopaga jefferyi*).*
- *Despite the limitations, Philippine eagle conservationists and their partner agencies rescued seven eagles and sighted two new eagle families.*
- *Conservationists note that more eagles have been seen in the wild in Mindanao, among the last remaining bastions of the species, which means that conservation drives to educate communities are working.*
- *While 2020 was a productive year for eagle conservation, the pandemic crippled the steady stream of revenue coming from tourists visiting the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City.*

MINDANAO, Philippines — Efforts to conserve the critically endangered Philippine eagle, one of the rarest raptors in the world, soared high even amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the global havoc wreaked by the health crisis, the year 2020 ended on a high note for eagle conservationists, with at least two eagle families sighted in the Davao region of the southern Philippine island of Mindanao.

The Philippine eagle (*Pithecopaga jefferyi*) enjoys a special status as the national bird of the Southeast Asian nation, but faces extinction due to hunting and loss of habitat. Growing the population is difficult, as the birds are slow to reproduce. It takes them five to seven years to mature sexually, after which the female lays a single egg every two years.

There are only an estimated 400 nesting pairs of Philippine eagles left in the wild, so the sighting of new eagle families is always a milestone to celebrate for the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF), a nonprofit that has worked for more than 30 years in conserving the species.

Dennis Joseph Salvador, executive director of the PEF, said he's optimistic the protection of the Philippine eagle is off to a good start for 2021, given the achievements of 2020, which came despite the debilitating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the threats the birds face daily from human activities such as hunting and illegal logging.

"We have demonstrated over the past 30 years our commitment to conserve the mighty Philippine eagle and by hook or by crook, we will sustain that next year and in the years to come," he told Mongabay.



Conservation milestones

In addition to the sighting of new families, in the seven months that followed the March 2020 start of lockdown in the Philippines, the foundation rescued seven birds with the help of mobile technology and social media.

PEF credited this record number of rescues to heightened public awareness and involvement of local governments in eagle conservation, rather than to an uptick in the number of captured or injured birds.

Most of the rescued birds had been captured by trappers, with one sold for 8,000 pesos (around \$170) by the trapper to an outdoors enthusiast.

In some instances, rescuers had to work in the dead of night and traverse rugged terrain to fetch the distressed eagles hundreds of kilometers away in remote mountain villages.

Of the seven Philippine eagles rescued since the start of the lockdown, one died due to malnutrition, three were released back to the wild, and three remained at the PEF's rehabilitation center.

"We are very glad that despite the pandemic's travel and movement restrictions, we were able to save six of these seven precious birds, with three of them healed and successfully released back to their respective forest homes," Salvador said.



Despite his left eye injury, Philippine eagle Balikatan is very active prefers to "hunt" his prey, according to the PEF. Image courtesy of the PEF.

The PEF says successful rescues involve collaborating with a wide variety of actors, including concerned citizens reporting eagles in distress; officials from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local governments; as well as organizations that support the PEF. After each bird's release, it continues to be monitored with the aid of community volunteers and their respective village and Indigenous community organizations.

One such release came on July 28, as the world celebrated World Nature Conservation Day. The rescued eagle, named Makilala Hiraya, was released back into the wild, tagged with a GPS/GSM tracker on her back, in the first such event ever livestreamed on Facebook.

Sightings offer hope

But what astonished Philippine eagle conservationists last year were the sightings, a few weeks apart, of two families of the raptors: mated pairs and their offspring. The first family was spotted within Mount Apo Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) in November and the other in December within Mount Kampalili-Putting Bato KBA. Both KBAs are on the island of Mindanao.



Jayson Ibañez, research and conservation director at the PEF, said the organization has for years been searching for eagle nesting sites, particularly in Mindanao, where half of the estimated 400 nesting pairs of Philippine eagles are believed to live.

“The recent sightings of two families of Philippine eagles indicate that the forests where they’re seen are still pristine and rich in prey items for the raptors such as macaques, flying lemurs, hornbills, palm civets and snakes, among others,” he told Mongabay.

Unless disturbed or destroyed by human activities, Philippine eagle nest sites are considered ancient breeding grounds, since generations of eagle pairs will occupy the nest over and over again.

“Conserving these core areas of reproduction and keeping the nesting pair and their young safe is pivotal to the success of saving the species from being lost forever,” Ibañez said.



Eagle Siocon, a juvenile Philippine eagle rescued at the height of the country's pandemic lockdown last April, was the first eagle rescued during the pandemic. Siocon was released back to the wild with a GPS tracker last May. Image courtesy of the Philippine Eagle Foundation

In November, the PEF team, in collaboration with state-run Energy Development Corporation, which runs a geothermal power plant within Mount Apo, launched the “Search for the King of Birds” campaign in the area.

The team spent 192 observation hours deep in the forest and emerged victorious after at least eight sightings of nesting pairs of Philippine eagles and their offspring.

Ron Taraya, senior biologist and expedition leader at the PEF, told of how he and the team got within 200-300 meters (660-980 feet) of a juvenile Philippine eagle in the wild. The bird exhibited characteristics typical of a 2-year-old of the species: awkward hunting moves, lower flight confidence, and limited flight duration.

“It amused us watching the bird take on a group of long-tailed macaques foraging on an escarpment just in front of the waterfalls,” Taraya said.

The young raptor failed to kill the target macaque, as the group faced off with the bird and grunted threateningly, prompting the eagle to back off and fly into a tree above the ledge.

A few days prior to the close encounter with the juvenile, the team saw a pair of eagles feeding their young one with freshly killed prey following the latter’s “food begging calls.” During the expedition, the team also documented the juvenile’s parents’ aerial rituals that appeared to be a courtship routine.



“The two eagles mutually presented their talons in mid-air, called ‘talon presentation,’” Taraya said. “They also did several bouts of flying together in spirals, or ‘mutual soaring.’ Then they flew to different directions; one disappearing inside the deep gorge, while the other landed on an emergent tree. There, the eagle stayed on its perch cleaning its feathers with its beak, called preening. It was also seen scratching, stretching and moving its head. After performing these general maintenance behaviors, the eagle finally flew off and glided beyond the waterfalls until it disappeared behind the tree line.”



The Philippine eagle is considered the longest eagle in the world. Image courtesy of the Philippine Eagle Foundation.

In Mindanao, September to January is typically nesting season for Philippine eagles, and courtship displays precede each egg-laying event. Eagle pairs at several nest sites across Mindanao start their courtship rituals as early as July, and the routine can persist even after the pair has started rearing a chick.

The second sighting of a family of Philippine eagles, in early December, was in the town of Lupon, in the province of Davao Oriental, within Mount Kampalili-Puting Bato KBA. A team from the provincial government was assessing the area’s potential tourism sites when it spotted the birds.

Images of the juvenile perched on a tree and two bigger eagles were captured by a government photographer, Eden Jhan Licayan, which the PEF’s Ibañez later confirmed as being Philippine eagles.

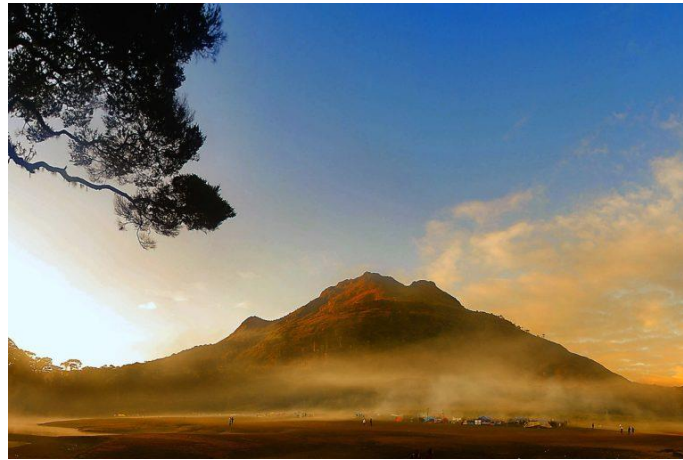
Ibañez said a single eagle pair needs 4,000-11,000 hectares (10,000-27,000 acres) of forest to thrive and multiply.

While roughly 200 eagle pairs are believed to survive in Mindanao, Ibañez said only 39 pairs have actually been documented. This means more expeditions are needed to get the real numbers, he said.

“We are very happy every time we discover new pairs,” Ibañez said. “It is important to locate the nesting sites so that we can put in place protective measures to ensure they will be out of harm’s way so that the species can reproduce and will not become extinct.”

The oldest nesting site within Mount Apo was discovered in the 1970s, near its foot. An eagle pair continues to frequent the area today, according to Ibañez. The birds can live up to 40 years.

The wider Mount Apo range spans at least 90,000 hectares (222,000 acres), of which only two-thirds are classified as a protected area, adding extra complexity to the task of protecting eagle habitat and nesting sites.



Mount Apo, the Philippines' highest mountain peak and volcano, is the stronghold of the Philippine eagles.

Image by Robert Anton Pimentel Aparente via Wikimedia Commons ([CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/))

The wider Mount Apo range spans at least 90,000 hectares (222,000 acres), of which only two-thirds are classified as a protected area, adding extra complexity to the task of protecting eagle habitat and nesting sites.

To help with the conservation of the forest and the Philippine eagles in Mount Apo KBA, the Davao City government engages Indigenous communities through its “Bantay Bukid” (Forest Guard) initiative. Under the scheme, some 200 Indigenous men have been recruited as volunteer forest guards, for which they get a monthly allowance of 2,000 pesos (about \$40), to patrol four identified nesting sites. Together, they keep watch over some 25,000 hectares (62,000 acres) of forest.

The Bantay Bukid program has significantly augmented the forest protection work force of the DENR in the area. From a ratio of one personnel for every 7,000 hectares (17,300 acres) of forest, the Bantay Bukid scheme has improved the guard presence to one person for every 200 hectares (500 acres).

“With many pairs of eyes watching over the forests, it helped deter timber and wildlife poaching activities,” Ibañez said, noting that the Indigenous women also benefit through livelihood projects.

Funding woes

Despite the successes in the field last year, the PEF has taken a financial beating from the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Ibañez and Salvador. The foundation has had to appeal to the public for donations to keep its work going amid the health crisis.

Salvador said the PEF’s rehabilitation center, which usually welcomes about 200,000 visitors annually, lost its main income stream as the pandemic forced it to shut to the public from March.

“We lost about a third of our revenues ... The large chunk of conservation money came from the gate receipts of the center,” he said, adding that the PEF has received the bulk of its funding from corporate and private contributors rather than from the government.

Ibañez said the center had lost some 2 million pesos (about \$40,000) per month due to the lockdown.

With the pandemic still unfolding, Salvador said short-term conservation efforts for the national bird pose a big challenge.



Mal'lambugok, a Mandaya term for the Philippine eagle, was turned over by a farmer last July. She was released back into the wild two months after. PEF's field crew saw her being chased by two Brahminy kites a month after her release, but she survived the ordeal, PEF says. Image courtesy of the PEF

"We're [financially] crippled due to lack of resources. Until this pandemic is effectively handled, the problem of lack of resources and policies associated in curtailing this pandemic will keep us grounded and unable to respond to the needs of the eagles in the wild," he said.

But despite the debilitating impact of COVID-19 on the PEF, Salvador said the foundation will try its best to respond to the needs of the Philippine eagles in captivity and in the wild. The foundation hasn't had to lay off any of its nearly 50 workers, thanks to the continuing support of its corporate sponsors, including some of the biggest companies in the Philippines.

To help get through the COVID-19 crisis, Salvador said they have launched crowdfunding initiatives through social media, appealing to the public for help in conserving the Philippine eagles.

The rehabilitation center reopened to the public in October, operating at a limited capacity and requiring visitors to book at least 24 hours in advance. To help recover the months of losses, the center raised its entrance fee to 300 pesos (\$6) and added extra activities, including a viewing of the short film *Kalayaan*, about a juvenile Philippine eagle's journey in the wild. Visitors need to wear face masks and face shields and observe physical distancing while in the facility, in line with wider efforts to fight the spread of COVID-19.

"Since we reopened our gates to the public, we have been receiving very few visitors but in some days, there's no one visiting at all," Ibañez said.

Banner image of Philippine eagle Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) was turned over by residents in the province of Surigao last September. Balikatan has an impaired eye and could no longer be released back into the wild, making him a permanent resident of the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City. Image courtesy of the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF).



Iconic PH eagle 'Pag-asa' dies

By Che Palicte January 9, 2021, 9:48 am



Photo of Pag-asa courtesy of Philippine Eagle Foundation

DAVAO CITY – The Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) on Friday announced the death of “Pag-asa”, the first Philippine eagle to be bred and hatched in captivity. He was 28 years old.

“The Philippine Eagle Foundation is sad to announce the passing of beloved Philippine eagle, Pag-asa. He succumbed to infections associated with Trichomoniasis and Aspergillosis. Both diseases are fatal for raptors. Although treatment was done over a week ago, he continued to deteriorate and died at 8:03 p.m. on January 6,” the PEF said in a statement.

Pag-asa was bred through artificial insemination and hatched through combined artificial and natural incubation techniques.

He was named after the Tagalog term for "hope" by the PEF team as awareness of conservation efforts on the endangered Philippine eagles increased after his hatching.

He was the first offspring of Philippine eagles Diola and Junior.

Then 29-year-old Diola laid the egg, and Junior, who is found in Agusan, donated the sperm.

She sat on the egg for 12 days before it was transferred to an incubator.

“Pag-asa would have turned 29 years old on Jan. 15, 2021. He was the first-ever Philippine eagle bred and hatched in captivity using the cooperative artificial insemination (CAI) techniques. Pag-asa’s birth – the culmination of 14 years’ worth of research – heralded hope for the critically endangered species and the entire conservation mission,” the foundation said.

Years after he was hatched, the PEF reached yet another milestone with Pag-asa in the form of his first and only offspring, “Mabuhay”, who was also bred and hatched through CAI.

Even after he retired from breeding, Pag-asa lived his life as an icon of hope for Filipinos, young and old, and was a constant inspiration to the people working tirelessly to save the country’s national bird from extinction, the PEF added.

“Pag-asa was gone too soon indeed, but his legacy lives on,” it said. **(PNA)**



Philippine Eagle na si 'Pag-asa' namatay na

By [Angie dela Cruz](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - January 9, 2021 - 12:00am



Si Pag-asa, ang unang Philippine Eagle na pinalaki at napisa gamit ang cooperative artificial insemination (CAI) techniques makaraan ang 14 taong research hanggang sa umabot ito sa 28 gulang.

Photo from Philippine Eagle Foundation Official via Facebook

MANILA, Philippines — Namatay na ang Philippine eagle na si Pag-asa matapos magkaroon ng impeksiyon dulot ng Trichomoniasis at Aspergillosis na sinasabing mapanganib sa mga raptors.

Ayon sa Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF), si Pag-asa na edad 28 ay ipinanganak noong 1992.

May mahigit isang linggo ring ginamot ang sakit ni Pag-asa pero patuloy na sumama ang pakiramdam ng agila at hindi na nakayanan ang sakit hanggang sa mamatay noong Enero 6.

Si Pag-asa, ang unang Philippine Eagle na pinalaki at napisa gamit ang cooperative artificial insemination (CAI) techniques makaraan ang 14 taong research hanggang sa umabot ito sa 28 gulang.

Taong 2013, nagtagumpay muli ang PEF nang manganak si Pag-asa na pinangalanang Mabuhay gamit din ang CAI.

“Even after he retired from breeding, Pag-asa lived his life as an icon of hope for Filipinos, young and old, and was a constant inspiration to the people working tirelessly to save our National Bird from extinction,” ayon sa PEF.

Ang Philippine Eagle na kinikilalang pinaka-malaking ibon ay makikita lamang sa Luzon, Samar, Leyte at Mindanao sa Pilipinas na pinangangambahang maubos. Mayroon na lamang 400 pares ang natitirang Philippine Eagle sa wild.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/bansa/2021/01/09/2069249/philippine-eagle-na-si-pag-asa-namatay-na/amp/>



Environment office on lockdown after employee contracts COVID-19

By: [Mar S. Arguelles](#) - Correspondent / [@msarguellesINO](#)

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 07:55 PM January 09, 2021

LEGAZPI CITY — The Albay Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) was placed on lockdown on Saturday after an employee tested positive for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Interagency Task Force for Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF) in Legazpi City said.

Legazpi City Mayor Noel Rosal, City IATF chairperson, said the lockdown of the PENRO office was for the conduct of contact tracing and to give sufficient time for the disinfection of the building and its premises.

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The closure would be lifted once contract tracing and the swabbing of close contacts of the patient are completed, Rosal said.

The PENRO office is the third government office in Albay that was placed on lockdown due to COVID-19 contagion.

The first office that was temporarily closed was the Department of Education regional office followed by the Government Service Insurance System Legazpi Branch.

/MUF



Climate change worse than pandemic

[BREAKTHROUGH](#) - [Elfren S. Cruz](#) (The Philippine Star) - January 10, 2021 - 12:00am

It seems that humankind is the victim of unnecessary catastrophes and the world is doomed to continuing this in the future. People like Bill Gates have been warning us about the possibility of pandemics during the last few years. When the epidemic started in China, it was kept a secret and most countries did not take the necessary preventive steps until the crisis worsened.

At the beginning there was no global effort to combat this epidemic; and even today the calls for a global approach is not being heeded. For example, “vaccine nationalism” is still the nationalist cry even in the richest countries as everyone scrambles to order some vaccines.

During this crisis, the world has set aside the concern for a much greater and longer lasting crisis. This is climate change. According to Gideon Rose, Executive Editor of Foreign Affairs Quarterly magazine: “Climate change is also a crisis. It is unfolding more slowly than its pandemic cousin but will have even vaster consequences. The world had a chance to tackle it early but blew that through decades of denial. Much future damage is baked in already. Yet wise public policy can still limit the scale of the eventual disaster – if everybody takes the challenge seriously across the board now...”

There have been many proposals to address the climate change crisis. International climate change agreements need to be reduced incentives for free riding. This means that industries like the fossil fuel and coal mining industries must also bear the burden of reducing future temperature increases and stop lobbying against efforts to combat climate change.

For the past three to four decades, policy makers and activists, like Greta Thurnberg, have kept calling for urgent action to address climate change. However, the climate has only grown worse.

In an article written by Michael Davidson, Jesse Jenkins, et al: “The benefit of climate change lies mostly in the future, and they will accrue above all to poor populations that do not have much voice in politics, whether in those countries that emit most of the world’s warming pollution or at the global level. The costs of climate action, on the other hand, are evident here and now and they fall on well organized groups with real political power. In a multipolar world without a responsible hegemon, any collective effort is difficult to organize. And the profound uncertainty about what lies ahead makes it hard to move decisively.”

The only good news in the battle against climate change is that while political obstacles are difficult to bring down, technological progress can make it easier by driving down the cost of action against global warming.

Electric power

Many articles have been written that the way to decarbonization is by shifting to electric power. For example, transportation accounts for 27 percent of global energy use and nearly all of it relies on oil. This is the reason there is so much interest in electric cars. In fact, with much improved batteries, heavy duty vehicles like trucks and buses could soon run also on electric power.

However, the use of electricity does not increase or reduce emissions on its own. It will still depend on whether the electricity that is the source of the energy may or may not be clean, depending on how it was generated. An electric car, for example, will not reduce global warming if all the electricity comes from conventional coal plants.



Once the world is able to convert the pollution-producing coal plants to clean energy plants, then it can focus on electrification of tasks that still rely on fossil fuels. Aside from transportation, heating is another process that can be electrified.

Davidson and Jenkins write: “Besides transportation, the most important electrification frontier is heating – not just in buildings but as part of industrial production, too. All told, heating consumes about half the energy that people and firms around the world use. Of that fraction some 50 percent goes into industrial processes that require very high temperatures such as the production of cement and steel, the refining of oil (including for plastics).”

Renewable energy will play the central role in the drive for clean energy. Thanks to the decreases in cost of wind and solar power equipment – together with a mature hydroelectric power industry – renewable energy already accounts for one quarter of global electricity production. In the US, the cost of electricity from large solar farms has gone down by 90 percent since 2009 and wind energy prices have fallen by nearly 70 percent. It is expected both will continue to drop.

Business sector

Most business leaders pay lip service to combating climate change, but there is still resistance to taking any steps that will negatively affect profit margins in the short term.

More than a third of global invested capital – about \$19 trillion – is controlled by the world’s largest asset owners. These companies are now realizing the long-term risk of climate change to their investments. These investment companies are now starting to push companies, where they have significant ownership share, to address climate change.

For example, Unilever came under pressure to stop using palm oil, the cultivation of which contributes to deforestation. Paul Polman, the company’s CEO, was able to persuade many of his fellow consumer goods CEOs to purchase palm oil which is covered by sustainability agreements. A group of more than 300 investors who control nearly half of the world’s invested capital formed Climate Action 100+ whose goal is to persuade top private sector carbon emitters to take action to reduce gas emissions in their companies and suppliers.

Together, the public and private sectors can still save humankind’s future from the ravages of global warming.

* * *

An invitation to young writers:

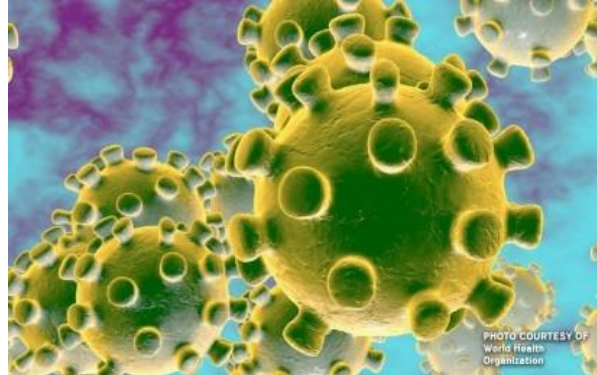
Young Writers’ Hangouts via Zoom will resume on Jan. 16 and 30, 2-3 p.m.
Contact writethingsph@gmail.com. 0945.2273216

Email: elfrencruz@gmail.com



PH logs 1.9K new cases; 291 more Covid-19 recoveries

By Marita Moaje January 9, 2021, 6:07 pm



MANILA – The country's recovery rate from the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic is now at 92.6 percent after the Department of Health recorded 291 new recoveries on Saturday.

However, the DOH also reported 1,952 new Covid-19 cases, raising the number of active cases to 26,784 or 5.5 percent of the total number of confirmed active cases.

The total number of Covid-19 recoveries is now at 449,615, out of a total of 485,797 cases in the country.

Of the total active cases, the DOH said Davao City remains to have the most number of new Covid-19 cases among the provinces and cities in the country with 143 new reported cases.

This was followed by Quezon City with 98 new Covid-19 cases, Rizal with 80 new cases, Cavite with 77, and Bulacan with 74.

The DOH said 83.1 percent of the total cases are considered to be mild, 8.6 percent are asymptomatic, 5.1 percent are critical, 2.8 percent are severe while 0.47 percent are moderate.

Meanwhile, the DOH reiterated its reminder to Black Nazarene devotees to just stay at home and attend virtual Masses for the annual feast.

It also reminded local government units to monitor the health condition of devotees and strictly impose minimum public health safety protocols. **(PNA)**



Deputy Speakers Mikee Romero and Rufus Rodriguez particularly cited Republic Act (RA) 11509 or the Doktor Para Sa Bayan Act, which provides scholarships for aspiring doctors.

Photo Release

House leaders laud enactment of additional pandemic response measure

[Edu Punay](#) (The Philippine Star) - January 10, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — House leaders yesterday lauded President Duterte for the timely enactment of additional measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deputy Speakers Mikee Romero and Rufus Rodriguez particularly cited Republic Act (RA) 11509 or the Doktor Para Sa Bayan Act, which provides scholarships for aspiring doctors.

They said the measure, signed by Duterte recently, would help boost the country's public health system by increasing the number of doctors.

"We thank President Duterte for signing this law that will benefit our nation, especially now that we need more doctors while facing the coronavirus pandemic," stressed Romero, author of the measure in the House of Representatives.

The 1-Pacman party list congressman explained that RA 11509 will provide scholarships at medical schools to qualified students.

He stressed that the country will benefit from the measure since the law requires scholars to serve in the public health and medical service system for a number of years after passing the physician licensure examination.

Rodriguez, also an author of the measure, explained that the law will result in having doctors in remote towns in the country.

"We are hoping that Republic Act No. 11509, which President Duterte signed last Dec. 23, will entice poor students in the provinces to pursue medical education through the program and eventually serve their community," he stressed.

The Cagayan de Oro congressman said the program is the answer to the problem of students from poor families who want to have a medical degree but cannot afford its high cost.

"It is also the answer to our lack of doctors in remote areas in the provinces, where many of the sick die without being attended to by a physician," he added.

He explained that under the law, each town in the country should have at least one qualified applicant in the medical scholarship and return service program.



In case there is no qualified student from a particular town, its slot may be given to an applicant from a nearby municipality.

Under the return service program, the new doctor-program beneficiary is required to render service in his town for one year for every year of his doctor of medicine degree, Rodriguez said.

In the case of a graduate who took the slot of a particular town, he will render service in that municipality, he said.

Thus eventually, all towns, however remote, will have at least one doctor, Rodriguez stressed.

The doctors will serve in government hospitals or health facilities and will hold positions and receive compensation commensurate to their education, he said.

The program offers full financial assistance to qualified students.

Aside from tuition and other school fees, it covers expenses such as allowance for prescribed books, supplies and equipment, clothing or uniform, dormitory or boarding house accommodation, transportation, internship fees, medical review fees, licensure fees, other related miscellaneous living or subsistence expenses and annual medical insurance.

Qualified applicants are to take their course at a state university or college, or an accredited private learning institution.

Apart from this law, President Duterte also signed three other crucial measures – RA 11517 which authorizes the President to expedite processing and issuance of national and local permits, RA 11510 or the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Act and RA 11511 or the amendment to the Organic Agriculture Act.

RA 11517 authorizes the President, in times of national emergency, to expedite the processing and issuance of national and local permits, licenses and certifications.

The law covers all agencies of the executive branch.

RA1511 or the Organic Agriculture Act, which is principally authored by Romero, amends to make the certification of organic produce by farmers and fishermen more affordable. The law will create the National Organic Agriculture Program-National Program Coordinating Office under the Department of Agriculture secretary's office.

“All these laws will definitely help lift our country, especially that we are still under the pandemic,” added Romero.

The House earlier passed the Bayanihan 1 and 2 laws and the 2021 national budget, which were formulated to provide relief and recovery measures while the nation faces the pandemic.



Massive flooding hits Visayas

At least 1,089 families were evacuated in Victorias, while 295 families with 1,589 individuals were affected in Silay

Published 2 hours ago on January 10, 2021 02:30 AM

By [Bella Cariaso](#)



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PCG PHILIPPINE Coast Guard personnel help evacuate 30 families in Barangay Jubasan and Barangay Sabang II in Allen, Northern Samar on Friday. Visayas neighbor Negros Occidental also experienced massive flooding.

Negros Occidental was hit by massive flooding after continuous rains Friday night, according to the Provincial Disaster Management Program Division (PDMPD).

In a radio interview, PDMPD head Zephard Caelian said thousands of families were evacuated.

“There are many cities and municipalities affected by the massive flooding because of the torrential rains. We experienced light to moderate, heavy and sometimes severe rains here in Negros Occidental,” he said.

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In a radio interview, PDMPD head Zephard Caelian said thousands of families were evacuated.

“There are many cities and municipalities affected by the massive flooding because of the torrential rains. We experienced light to moderate, heavy and sometimes severe rains here in Negros Occidental,” he said.



Among the areas affected were Talisay, Silay, Dimasolona, Victorias, Cadiz, Sagay and Escalante. Rescue operations were launched after residents were trapped.

“It was raining since last night (Friday). Rains started at 6 o’clock. We started the rescue operation from 2 o’clock and until 4 o’clock,” he added.



Based on initial reports from the local government units, at least 1,089 families were evacuated in Victorias, while 295 families with 1,589 individuals were affected in Silay after 19 villages were submerged. No casualties were reported.

“From the upper part of the cities and municipalities, the floods transferred to the areas near the sea, so the affected barangays are now those in coastal areas,” he said.

Caelian said that aside from the continuous rains, obstructions in river systems such as garbage and siltation contributed to the flooding.

Before Friday’s flooding, dredging operations were conducted in Victorias to prevent a repeat of the 1 January flash floods that affected about 15,000 families.

In Northern Samar, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) personnel helped evacuate 30 families in Barangay Jubasan and Barangay Sabang II in Allen town.

PCG also rescued 115 residents of Talisay and Victorias and took them to Catabla Covered Court and Victorias City Mall.



“If no action will be taken to address this concern, every rainfall will be a nightmare to everyone affected. Donation drives are helpful but residents deserve tangible solutions. They deserve safety,” netizen Ge-ann Ibañez posted on Facebook.

Before Friday’s flooding, Negros Occidental third district officials, led by Representative Francisco Benitez and Governor Eugenio Jose Lacson, ordered dredging operations in Victorias to prevent a repeat of the 1 January flash floods that affected about 15,000 families and damaged houses in Talisay, Silay, Victorias and EB Magalona.

Damage and losses to agriculture, fishery and livestock reached P20 million.

Bicol Region, too

Flooding and landslides were likewise reported in Sorsogon and Catanduanes provinces after heavy rainfall Friday.



Dong Mendoza, spokesperson of the Office of Governor Francis Escudero, said floods rendered the Banagao Spillway in Matnog town impassable to all types of vehicles.

A landslide also blocked a road network in Sitio Tiris, Barangay Osiao in Bacon.

In Catanduanes, floods and landslides were reported in Bato, Panganiban and Viga towns, according to the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office.

Barangay Bagumbayan in Bato is passable only to motorcycles while flooding due to river swelling affected roads and farmlands in Barangay Talisay.

In Panganiban and Viga, farmlands, roads and villages along the river channel were submerged.



Residents evacuated as flooding hits Talisay, Victorias in Negros Occidental

Published January 9, 2021 1:55pm

Updated January 9, 2021 1:57pm

Residents in Victorias, Silay and Talisay in Negros Occidental were evacuated from their homes since late Friday night due to flooding from heavy rains, according to a report on GMA News' Saksi.

The Philippine Coast Guard on Saturday said it has helped evacuate around 115 residents in Talisay City and Victorias City at around 1 a.m. on Saturday.

The residents were brought to Catabla Covered Court and the Victorias City Mall for temporary shelter.

The local government is extending assistance to the affected residents.

Philippine Coast Guard ✓
19 hours ago

TINGNAN: Humigit-kumulang 115 na residente ng Talisay City at Victorias City ang inilikas ng mga miyembro ng [Philippine Coast Guard \(PCG\)](#) kasunod ng malawakang pagbaha sa Negros Occidental bandang ala una ng madaling araw kanina, ika-09 ng Enero 2021.

Pansamantalang dinala ang mga residente sa Catabla Covered Court at Victorias City Mall para sa karagdagang tulong mula sa lokal na pamahalaan.

Ang pagbaha sa probinsya ay dulot ng malakas at tuluy-tuloy na buhos ng ulan kahap... [See More](#)

👍 2.3K 💬 80 ➦ 593



According to a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council initial report, 1,740 families in Negros Occidental were affected and evacuated.

Meanwhile, two bridges in Silay City, Negros Occidental were reported to be impassable.

Parts of Bicol region and the Eastern Visayas will experience [moderate to intense rains](#) in the next 24 hours due to the Tail-End of a Frontal System (Shear Line), PAGASA said on Saturday.

In its 11 a.m. advisory, PAGASA said Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Albay, Sorsogon, Ticao Island, and Northern Samar will have moderate to heavy with at times intense rains following the inclement weather.

Meanwhile, Camarines Norte, Masbate including Burias Island, Cagayancillo Islands, Antique, Aklan, Guimaras, Capiz, Iloilo, the northern and central portions of Negros Occidental, the northern portion of Cebu including Bantayan and Camotes Islands, Eastern Samar, Samar, Biliran, and Leyte will experience light to moderate with at times heavy rains. — **Joahna Lei Casilao/KG, GMA News**

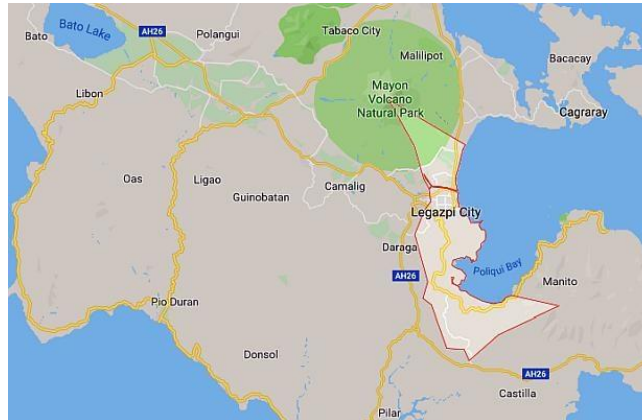
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Legazpi City on alert for flood, lahar flow

By: [Mar S. Arguelles](#) - Correspondent / [@msarguellesINO](#)

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 09:56 AM January 09, 2021



Legazpi City (outlined in red) in Albay (Image from Google Maps)

LEGAZPI CITY – The City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (CDRRMC) on Friday night raised a flood and lahar warning advisory in threatened low-lying villages here.

The advisory was issued after the local weather bureau issued a red rainfall alert due to the tail end of a frontal system affecting the eastern section of Southern Luzon.

A red rainfall warning is raised when heavy rains are expected and could produce 7.6 mm to 15 mm rain per hour, according to the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Service Administration (Pagasa).

Legazpi City Mayor Noel Rosal, CDRRMC chairman, activated all village DRRMOs in low-lying areas to implement preparedness measures including localized preemptive evacuation especially in villages near or along river channels prone to flooding, lahar flow and landslides.

The village officials were advised to implement the “no sailing” policy.

Residents were also warned not to cross swollen river and waterways.

gsg



UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration: New year, new hope for nature in ASEAN

By Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim-Executive Director, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity Published on January 9, 2021



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity joins the international community in amplifying the call for everyone to contribute to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Photo taken in Khao Yai National Park, a designated ASEAN Heritage Park in Thailand.

LAGUNA, Jan. 9 -- This year marks the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which is aimed at preventing, halting and reversing the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean while helping to end poverty, combat climate change, and prevent mass extinction. The United Nations General Assembly on 1 March 2019 proclaimed the period between 2021 and 2030 as such amidst the loss of nature that is happening at an unprecedented rate worldwide.

The ASEAN Member States, as parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), take great interest in this global initiative and actively participate in the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework that lays down targets and strategies in approaching this new decade. The region, being one of the richest on the planet in terms of biodiversity having 18 percent of the world's known plants and animals and one of the most vulnerable to climate change, has a larger stake in the global efforts to restore natural ecosystems from sea to land.

Ecosystem restoration is a holistic approach to assisting the recovery and reconstruction of degraded, damaged, or destroyed areas, with equal attention on conserving protected areas. Naturalist Sir David Attenborough in his recent documentary "A life on our Planet" made an emphatic appeal to "rewild the world" as the only way out of the crisis that mankind has created.

It is however crucially important that we share a positive attitude towards the environment. The unthinkable events of 2020 pushed many of us to reflect and reexamine our relationship with nature as it becomes even clearer that the loss and degradation of biodiversity undermines the web of life and increases the risk of disease spillover from wildlife to people. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Pandemics Risk Report reaffirmed this saying that reducing the human activities that drive the loss of biodiversity, conserving protected areas, and adopting measures that reduce unsustainable exploitation of high biodiversity regions will reduce wildlife-livestock-human contact and help prevent the spillover of new diseases.

In 2021, it is time that we shift our next gear and take action.

Against this backdrop, I would like to emphasise the significant role of biodiversity conservation and other nature-based solutions in our recovery efforts, from addressing risks posed by the pandemic, to providing jobs and livelihood for communities.



The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 provides the framework for the region's ecosystem restoration and conservation efforts and strategies. Let me also echo the recent statement of ASEAN Secretariat Deputy Secretary-General Kung Phoak in a webinar on Wildlife Conservation and Zoonotic Diseases co-organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity in November last year that our recovery efforts should be seen as an opportunity to explore ways and leverage existing partnership and initiatives towards a more collective and coordinated response.

We note the value of existing greening initiatives in the ASEAN Region that support ecosystem restoration. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources will plant 100 million trees under the Greening Malaysia Program from 2021 to 2025, an initiative that will involve participation of the whole of society, including members of the private sector. As of 2020, the Philippine government planted 35.6 million seedlings covering around 45,000 hectares of denuded and open forestland across the country, completing 95 per cent of its target under the national greening programme. The region needs more of these initiatives that have both short-term and long-term positive impacts on the environment and the wellbeing of the people.

The ongoing work of the ACB contributing to steps to combat COVID-19 and other zoonoses takes off from the positions of the ASEAN leaders, such as the Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19, the ASEAN Strategic Framework for Public Health Emergencies, and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and Implementation Plan. The ACRF identified the ACB's role in enhancing cross-sectoral coordination with other ASEAN bodies particularly with the ASEAN Working Group on CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and Wildlife Enforcement on the efforts of enforcing wildlife protection laws and improving wildlife habitats, as well as the implementation of the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme, of which the ACB is the secretariat.

Similarly, the renewed traction of the One Health approach, which aims to attain optimal health for people, domestic animals, wildlife, plants, and environment, provides an excellent opportunity to embed nature considerations into the policy-making and other development processes in many ASEAN countries. Setting the dire consequences of the pandemic aside, this makes us optimistic about the future.

Despite some shortcomings in the past decade, we continue to press on in 2021. Originally planned for October 2020, the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the CBD in Kunming, China, in May this year, is expected to adopt the landmark post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

More than a branding, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration counts on transformative steps, huge or small, that the world is taking to conserve and protect ecosystems. It calls for a change of mindsets and deep-set habits from the way we consume food and energy and our choice of products to sustain our living, to business models and decision making.

This year, we join the international community in amplifying the call for each and everyone's earnest participation in this ambitious effort to save the planet and equally biodiversity and humankind. (ACB)



South Asian river dolphin.

Wikimedia Commons

Three arrested for beating endangered dolphin to death in India

(Agence France-Presse) - January 9, 2021 - 12:05pm

NEW DELHI, India — Police arrested three people in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on Friday for beating an endangered dolphin to death with an axe.

In a video shared widely in the Indian press and on social media, a group of men are shown beating the Gangetic dolphin with sticks and rods before one of them drives an axe into its body.

"The incident happened on December 31 and we have arrested three people in connection with the assault," local policeman Dinesh Prasad told AFP over the phone.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, there are only between 1,200 and 1,800 of the endangered species left in the world.

Prasad said the motive for killing the marine mammal, which is also known as the Ganges River dolphin, remained unclear.

The lifeless dolphin was found next to a canal by officials from the local forest department, according to Indian media reports.

In the video, one of the men in the group can be heard telling the attackers that they "killed the dolphin for no reason."

The dolphin -- which can weigh up to 170 kilogrammes and can only live in freshwater -- is only found in Nepal, Bangladesh and India.



Three arrested after endangered Ganges river dolphin beaten to death in India

By Rishabh Madhavendra Pratap and Kara Fox, CNN

Updated 1302 GMT (2102 HKT) January 9, 2021



The carcass of the endangered Ganges river dolphin was found on the banks of the Sharda canal in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagrah district on December 31.

New Delhi, India (CNN) Police in [India's](#) northern Uttar Pradesh state have arrested three people allegedly involved in the killing of the endangered Ganges river dolphin after a video of the grim incident went viral on social media, according to local police.

Investigating officer Akhilesh Pratap Singh told CNN that the dolphin's carcass was found on the embankment of the Sharda canal in the Prayagrah district on December 31.

On Thursday, three individuals allegedly seen on the video were arrested, police said. Nine people -- also seen on the video -- are currently still on the run, according to Singh.

The video shows a group of men with sticks and an ax bludgeoning the dolphin to death. Some laughed as the dolphin's near lifeless body was pulled around by its fin in the shallow water.

Forest officer Varun Singh, who was part of the initial investigation, told CNN the dolphin had been an adult Ganges river dolphin.

The Ganges river dolphin was "once present in tens of thousands of numbers" but has now "dwindled abysmally" to a population to less than 1,800 in the last century, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) India.

"Living in one of the most densely populated parts of the world, the Ganges river dolphin faces threats from agriculture and industrial pollution and other human activity such as dam creation, irrigation projects and fishing," according to the WWF, who [says](#) that development "divides and isolates populations."

The rare freshwater dolphin is essentially blind, and is known locally as "susu," a reference to the noise it makes when it breathes, according to the WWF.

When it hunts, the dolphin emits ultrasonic sounds that bounce off fish and other prey that allows them to visualize an image in their mind.

Female Ganges river dolphins give birth once every two to three years to only one calf, according to the WWF.

10 JANUARY 2021, SUNDAY



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