



Joined by leaders of intergovernmental organisations and multilateral environmental agreements, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim speaks on the value of regional and subregional cooperation in the conservation of migratory species at the meeting of a UN body on migratory species in India.

Multi-country cooperation advances migratory species' conservation – ACB

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) underscored the importance of regional and multi-country cooperation in optimising resources for biodiversity conservation, particularly in protecting migratory species and their habitats.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim joined leaders of intergovernmental organisations and multilateral environmental agreements at the high-level segment *Priorities for Migratory Species Conservation in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework* held on the eve of the 13th Meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP 13) in Gandhinagar, India, from 17 to 22 February 2020.

“Ecological connectivity is being addressed in the current regional and international cooperation. The information exchange, data sharing, and the capacity building that we do at the regional level in the ASEAN allow us to maximise our resources,” Lim said.

With Lim in the panel were Amy Fraenkel, Acting Executive Secretary of the CMS Secretariat, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Acting Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention, Ovais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, John Scanlon, Special Envoy of African Parks, and Ivonne Higuero, Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The segment highlighted discussions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and “ecological connectivity” as the CMS’s top priority in the framework.

Lim noted that the ASEAN Member States (AMS) share many species and, thus, efforts to protect them will be successful if countries work together and create partnerships across sectors.

...continued on page 3

What's Inside?



ASEAN Programme sends 2 youth leaders to biodiversity negotiations in Rome page 7



ASEAN highlights long-term health measures amid COVID-19 pandemic page 9

ASEAN joins second round of negotiations for new global biodiversity framework

Rome, Italy — The ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) took part in the second round of negotiations over the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which pushed through despite reports of an outbreak of COVID-19 in northern Italy.

“The ASEAN Member States and the ACB are determined to actively participate in the development of this new framework that will be our guide in reversing biodiversity loss and safeguarding life on Earth in the years to come,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

Over a thousand delegates from 149 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and representatives and observers from international organisations, indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society, the academe, and subnational and local organisations gathered at the Food and Agriculture Organization’s headquarters on the first day of the second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which ran from 24 to 29 February 2020.

The OEWG was created during the 14th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the CBD in Egypt in 2018 to develop the framework, which is expected to be adopted at the 15th Conference of the Parties. The framework will serve as a global guide on the implementation of the CBD and other international agreements relating to biodiversity in the longer-term after 2020. Parties to the CBD aim not only to stop the continuing loss of biodiversity but also to scale up its restoration and recovery.

The first meeting of the OEWG was held in August 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya, where parties and observers made their initial views on the



The second round of negotiations over the post-2020 global biodiversity framework touted as the “landmark agreement on biodiversity” pushed through in Rome, Italy. Photo by IISD/Mike Muzurakis (enb.iisd.org/biodiv/post2020/oewg/2/24feb.html)

contents of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The second meeting was supposed to take place in Kunming, China, but was relocated to Rome, Italy due to the ongoing health emergency in China.

Lim, who served as the Philippines’ expert to the Informal Advisory Group on Mainstreaming Biodiversity, noted in the plenary session that mainstreaming biodiversity, which requires “a whole of government and a whole of society approach” must be part of the framework’s overarching goals and must not be limited to tools and solutions.

“Mainstreaming is, in fact, arguably the most significant component to meet the ambitious goals for the framework, from net gains to resource mobilisation and transformative change; it is needed to address the urgency of biodiversity loss...Mainstreaming needs to be moved up in the current zero draft of the framework, to an overarching category, like a chapeau of the framework,” Lim said.

Some member states of the ASEAN delivered on the floor their general comments on the zero draft of the framework, a copy of which was

published by the CBD Secretariat on its website in January this year.

Singapore, in a statement delivered by Dr. Lena Chan, Senior Director of International Biodiversity Conservation of Singapore’s National Parks Board, underscored the need to ensure that the process is inclusive and involves all levels.

Singapore propounded the crucial role of cities in the implementation of the framework. “The most effective level that has administrative capacity to organise, monitor, and report is the city level. This is particularly relevant and appropriate as there are more people living in cities than rural areas. Moreover, there is rich biodiversity in cities,” Chan said.

Malaysia’s Ministry of Water, Land, and Natural Resources Secretary-General Datuk Zurinah Binti Pawanteh, on the other hand, noted the importance of aligning major actions under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Malaysia said the framework should incorporate three important elements – resource mobilisation, capacity-building and mainstreaming.

...continued on page 5

ACB supports integrating biodiversity into rescue, restoration in areas hit by eruptions

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) expressed its readiness to provide support in activities that will save the remaining biodiversity in areas that were affected by the eruptions of Taal Volcano.

“With our headquarters based in CALABARZON, we, at the ACB, are ready to support activities that will look into the impact of such natural disasters on biodiversity, including wild species of flora and fauna, and how these impacts can be mitigated or reduced,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

The restive Taal Volcano, which is located 60 kilometres away from Metro Manila, spewed ash for several days in January, which threatened to lead to a “hazardous” eruption, according to reports.



Ash emitted by Taal Volcano in the province of Batangas can be seen as a dark cloud hovering above Mount Makiling in the province of Laguna. Photo by EJ Lagrimas

Lim commended the pronouncements of the Philippines’ Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other concerned groups in saving stranded animals and

wildlife in affected areas, noting the necessity for the enforcement of an evacuation plan for animals during emergencies.

...continued on page 12

Multi-country cooperation advances migratory species’ conservation – ACB ...continued from page 1

This, in the process, will benefit not just the species, but communities living in and around the species’ habitats as well.

Lim likewise cited the importance of transboundary cooperation in the conservation of Irrawaddy dolphins, which roam around the waters of Myanmar, Cambodia, Viet Nam, and Lao PDR.

In the development of the post-2020 framework, the ACB assured a more active involvement of the ASEAN as a region.

“We are no longer thinking about being on the receiving end of the framework. The ASEAN Member States are actively participating in the shaping of the post-2020 framework,” Lim said noting that the ACB, as an intergovernmental organisation created by the AMS, “bridges the international and

national” in addressing issues on migratory species conservation.

Meanwhile, Fraenkel of CMS noted that the framework must address both the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, citing measures in the infrastructure and energy sectors that reduce impacts on biodiversity and efforts to integrate biodiversity considerations in the countries’ economic planning.

India hosted the CMS COP 13 with the theme *Migratory species connect the planet and we welcome them home*. This kicked off “the super year” for nature, which will include the UN Climate Action Summit in September and the UN Biodiversity Conference at the end of 2020 when a new global biodiversity strategy for the next decade or the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

In the ASEAN region, Malaysia, in collaboration with the ACB, will host the Third ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity or ACB 2020, which will gather at least 500 representatives, conservation experts, and stakeholders from the AMS. Malaysia will also host back-to-back high-level meetings, including the ASEAN High-Level Ministerial Meeting on Biological Diversity. Outputs from these meetings are expected to feed into the region’s position on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The schedule of the ACB 2020 and the other meetings, originally slated to take place from 16 to 20 March 2020 but postponed due to the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic, is still being determined.

Reducing demand for pangolins nips trade in the bud – ASEAN biodiversity expert

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) commended the rescue of pangolins and other threatened species in Palawan and South Cotabato in the Philippines, citing the role of communities in combatting wildlife trafficking.

“The recent rescue of wild animals demonstrates the seriousness of the Philippine government, with the help of community organisations, in enforcing its wildlife trafficking law and its commitment to strengthening cooperation with fellow ASEAN Member States in campaigns to end wildlife trafficking,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

Twenty live pangolins (*Manis culionensis*) were reportedly recovered from a wildlife trafficker in January in El Nido, Palawan, in the Philippines. According to reports, the joint operation was conducted by the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, Bantay Palawan Task Force, Naval Forces West, Joint Task Force Malampaya, 3rd Marine Company of Marine Battalion Landing Team 3, local environment

office, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Pangolins, which are found throughout Southeast Asia, are considered one of the world’s most trafficked mammals.

“Stopping the poaching of pangolins, which is an ASEAN-wide problem, entails the reduction of the demand for it. There is no scientific evidence that shows pangolin scales have high medicinal value,” Lim said.

Lim stressed the need to raise public awareness on the important roles of pangolins, which provide pest control and improve soil quality in ecosystems.

In a separate incident, an adult male tarsier that found its way into the hands of children in Koronadal City, South Cotabato, was rescued by a villager.

The Philippines is enforcing the Republic Act No. 9147, otherwise known as the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, which provides for the conservation

and protection of wildlife and their habitats and prohibits trade and transportation of wildlife species.

“On several occasions, members of communities have become first responders in the rescue of wild animals. The success of wildlife conservation greatly depends on the people’s awareness of and attitudes towards wildlife conservation,” Lim, former chair of the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network and former director of the Philippines’ Biodiversity Management Bureau under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said.

The Philippines and the rest of the ASEAN Member States are parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international agreement among governments, aimed at ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.



Knowledge Management is the systematic and strategic organisation of information, skills, and knowledge assets of an entity and its workforce. This includes the creation, storage, sharing, and communicating knowledge within and outside the organisation.

Having an effective knowledge management system results to a more efficient and productive workforce; and to the effective management of knowledge, which is an important asset of any organisation.

From 27 to 29 February 2020, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) conducted the *Knowledge Management Planning Writing Workshop* in Muntinlupa City, Philippines. The three-day workshop was facilitated by Dr. Serafin Talisayon, Director for Research and Development of the Community and Corporate Learning for Innovation Philippines. Through the workshop, the team intends to draft a comprehensive ACB Knowledge Management Plan for 2020–2025.



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) joined the Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region III, Macagatal Irrigators Association, Local Government of Candaba and Barangay Paligui, and the Pampanga State Agricultural University for the celebration of the World Wetlands Day on 6 February 2020. For this year, the annual celebration carried the theme *Wetlands and Biodiversity*.

At the event, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said given that wetlands are dynamic and productive ecosystems, new technologies may be tapped to benefit the wetlands’ farmers and fisherfolk.

In her keynote speech, Philippine Senator Cynthia Villar, chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, said 78 per cent of coastal wetlands in the Philippines have been destroyed in the past 30 years. It is thus important to engage the public, especially the youth, in the conservation of wetlands.

ASEAN joins second round of negotiations...

...continued from page 2

The ACB, during the contact group discussions on goals and targets, suggested taking a closer look at the three objectives of the CBD, such as “the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources” as the implementation of these objectives are interlinked with other biodiversity-related conventions and international agreements.

“Crafting a global biodiversity framework that is ambitious yet achievable and inclusive is a common interest in the ASEAN region. We hope that the lessons from implementing the Convention through the previous strategic plans will help the ASEAN and the rest of the world to be better prepared in addressing the challenges of biodiversity loss, of truly living in harmony with nature,” Lim said.

ASEAN training on biodiversity information sharing tool goes online

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) conducted a three-day online training on the use of the Bioland Tool, an online platform designed to help parties to the CBD with the curation and sharing of biodiversity data.

The webinar, which took place from 25 to 27 March 2020, was designed as a preliminary activity to the *Regional Workshop for the ASEAN on National Clearing-House Mechanisms*, which was originally slated for 8 to 12 March 2020 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, but was postponed due to growing concerns on the spread of the Coronavirus disease or COVID-19.

In the two-step webinar, the SCBD oriented the Biodiversity Information Management staff of the ACB on the use of the platform from 11 to 13 March 2020. The ACB team then trained the information technology and technical staff from the ASEAN Member States (AMS).

The training was designed to address technical barriers faced by the AMS in effectively establishing their

respective national Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) websites, which would be part of the global network with the CBD website serving as a central node.

Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch, Information Systems Officer of the Secretariat of the CBD, served as the main resource speaker of the training with support from the biodiversity information management team of the ACB.

The CHM of the CBD was established to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation, and sharing of biodiversity information among States, towards the successful implementation of national biodiversity strategies and plans, which will eventually contribute to the achievement of global biodiversity targets.

“As parties to the CBD, the AMS are encouraged to establish and maintain their national CHMs that will serve as a rich biodiversity information resource in their respective countries,” said Dr. Sheila Vergara, the ACB’s director of Biodiversity Information Management.

The Bioland Tool, which the parties to the CBD and its secretariat have developed, is a user-friendly portal that provides templates for uploading various content to a national CHM. It can be customised to meet its user’s specific needs.

“In the region, we have the ASEAN CHM, which provides a wide range of services, information, capacity-building guides, and tools to support the AMS in conservation planning, monitoring and science-based decision making,” Vergara explained.

Some of ASEAN CHM’s features are the species database, invasive alien species database, information on the ASEAN Heritage Parks, and an e-library.

The ACB is working with the Scientific Advisory Committee of ACB to develop a roster of biodiversity experts. This database will make it easier to locate and identify individuals and institutions sharing a common interest in biodiversity conservation, as well as scientists, researchers, and biodiversity experts in the ASEAN region.

ASEAN Programme sends 2 youth leaders to biodiversity negotiations in Rome



ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Leaders Kittikun Saksung from Thailand (front row, second from left) and Karl Png Jun Qiang from Singapore (back row, second from left) join the delegation of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network in a group photo with Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity Elizabeth Maruma Mrema (back row, seventh from left).

As part of its efforts to empower the youth in conserving biodiversity, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), through the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme (AYBP), sent two youth leaders to the second round of negotiations about the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in Rome, Italy.

The second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework was held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization from 24 to 29 February 2020, with over a thousand delegates from 149 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and representatives and observers from international organisations, indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society, academe, and subnational and local organisations in attendance.

Two Youth Biodiversity Leaders (YBL) from the YBL fellowship 2019 Cohort, namely Karl Png Jun Qiang from Singapore and Kittikun Saksung from Thailand, were selected to participate in the second OEWG meeting and a two-day training on CBD protocols, policy-making, and negotiations.

The training was organised by the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), an international network of youth organisations and individuals that serves as the official youth constituency in the negotiations under the CBD.

“In the ASEAN region, over 65 per cent of the population is under 35 years old. Being the next generation to inherit the planet, young people have a key stake in shaping and implementing policies related to biodiversity, the Earth life support system,” Mika Tan, coordinator of the AYBP, said.

The AYBP, an initiative of the ACB and the European Union through the project *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* or BCAMP, provides ASEAN youth with capacity building, mentorship and resources to scale their impact for biodiversity conservation.

Tan said the youth leaders from ASEAN gained first-hand exposure to international processes and policy negotiations on biodiversity, so that they may bring these global discussions down to the national

and local levels in their respective communities and actualise policies on the ground.

She said the most effective policies that galvanise broad support are also the ones that reflect the needs of the peoples. The youth leaders also brought with them the views of the youth from Southeast Asia to the policy discussions. They highlighted to decision makers about the central role of education – transformative education – for us to be able to promote values and eventually shift behaviours for transformative change towards a future living in harmony within nature.

Youth leaders in biodiversity conservation like Kittikun Saksung and Karl Png Jun Qiang are being trained under the YBL fellowship programme, in which 20 outstanding young leaders each year are selected from a rigorous open application process to join the fellowship Cohort for the year. The 2020 Cohort of YBLs will be beginning their one-year fellowship this year.



ACB rolls out secondment programme to diversify workforce

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) signed a financing agreement with the German development agency *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH for an initiative that allows nationals from ASEAN Member States (AMS) to work in its headquarters under an enhanced secondment programme.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim and Franca Sprong-Wijnreder, Coordinator of the GIZ Biodiversity and Marine Protection Cluster, led the signing ceremony held at the ACB headquarters in the Philippines, on 27 January 2020. Accompanying them were Assistant Director of ASEAN Secretariat's Community Affairs Directorate Romeo Abad Arca Jr. and Juergen Richter, Project Director of GIZ.

With funding support coming from the GIZ, the ACB secondment programme is a capacity-enhancement initiative that aims to promote and facilitate the direct participation of nationals from the AMS in carrying out selected functions of the ACB through temporary assignments.

"We have identified this programme as one of the effective approaches to capacity building. Through this intervention, learning experience and cultural exchange through face-to-face interactions and actual hands-on application of biodiversity-related concepts are maximised. This also enhances the efforts of ACB to diversify and have a wider representation of ASEAN nationals," Lim said in her speech.

The programme, which started in 2010, has engaged 25 secondees who have taken various assignments at ACB from one week to three months. Lim said the ACB has revitalised the programme with the secondment period for accepted individuals running for one to two years.

"This next phase underlines Germany's continuing commitment to supporting the ASEAN Region in achieving its biodiversity goals, through the ACB. May ASEAN's governments grow ever stronger in performing their mandate to protect the region's rich biodiversity, to secure a prosperous future for the ASEAN's more than 600 million people," Sprong-Wijnreder said.

The applicant to the Secondment Programme must be a citizen of an AMS, aged between 30 and 58, and currently employed by a government agency or occupying professional, technical, midlevel management position in a university, research, policy development or an advocacy organisation.

Additionally, the applicant must have sufficient exposure on any of the thematic areas that are part of ACB's thrusts and mandate and must be willing and able to travel in areas within and outside ASEAN to do assigned tasks.

The ACB will prepare the terms of reference for the expected functions of seconded AMS personnel and announce the programme through the Governing Board and ACB's website.

"We trust that the secondees will help the ASEAN in developing a 'regional mindset' that will be key to the achievement of the region's biodiversity goals," Lim said.



ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim (second), and Franca Sprong-Wijnreder, Project Director and Cluster Director Biodiversity and Marine Protection ISB II Project of GIZ (third), signed a financing agreement for the ACB's Secondment Programme. With them were Assistant Director of ASEAN Secretariat's Community Affairs Directorate Romeo Abad Arca Jr. (leftmost) and Juergen Richter, Project Director of GIZ (rightmost).

ASEAN highlights long-term health measures amid COVID-19 pandemic



Photo by Aung Thu Ya

As parts of the world come to a standstill to stop the spread of the new Coronavirus disease or COVID-19, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) underscores the importance of taking a long-term view of the situation and integrating biodiversity into the design and implementation of health programmes and policies.

"We take some lessons from this pandemic and enjoin governments, conservation organisations, and partners to ensure that our health programmes, policies, and strategies consider the linkages of health and biodiversity," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

Lim, who served as chair of the 21st Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2017, highlighted the previous recommendations of the science body in connection with mainstreaming biodiversity into health.

Based on the recommendations adopted by parties to the CBD during the 21st SBSTTA meeting, biodiversity and health programmes can be harmonised through measures that strengthen ecosystems and take a holistic approach to health.

"It is time to view environmental health and human health as one. Our health greatly depends on functioning ecosystems, which regulate climate change and diseases, not to mention their role in providing us with food, air, water, and raw materials for our medicines," Lim said.

"Human activities, such as illegal logging, poaching, and indiscriminate land and land-use conversion, have driven biodiversity decline in the ASEAN region. Measures to curb these would help in keeping ecosystems and habitats of wildlife intact," she added.

The ACB with the International Institute for Global Health of the United Nations University, the academic and research arm of the United Nations, is conducting an assessment on possible areas of collaboration among the ASEAN Member States and ASEAN bodies, following the regional workshop to tackle the interlinkages of human health and biodiversity held in Manila, Philippines, from 5 to 7 November 2018. The workshop was convened by the ACB, CBD Secretariat, and the World Health Organization, with the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Health.

In his statement during the workshop, Philippine Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III said that while social and environmental changes linked to urbanisation, mobility, and deforestation created new opportunities for infection, healthy and stable natural ecosystems can, on the other hand, prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Lim said among the recommended actions during the workshop were the establishment of resource data centres for zoonotic diseases and state of biodiversity in emerging disease hotspots, and coordination mechanisms for joint surveillance.

Greening cities to improve overall mental health and conducting inventory and mapping of endangered medicinal and nutritional species in ASEAN were also suggested.

"As the issues that give rise to infectious diseases overlap with the drivers of biodiversity loss, every immediate response against the spread of diseases can be bolstered by long-term actions to improve human health and wellness," Lim said.

Myanmar's Indawgyi Lake villagers form network vs illegal logging



Photo by Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary Park Management

In a tea shop at Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (ILWS), information about illegal logging activities gets passed around. A verified tip-off from a concerned individual could often lead to the detection of areas with log piles.

This initiative from communities surrounding the lake and its forests has prompted Fauna & Flora International (FFI) to formally set up a network of informants against illegal logging and other forest crimes in January 2018, with support from the Small Grants Programme (SGP) of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the German Development Bank (KfW). FFI is an international wildlife conservation organisation supporting local civil society organisations in Myanmar.

ILWS has been identified as one of the pilot sites of the SGP, an ongoing project that aims to conserve biodiversity and improve livelihoods in and around ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) of Indonesia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

SGP also works to enhance the capacity of local organisations and

support the collaboration of all governmental, non-governmental, academic, and private sector organisations towards biodiversity conservation.

Mark Grindley, country director of FFI Myanmar Country Programme, said activities to raise awareness on the importance of conserving protected areas are being done to persuade community members to report forest crimes to authorities.

"Initially, the network has 10 members. It grew over time with 50 participants from different age and ethnic groups and professional backgrounds," he said.

While the information received is shared right away with the management of ILWS, the informants' identities have been kept confidential for security reasons.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said the contributions of the communities at ILWS prove how invaluable community participation is in biodiversity conservation.

"Communities are our best allies in biodiversity conservation. Since they reside in and around ILWS, they have a greater stake in the sustainable management of its resources. They are also the ones who immediately take the brunt of the effects of biodiversity loss," Lim said.

Law enforcement as priority

ILWS, one of Myanmar's eight AHPs, is one of country's high conservation value areas as it teems with the world's most threatened species, such as the Eastern hoolock gibbon, Shortridge's langur, Asiatic black bear, Chinese pangolin, and gaur.

Its pristine lake and evergreen forests support over 20,000 migratory water birds and the 50,000 people living in and around the area.

But this peace and calm at ILWS is often disturbed by growls of lumber mills, reverberating signs that illegal loggers are present in the area. One may follow trails of logging activities through roads built and sights of

elephants carrying logs from steep mountain slopes.

Lim said illegal logging activities, among others, threaten the population and diversity of wildlife. "With the emergence of infectious diseases, we have seen the consequences of degradation of habitats and overharvesting of wildlife and vegetation to public health and safety. Recent global events remind us of biodiversity's role in regulating these diseases," Lim added.

As illegal logging activities continue to put a strain on the biodiversity of ILWS, law enforcement has been identified as one of the priorities in the sanctuary's first-ever Collaborative Management Plan (CMP).

With the SGP's assistance, park authorities and members of the communities, and local organisations like the FFI worked together to craft the CMP. The CMP lays down action plans for five years, from 2017 to 2022.

Under the ACB, the SGP has been working closely with the FFI in boosting law enforcement activities in the area. Apart from the informants' network, community rangers were recruited to support the forest and lake patrol units at ILWS.



Photo by Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary Park Management

Similarly, road barriers to protect forest areas in the core zone have been set up. In November 2018, a community-based forest monitoring unit was created following the existing patrol guidelines. With park authorities, this unit conducts patrols monthly to monitor threats at ILWS.

Grindley said that since the formation of the informants' network in 2018, 13 logging businesses and their sites have been reported to the authorities. Twenty-six logging camps were also detected by the ILWS management, 22 of which were reported by the network.

He pointed out, however, that a major challenge to the ILWS park management and the local authorities is ensuring that all information received is acted upon.

Timber logging on a decline

An FFI report dated 14 November 2019 said illegal timber logging at ILWS has been on a decline following the improvement in the law enforcement and patrols.

The downward trend has been confirmed by multiple monitoring mechanisms and data sources, according to the report.

The number of distinct logging operations reported by the informants' network decreased from 30 in the first half of 2018 to less than five in the second half of 2019.

The number of logs and sawn timber found in the forest likewise decreased from 250 pieces in the first half of 2018 to zero in the second half of 2019, based on the data generated by the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) approach. The SMART approach combines standardised patrol data collection, and site-based database management and decision-making, with an emphasis on capacity building and best practices for protection.

The FFI likewise cited the creation of the informants' network and the community-based forest monitoring units, along with SMART approach being employed and the established road barriers, as contributing factors to robust monitoring of data on forest crimes and the reduction of illegal logging cases.

Lim likewise underscored the capacity enhancement activities being conducted to cultivate environmental stewardship among the members of the communities.

With 50 active members helping the ILWS' park management, which at present employs 14 staff members, the informants' network provides a strong boost to the management's law enforcement.

"We aim to foster a strong collaboration between the government and members of the communities. As this partnership is sustained, we hope to curb illegal logging, along with other forest crimes that drive degradation of habitats and biodiversity loss," Lim said.

Myanmar's ASEAN Heritage Park Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary designated flyway network site

Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, an ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP) in Myanmar, was recently declared a flyway network site in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF), one of the nine major flight paths of migratory waterbirds in the world.

Myanmar's second largest lake located in the Nyaungshwe Township of Taunggyi District of Shan State, Inlay Lake joins the list of important sites identified by the EAAF Partnership (EAAFP) as internationally important for migratory birds.

The EAAFP is a network of partners within the flyway, aiming to protect migratory waterbirds, their habitats, and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them.

One of EAAFP's partners is the ASEAN Flyway Network (AFN), a virtual network of flyway site managers and other key stakeholders in the ASEAN region that facilitates regional cooperation in the conservation of migratory waterbirds and the wetlands that support them along the flyway.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) facilitated activities of the AFN through a project supported by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund and being led by Singapore, through the National Parks Board.

In its announcement on 2 February 2020 in time for the celebration of the World Wetlands Day, the EAAFP Secretariat said Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary is recognised for its importance for Baer's Pochard, Eastern Sarus Crane, and other endangered migratory waterbird species.

"We welcome the designation of Inlay Lake as a flyway network site of EAAF. This will bring a range of benefits for its site managers and surrounding communities, allowing them to step up biodiversity conservation efforts in the area," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

This unique wetland system, one of the eight AHPs in Myanmar, is a high conservation value area, being home to 270 bird species, 20 species of snails, and 43 species of fish, 16 of which are endemic.



Photo by Kyaw Kyaw Winn

ACB supports integrating biodiversity into rescue... continued from page 3

"Animals and wildlife in these areas need our attention, as well. Like humans, animals may suffer from silicosis and other pulmonary diseases by inhaling volcanic ash. They should be rescued and be given a proper physical examination by qualified veterinarians. Shelters may be set up for rescued animals," said Lim, a wildlife expert and former director of DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau.

Likewise, rescued wild animals after rehabilitation must be released to their natural habitats, which are less affected by the volcanic activity.

"The healthier and more mobile ones must just be allowed to flee, as they can instinctively seek shelter for themselves," said Lim.

The ACB executive director said emergencies like this provide the region valuable insights and learnings that will help each ASEAN Member State (AMS) develop better measures that take into account biodiversity and nature-based solutions in disaster management.

She added that these lessons would enhance the existing ASEAN Disaster Management Reference Handbook

that serves as an initial source of information for individuals preparing for disaster risk reduction activities or immediate deployment to the AMS.

"We hope we can create the optimum conditions to promote natural regeneration and ecosystem restoration to recover lost biodiversity and biodiversity-based livelihoods that will translate to resiliency and adaptability in the country, within the ASEAN Region, and for the people of ASEAN," she said.