

# ACBeats

The Official Newsletter of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity • JANUARY–MARCH 2021

## Gender matters in achieving biodiversity goals

### GENDER MATTERS IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION: LAUNCH OF REGIONAL TRAINING MATERIALS



25 MARCH 2021 | 10:00 (GMT+8) | Via ZOOM



With the ongoing global pandemic exacting a heavier toll on women, training key actors to integrate gender perspectives into efforts to achieve biodiversity and environmental goals is crucial.

This was the core message at the online launch of the gender and biodiversity training materials for South East Asia and the Pacific, which were designed to promote greater gender-responsiveness in biodiversity policy and programming.

In celebration of International Women’s Day on 8 March, the launch titled *Gender Matters in Biodiversity Conservation: Launch of regional training materials* held on 25 March via Zoom and Facebook Live was organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), in partnership with the Secretariat of the Convention of

Biological Diversity (CBD) and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH.

In his remarks, Alexander Shestakov, director of the Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division of the Secretariat of the CBD, said the gender and biodiversity training materials are critical to achieving all the objectives of the CBD.

“The preparation of these training materials is a recognition that there is a real need to build an understanding of and capacity to address gender inequalities in respect to biodiversity,” Shestakov said, emphasising the timeliness of the training materials given the “disproportionate impacts” of the COVID-19 pandemic.

...continued on page 2

**What’s Inside?**



Thailand’s Khao Sok National Park is 50th ASEAN Heritage Park  
page 8



Baby elephant gives hope for elephant conservation in Indonesia’s ASEAN Heritage Park  
page 15

## Gender matters in achieving biodiversity goals

continued from page 1

“It has been found that women are carrying a higher burden of care and facing more job insecurities and job loss, as well as an increased rate of gender-based violence,” he said.

He further added that the ACB is well-placed to serve as a coordinating body for the entire ASEAN region to promote the use of the training materials among key individuals and organisations across the member states.

Executive Director of the ACB Theresa Mundita Lim, in opening the online event, expressed commitment to mainstreaming gender in alignment with developing biodiversity synergies across sectors and subregions. The ACB has recently re-instituted its Gender and Biodiversity Committee to reach out to the ASEAN Member States and support their national efforts on gender and biodiversity.

“We welcome collaborations with the regional mechanisms for gender equality and women’s empowerment to strengthen our biodiversity and gender mainstreaming initiatives in the region,” Lim said, citing the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women, the

ASEAN Committee on Women, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, and the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network.

Apart from Shestakov and Lim, resource persons in the panel, such as Tanya McGregor, Gender programme officer of the Secretariat of the CBD; Maricel Aguilar, gender specialist in the Philippines; Dr. Mary Kristerie Baleva, ACB external Relations and policy specialist; and Katherine Viñegas, senior advisor of GIZ, shared their insights on the training materials and how best to disseminate them among a wider audience.

McGregor explained that the three modules aim to support behavioural change through discussion and sharing of different perspectives related to gender issues.

“It is desired to foster good regional practices for gender-responsive biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. These materials provide a flexible and adaptive learning approach, guided by facilitator nodes and participants’ handouts,” she said.

McGregor pointed out the steps to synergise gender and biodiversity concerns. These regional steps include supporting the gender-responsive implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and assessing possible gender-specific indicators.

Sharing good practices on the ground, Viñegas said efforts to mainstream gender into the NBSAPs of Lao PDR and Myanmar, and into the General Management Plan of Lampi Marine National Park, an ASEAN Heritage Park, improved capacities and led to greater recognition of women empowerment and gender equality.

The initiative to develop regional training materials on gender and biodiversity stemmed from the consultative regional expert workshop held in 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand, organised by the Secretariat of the CBD, with support from the Government of Sweden, United Nations Environment Programme’s Asia Pacific Office, and GIZ Philippines.

The Official Quarterly Newsletter of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

**Editorial Consultants**

Theresa Mundita S. Lim, Clarissa C. Arida, Sheila G. Vergara, Genalyn A. Bagon-Soriano





**Editorial Board**

**Editors:** Earl Paulo Diaz, Niña Catherine Calleja, Dion Zarina Tuazon  
**Writers:** Niña Catherine Calleja, Eloisa Frieda Delos Reyes, Dion Zarina Tuazon  
**Layout and Design:** Reigna Belle Aguja, Martin Manuel Palis  
**Photography:** Angela Rose Crissie Metin, BBTN / Ari Iswandari, Dr. Robert Mather, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Mt. Malindang Range Natural Park, Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation (VSSWIC), Virachey National Park / Moang Viseth  
**Production:** Pauline Kristy Erasga

For story contributions, please contact the ACBeats editorial team at [cpa@aseanbiodiversity.org](mailto:cpa@aseanbiodiversity.org).

For more information, log on to [www.aseanbiodiversity.org](http://www.aseanbiodiversity.org) or [chm.aseanbiodiversity.org](http://chm.aseanbiodiversity.org)

ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity  
 D. M. Lantican Avenue  
 University of the Philippines Los Baños  
 Laguna, Philippines 4031  
 Tel. No.: +6349 536-2865 Fax: +632 584-4210

 ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity  
 ABiodiversity  
 ASEANBiodiversity  
 TheASEANBiodiversity



The printing of this newsletter was made possible with the financial assistance of ASEAN-EU Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) Project. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the European Union, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



Thomas L. Friedman (Upper left) of The New York Times moderates the webinar hosted by World Wildlife Fund, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, and Cornell Atkinson Centre for Sustainability. ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim (centre) is one of the invited speakers during the event.

## Indigenous peoples, communities play key roles in preventing pandemics - ACB chief

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) tackled the crucial role of indigenous peoples and local communities in creating nature-positive solutions to prevent pandemics and other emerging diseases in a live online event on 23 February.

Joining global experts, including Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE and UN Messenger of Peace, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim discussed key approaches towards COVID-19 recovery and building resilience to diseases.

“These communities, along with the local and indigenous knowledge associated with the natural surroundings in which they live, must be part of our new approach. Their presence within and around the habitats makes them indispensable frontliners in safeguarding biodiversity,” Lim said.

She said through a connection that has been forged through time, indigenous and local knowledge systems that are built around a harmonious relationship with nature are essential in ensuring resilience and sustainability.

“Together with environment-friendly innovation and technologies, traditional and sustainable practices that have been passed on from generation to generation must likewise be incentivised and recognised to instil renewed pride and deliver added benefits to those who apply them,” she said.

The webinar *Emerging Disease, Wildlife Trade and Consumption, and the Need for Robust Global Governance: Exploring Ways to Prevent Pandemics*, hosted by World Wildlife Fund, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, and Cornell Atkinson Centre for

Sustainability, was moderated by The New York Times’ Thomas Friedman. The online discussion featured experts, such as Richard Kock, co-chair of International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Wildlife Health Specialist Group; David M. Lodge, professor at Cornell University’s Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; David Nabarro, special envoy of the World Health Organization Director General on COVID-19; Dr. Steve Osofsky of Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine, Doreen Robinson, chief for wildlife at UN Environment Programme; John Scanlon, former secretary-general of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and now the CEO of the Elephant Protection Initiative Foundation; and Nik Sekhran, chief conservation officer at the World Wildlife Fund-US.

...continued on page 5

## ACB kicks off webinar series on protected area effectiveness, financing

Kicking off its virtual series on sustainable financing and protected area effectiveness, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) held a two-part virtual training on the Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for protected area managers.

Drawing a hundred participants from the ASEAN Member States (AMS), the METT-4 training was conducted in cooperation with the European Union, German Development Bank (KfW), and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* (BCAMP) Project, *Small Grants Programme* (SGP), and the *Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in the ASEAN II* (ISB II) Project, respectively. The training was designed to develop the capacities of key stakeholders working towards the improvement of the quality of ASEAN Heritage Parks and protected areas the region as well as the achievement of their conservation outcomes.

Developed in 2020, METT-4 is the improved edition of the protected area management effectiveness monitoring tool first developed 20 years ago. The tool has been adopted widely by many protected areas globally, including some in the AMS. It allows protected area managers to monitor the progress and management effectiveness of their site. Through METT-4, protected area managers and personnel may input the data electronically using a simple, accessible format with a step-by-step application guide and training video.

The virtual training held via Zoom on 8 and 9 March was led by the experts involved in developing the tool – Professor Marc Hockings, Sue Stolton, and Nigel Dudley.

“Protected and conserved areas play important roles in our recovery and resilience-building efforts against the backdrop of these ongoing public health and climate crises,” the ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in her opening remarks.

She added that the ACB and the AMS ensure that frontliners and decision-makers are fully-equipped to monitor the progress and effectiveness of management, which are indicators of the quality of protected areas.

Stolton, a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), stressed that the METT is designed to complement the protected areas’ planning and assessment cycle as it tracks progress over time.

In the second part of the training, Hockings, vice-chair (Science and Management of Protected Areas) of the IUCN WCPA and senior fellow of the United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation Monitoring Centre demonstrated the usage of the METT-4 Excel workbook.

Managers and officers of protected areas in the ASEAN likewise shared

...continued on page 5



Screengrab from the two-part virtual training on Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for protected area managers.

## Indigenous peoples, communities play key roles...

continued from page 3

Lim likewise stressed addressing the root causes of pandemics by protecting and conserving wildlife species and their habitats in order to stem future outbreaks.

Meanwhile, Nabarro shared how governments, particularly in Southeast Asia, took a holistic, interdisciplinary, and integrated approach to contain the global spread of the H5N1 influenza in 2003.

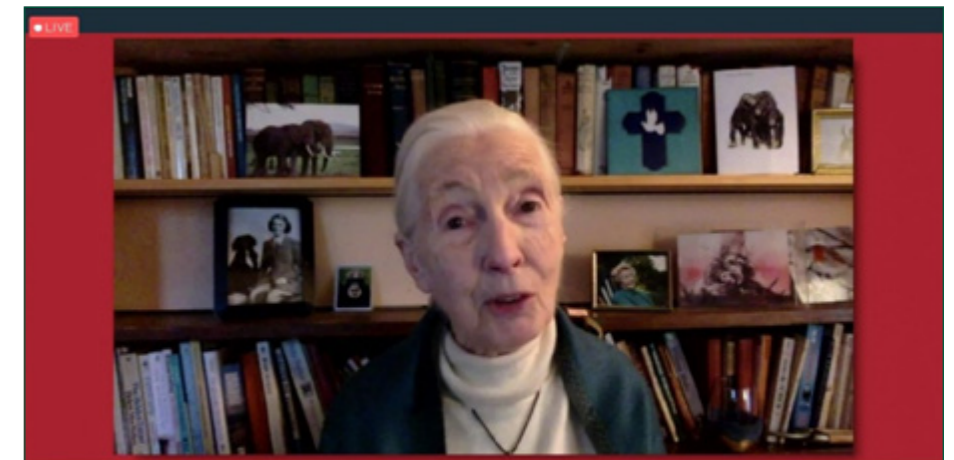
Kock emphasised the urgent need to assess the deep social political economic factors that drive diseases, with particular attention on wildlife management. Scanlon, on the other hand, said the One Health approach, which takes into consideration animal, human, and environmental health, must be hard-wired in international legal frameworks.

In his statement, Osofsky said the virtual dialogue was a “robust exploration on how we, as humanity, can better govern our behaviour to reduce the likelihood of future pandemics”.

Lim asserted that while the mass roll-out of COVID-19 vaccination boosts confidence, the COVID-19 pandemic should not be viewed as a single event “but part of a recurring challenge.”

Capping off the webinar, primatologist Goodall issued a strong statement on how humanity has brought zoonotic diseases upon itself.

“We have absolutely disrespected the natural world and we have disrespected animals. It’s the destruction of the environment that is pushing animal species closer together, pushing them closer to human habitations, that has led to zoonotic diseases,” she said, urging people to think of long-term investments instead of short-term gains.



Dr. Jane Goodall is a speaker at the *Emerging Disease, Wildlife Trade and Consumption, and the Need for Robust Global Governance: Exploring Ways to Prevent Pandemics* webinar

## ACB kicks off webinar series... continued from page 4

their experiences and reflections on METT’s applicability.

For instance, Ryan Cuanan of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of the Philippines shared that in 2013, through a project supported by GIZ, it has commissioned a study on the National Management Effectiveness and Capacity Assessment of 64 protected areas using METT. He added that three years after the implementation of the project, an increase in the management effectiveness in the protected areas

has been observed. Since 2018, all protected areas have been required by the DENR to undertake Protected Area Management Effectiveness Assessment using the METT.

Dr. Victor Luna Amin, head of the Totally Protected Area Management Division of Sarawak Forestry Corporation in Malaysia, shared how protected areas in Sarawak applied and modified other tools of assessment in the past across all the protected areas. These, he said, improved teamwork and encouraged positive reinforcements among the managers, personnel, and

stakeholders. Incentives were also provided to the protected areas with good management.

Peeranuch Dulkul Kappelle of the National Park Office of Thailand’s Department of Natural Parks noted the enhancements in the METT that made it user-friendly. She stressed the value of having the tool translated into local languages and acknowledged that these tools enable protected areas to identify and quickly address management gaps by themselves.

## ACB chief lauds ASEAN winners of the UN's Environmental Enforcement Awards

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) congratulates the winners of the 5th Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards held on 17 February, which were conferred by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) on government officials and teams that have excelled in enforcing laws against environmental crimes, such as illegal wildlife trafficking.

Illegal wildlife trafficking is reported as one of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss and destruction of habitats in the ASEAN region. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), wildlife and forest crime in the East Asia and Pacific region is generating around USD 19.5 billion every year, making it a 'lucrative business' that is often hard to detect.

In 2020, government institutions and officials from the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia successfully completed investigations and seizure operations against notorious wildlife traders, as well as illegal waste smuggling.

Under the Impact Category, the Philippines Operation Group on Ivory and the Illegal Wildlife Trade comprised with representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Biodiversity Management Bureau, and the National Bureau of Investigation – Environmental Crime Division was recognised after it arrested a number of illegal traders and recovered 13 rare animals in a single operation. At the same time, the Operasi Bersepadu Khazanah taskforce in Malaysia, composed of officials from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia under the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources together with the Royal Malaysia Police, was also cited for arresting "87 wildlife criminals, destroying 460 wire snares, with total seizure amounting to MYR 2.7 million (USD 670,000)."

Meanwhile, John Simon, district customs collector of the Philippines Bureau of Customs, was given an award under the Impact and Integrity category for busting an illegal waste smuggling operation, seizing 10,000 tons of illegal waste and initiating legal proceedings against the smugglers, and repatriating the waste back to the country of origin.

UNEP likewise recognised inter-agency and bilateral collaborations, such as the efforts of the Enforcement Division, Department of Environment, Malaysia, currently under the Ministry of Environment and Water, which worked closely with the authorities from the United Kingdom to repatriate 42 containers of smuggled plastic waste; and Indonesia's Police Chief Commissioner Adi Karya Tobing, Police Commissioner Sugeng Irianto, and Rasio Ridho Sani, Director General for Law Enforcement in the Ministry of Environment and Forestry who worked with Dutch authorities to crack down on a large-scale wildlife network that trafficks body parts of endangered species.

"These well-deserved awards recognising efforts of the ASEAN Member States in stemming the illegal wildlife trade in the region, as well as in curbing environmental waste pollution contribute to the protection and conservation of vital wildlife species, which support livelihood and ecosystem services necessary for well-being and survival," said the ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim.

"In light of the ongoing global crisis, addressing illegal wildlife trade and other environmental crimes will contribute significantly to keeping our forests healthy, and securing the lives of more than 650 million people in the ASEAN that depend on these. The commendations come at an opportune time as the World

celebrates this year's Wildlife Day, on 3 March, under the theme *Forest and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet*," she said.

Lim added that the awardees have also shown that regional collaboration and international cooperation among the various agencies and the public can make a difference in law enforcement.

"Every action that protects species and strengthens collaboration benefits biodiversity and the people. The awardees embody success stories worthy of being emulated in the region," she said.

Other recipients of the 5th Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards are Nepal's Sudarshan Panthee and Birendra Singh Johari; and India's Sashimita Lenka, Divisional Forest Officer and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.

The annual award for achievement in combating environmental crime is presented by the UNEP in partnership with the UN Development Programme, the UNODC, INTERPOL, the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the World Customs Organization.

Catch news and announcements from the ACB



[www.aseanbiodiversity.org](http://www.aseanbiodiversity.org)

## ACB at World Sustainable Development Summit: collaboration, biodiversity mainstreaming key to post-pandemic economy

With over 100 speakers representing different sectors and organisations around the globe, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) held the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) 2021 from 10 to 12 February. The 20th staging of the summit, with the theme *Redefining Our Common Future: Safe and Secure Environment for All*, took a virtual platform, and underscored the roles of regional and subregional collaboration and mainstreaming of biodiversity in building a resilient post-pandemic economy.

Among the summit's speakers were His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, president of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana; John F. Kerry, U.S. special presidential envoy for Climate; Inger Andersen, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change; Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, external affairs minister of the Ministry of External Affairs of India; Erik Solheim, former minister of international development and minister of the environment, Norway; and His Excellency Ugo Astuto, ambassador of the European Union to India.

The inauguration of the WSDS 2021 was led by the Honourable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi. In his message, the prime minister highlighted that to solve the global climate issues, people need to do more than the traditional approaches. "Two things will define how the progress generally of humanity will unfold in the times to come. Firstly, the health of our people. Second, the health of our planet. Both are interlinked," the prime minister said. He emphasised that as it has become more apparent

that conventional approaches alone cannot solve the challenges we are facing; climate justice must be the path we should be treading.

The ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, during the session on the *Role of Biodiversity Conservation in a Green and Resilient Post-pandemic Economy*, shared that a key component of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan is the development of mechanisms to increase investments in natural solutions, wildlife enforcement, and habitat protection.

Lim furthered that the region's strategic direction towards recovery recognises biodiversity as a cross-cutting issue. Thus, strengthening biodiversity mainstreaming becomes imperative in the implementation of the framework.

...continued on page 11



Executive Director of the ACB Theresa Mundita Lim (upper right) is one of the speakers during the session *Role of Biodiversity Conservation in a Green and Resilient Post-pandemic Economy*

## Thailand's Khao Sok National Park is 50th ASEAN Heritage Park

A protected area in Thailand touted as the world's oldest tropical evergreen forest, Khao Sok National Park, was declared an ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP), the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) announced.

The environment ministers of the ASEAN approved the nomination of Khao Sok National Park as the 50th ASEAN Heritage Park as endorsed and recommended virtually by the 31st Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) and the 22nd Meeting of the Governing Board of the ACB, with Viet Nam as host, held from 24 to 25 November 2020.

"We are pleased to share the news that Khao Sok National Park has joined the list of designated ASEAN Heritage Parks. These remarkable parks are areas of high conservation

value that best represent the region's rich natural resources and cultural identity," the ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

The ACB, as the secretariat of the AHP Programme, facilitates the rigorous evaluation process of the nominated protected areas to be declared as an AHP.

An evaluation team led by Dr. Robert Mather, technical assistance team leader of the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* (BCAMP) Project, together with two Thai evaluators Dr. Dachanee Emphandhu and Dr. Petch Manopawitr, visited Khao Sok in October 2020. BCAMP is an ongoing project being implemented by the ACB with support from the European Union.

Khao Sok National Park is a 740-square kilometre terrestrial national park located in the Suratthani Province of Thailand, consisting of diverse ecosystems including evergreen forest, swamp forest, and limestone forest.

Wildlife species thriving in the park include the vulnerable species Mainland Serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*) and the endangered Malay Tapir (*Tapirus indicus*), as well as the largest flower *Rafflesia kerrii* and the endemic flowering plant species *Khaosokia caricoides*. Khao Sok is adjacent to the Ratchaprapha Dam that generates power supply to its surrounding communities.

Thailand's Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation (DNP), the agency



Khao Sok National Park has the world's oldest tropical evergreen forest. Photos by Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation



responsible for protected area conservation and management in the country welcomed the announcement, saying it gives the department "a feeling of accomplishment."

"On behalf of the Thai people, DNP is delighted and proud of Khao Sok National Park becoming the 50th ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP)," Mr. Thanya Netithammakun, Director-General of DNP said.

Chonlathorn Chamnankid, Thailand's AHP representative and Director of National Park Research and Innovation Centre, National Parks Office of DNP said Khao Sok National Park, which is situated in the middle of Klong Saeng Khao Sok Forest Complex, has been a tourism destination for its ancient rainforest, limestone landscapes, and wildlife, "(providing) income and enhancing (the) quality of life for the locals."

Khao Sok National Park is the seventh AHP in Thailand. Other AHPs are Khao Yai National Park, Tarutao National Park, Ao Phang-Nga – Mu

Ko Surin – Mu Ko Similan National Park, Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex, Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park, and Hat Chao Mai National Park – Mu Ko Libong Non hunting Area.

"The designation of Khao Sok comes at an opportune time as the ASEAN region gears towards the recovery of the tourism sector, which is one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. The ASEAN Heritage Parks, apart from showcasing the rich biodiversity in the region, can also be prime nature tourism destinations," Lim said.

On 4 February, following the 24th Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers through a video conference hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia, the ASEAN ministers issued a joint statement expressing commitment to the recovery of the tourism sector, highlighting three priority areas— the "Road to Recovery;" "Towards ASEAN as a Single Tourism Destination;" and "Realising Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Tourism Development."



## ACB working with experts to improve database of plants in ASEAN Heritage Parks

Amid the ignited interests in plants in ASEAN countries, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is supporting a project that aims to document endemic and threatened plant species in Mount Makiling Forest Reserve and Mount Malindang Range Natural Park in the Philippines and improve the database of plant species in the region.

Both natural parks are designated ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP), which best represent the species and ecosystems of ASEAN and are known to harbour high levels of biodiversity. The AHP Programme is a flagship programme of the ASEAN, with the ACB as the Secretariat.

The ongoing collaboration between the Department of Forest Biological Sciences and Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems (MCME) under the College of Forestry and Natural Resources of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), with support from the ACB's AHP Programme commenced in December 2020. The project tapped a research team led by Dr. Manuel Castillo, a plant taxonomist and professor at UPLB.

Dr. Castillo said the primary aim of the project is to conserve and protect endemic and threatened plants especially against the rampant poaching fueled by the current boom of plant-selling businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information will be helpful in conducting long-term research and extension activities for Philippine plants.

"This is to raise awareness on the status of threatened plants being sold in the market and deter poaching activities in the two protected areas," Dr. Castillo said.

In terms of its flora, Mount Makiling Forest Reserve is home to about 940 genera, 2038 species, 19 sub-species, 167 varieties and several forms and cultivars representing



Mount Makiling is known to host *Rafflesia lagascae*, which blooms on the mountain once a year.

225 families of flowering plants and ferns. It is known to host plant species, such as *Rafflesia lagascae* (formerly known as *Rafflesia manillana*), *Medinilla magnifica* and *Nepenthes alata*. Some of the rare animal species found in the area are the Philippine eagle-owl (*Bubo philippensis*) and the Philippine pygmy fruit bat (*Haplonycteris fischeri*), which are both endemic in the country.

Like Mount Makiling, Mount Malindang is an important biodiversity refuge and one of the ecologically valuable areas in Mindanao, with equally high endemism.

Each AHP may be involved in exchanging endemic and threatened plants that are abundant in their respective areas, which may be developed and translated into a bigger research project later on.

...continued on page 11



Lake Duminagat, Mt. Malindang Range Natural Park

## ACB at World Sustainable Development Summit...

continued from page 7

Highlighting the importance of collaborative work, Dr. Lim stressed, "For these approaches to be effective, robust cooperation within the ASEAN region and across regions is critical. Countries in the same region and subregion are often similarly situated, and frequently share common development narratives, challenges, and opportunities. With the interconnectivity of our ecosystems, we have more reasons to work closely together through meaningful partnerships, science-policy dialogues and conscientious exchanges of information, knowledge, and practices within and across the region and subregions."

Joining Lim in the panel were Executive Secretary of the UNEP and Secretariat of Convention on Migratory Species Amy Fraenkel, Head of Ecosystems and Biodiversity of the United Nations Development Programme Dr. Midori Paxton, Co-Chair of the open-ended working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity Basile van Havre, Director of TERI's Land Resources

Division Dr. J.V. Sharma, and Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change India B.V. Umadevi.

Åslaug Marie Haga, associate vice-president of the External Relations and Governance Department of Norway's International Fund for Agricultural Development in her keynote address emphasised lost opportunities and options as a result of biodiversity loss. The former Norwegian minister and diplomat further underscored the importance of agrobiodiversity, along with tools and knowledge to enable small-scale farmers to be "agents of change."

Fraenkel in her message, meanwhile, stressed the value of cooperation among countries in conserving migratory species and cited studies that show the positive relationship between the risks increasing the likelihood of infectious diseases and the risks causing the decline of species.

The virtual session was chaired by Dr. Vinod Mathur, chairperson of India's National Biodiversity Authority.

The WSDS is the annual flagship event of TERI, and is designed to make sustainable development a shared goal across all countries.



## ACB working with experts to improve database...continued from page 10

The ACB has partnered with other development organisations in previous years to strengthen the ASEAN Member States' (AMS) taxonomic capacities. Most recently, joint projects were funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund, which resulted in the development of field guidebooks in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and Gunung Mulu National Park in Malaysia.

"The ongoing work of our partner scientists will contribute to a common and deeper understanding

of existing plant species that require protection. This will help improve the ASEAN Clearing-House Mechanism," the ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

The ASEAN Clearing-House Mechanism is a regional platform for sharing biodiversity information, experiences, best practices, and lessons learned to service needs of the AMS in decision-making related to biodiversity conservation and their commitments to multilateral environmental agreements.

**ASEAN  
Clearing-House  
Mechanism**

[asean.chm-cbd.net](http://asean.chm-cbd.net)

## ASEAN voices biodiversity concerns at virtual UN body meeting

The ASEAN Member States (AMS) participated in a series of informal sessions of the UN Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and voiced national and subregional positions in preparation for the subsidiary body's formal meeting taking place later this year.

Delivering the sub-regional positions of the ASEAN, the Philippines welcomed the proposed recommendations to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Conference of Parties to address modalities for modifying descriptions of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and for describing new areas.

"These modalities will strengthen the system of EBSAs, which can help the international community effectively manage these areas to contribute to the overall goals of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF)," the Philippines said in its intervention during a session on marine and coastal biodiversity.

With 2,000 pre-registered participants, the open-ended intergovernmental scientific advisory body held these sessions from 17 to 19 and from 24 to 26 February, providing an opportunity for Parties and observers to exchange opinions on key agenda items as part of the process to develop a scientifically and technically sound post-2020 GBF.

This framework will be further reviewed for adoption later this year at the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the CBD that will be hosted by the Government of China.

The AMS, through the Philippines' intervention called for support for the adoption of an integrated coastal management approach. The statement also called for efforts to reduce pressures to marine and coastal issues, increase the coverage of marine protected areas, and improve the management of these areas.



ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim during one of the informal sessions of the SBSTTA in February 2021

Meanwhile, Thailand expressed support for the inclusion of marine debris in the post-2020 GBF to strengthen the conservation of marine biodiversity.

"The regional effort for marine debris management should be prioritised and enhanced. For example, the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris, which reflects the cooperation between ASEAN member states to address the challenges at the regional level, will also significantly facilitate CBD's implementation and can be applied as a model for other regions," Thailand said.

In the session on biodiversity and agriculture, Thailand encouraged the CBD Parties to integrate sustainable agricultural practices into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and national agricultural strategies according to their country circumstances.

Expressing concerns about the negative impacts of agricultural wastes on soil biodiversity and climate change, Thailand recommended that agricultural waste management and appropriate use of fertilisers to control pests be added in sustainable soil management practices in the draft plan of action 2020-2030 for the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity.

Indonesia, in its intervention, called for greater global efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the impacts and implications of invasive alien species (IAS).

It noted that the ASEAN region has made significant progress in consolidating ongoing efforts in IAS management and exchanging essential taxonomic information useful for agencies that are managing IAS through the ASEAN IAS Database.

At present, an action plan for IAS is being developed based on the results of the baseline study on the IAS management in the ASEAN region, and this will be augmented by other activities, such as capacity building, training, and knowledge exchange.

Meanwhile, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim underlined the use of indicators in the preparation of national reports and the value of a simple monitoring framework that uses a select set of headline indicators in tracking the progress in the achievement of the goals and targets of the post-2020 GBF.

"The proposed headline indicators will be relevant, as the ACB facilitates coordination in the ASEAN region to disaggregate such headline indicators into component indicators that suit the needs and capacities of the AMS," she said.



Screengrab from theglobalherald.com

## ASEAN body welcomes outcomes of One Planet Summit for Biodiversity

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) has expressed openness to the outcomes of the One Planet Summit, hosted by the French government, United Nations, and World Bank, on 11 January.

"We welcome fresh commitments from world leaders, which the ACB views with much optimism and enthusiasm. These pledges pivot initiatives to conserve and restore ecosystems in the ASEAN region and across the globe, especially now that we are ushering in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration," the ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

At the summit, governments, such as the United Kingdom (UK) and France, announced earmarking funds for nature-based solutions. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the UK will commit at least GBP 3 billion (USD 4 billion) to climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity over five years. The summit also saw USD 10 billion earmarked for the Great Green Wall, a project to restore degraded lands in the Sahel along

an 8,000-kilometre band from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, along with new financial commitments from Norway and Germany.

Some 50 nations expressed support for the plan to carve out 30 per cent of global lands and oceans for protection by 2030 (30x30 goals).

"The pledges of governments are of great importance for other regions and subregions. Such commitments could not come at a more opportune time ahead of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China, where the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is expected to be adopted," Lim said.

In 2020, the ACB co-organised webinars with Pew Charitable Trusts and the High Ambition Coalition for Nature with the National Geographic Society's Campaign for Nature to raise awareness among the ASEAN Member States on the importance of the 30x30 goals.

Based on the ASEAN's initial inputs to the post-2020 global

biodiversity framework, resource mobilisation, including setting up a finance mechanism specifically for biodiversity, is a crucial tool to effectively implement the framework and achieve the 2050 vision.

Meanwhile, in terms of the One Health approach to address existing and emerging outbreaks of diseases, Lim shared the regional and country-level initiatives made in the ASEAN in line with incorporating biodiversity into public health responses and regional development processes during the One Planet summit pre-event webinar "Prevention of Pandemics and Protection of Biodiversity" organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Lim highlighted initiatives in the ASEAN, such as Malaysia's wildlife disease surveillance programme, Indonesia's economic support and livelihood stimulus to ease environmental pressure on protected areas, and Viet Nam's One Health strategy pre-dating the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Conserving tarantulas, scorpions helps prevent diseases—ACB chief

Tarantulas and scorpions as pets? Think again.

The head of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) expressed concern over the recent cases of illegal wildlife trafficking seemingly influenced by trends of keeping these threatened species as pets.

The Philippines' Bureau of Customs (BoC) last week reported the seizure of a package containing 20 endangered tarantula spiders and 8 scorpions at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on 6 January.

Records showed the package, which came from Samut Parakarn, Thailand, was misdeclared as "teaching equipment," and imported without the necessary permits.

In 2019, the BoC intercepted 757 tarantulas at a mail exchange centre near Manila's international airport and later arrested a man who tried to claim the tarantulas declared as "collection items." In October last year, 119 tarantulas from Poland concealed in a pair of rubber shoes were also seized.

Lauding the work of the BoC, Lim emphasised the importance of strengthening wildlife law enforcement, particularly at seaports and airports, and fostering regional and transboundary coordination to combat illicit wildlife trade.

"We acknowledge the authorities' vigilance against illegal wildlife trafficking and their close coordination with environmental agencies in the pursuit to conserve and protect threatened wildlife species. The covert nature of the trade makes this a huge challenge for authorities and requires a whole-of-government approach," Lim said.

Tarantulas comprise a group of large and hairy spiders under the family Theraphosidae. Of the 39 species

listed in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List global database, 11 are categorised as either critically endangered or endangered, 5 are vulnerable, and 5 are near-threatened.

Scorpions, on the other hand, can be found in six of the seven continents of the world. A species found in the ASEAN, *Isometrus deharvengi*, however, is listed as an endangered arachnid in the IUCN Red List.

Lim noted that these arachnids play important roles in ecosystems, helping control insect populations and thus helping prevent the spread of insect-borne diseases.

Also, the venoms of tarantulas and scorpions may have medicinal properties that can be valuable in the development of new drugs. Apart from their contributions to maintaining ecological balance, Lim said these arachnids may provide solutions to modern-day ailments.

"Many hobbyists and collectors, however, are willing to buy these at high prices. This demand contributes to the rampant poaching of these species from the wild, smuggling, and illegal trade. Poaching to the point of extinction may have profound impacts on the environment and eventually on human health," Lim said.

Inadvertent release or escape of exotic animals, especially poisonous ones, into the wild and ecologically sensitive places with high endemism, could result in an ecological imbalance and potentially harm other species in the ecosystems, the ACB head explained.

She reminded the public to be compliant with national laws concerning the trade, transportation, and possession of these heavily trafficked animals.

In the Philippines, under the Philippines' Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Protection and Conservation Act, those engaged in illegal importation, collection, and trade of endangered wildlife are meted six years of imprisonment and a fine of PHP 200,000.00 (USD 4,100).

Also, given the transboundary nature of most illegal wildlife trade, Lim cited the need for greater coordination and cooperation among neighbouring countries, in accordance with the commitment of the ASEAN Member States.

In 2019, the ASEAN Ministers responsible for Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and Wildlife Enforcement during the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Illegal Wildlife Trade in Chiang Mai, Thailand, agreed to scale up their efforts to strengthen cooperation in addressing illegal wildlife trade in the region by collaborating with international organisations, private sector, academia, and civil society.

"With a better understanding of the human-wildlife interface amid the COVID-19 pandemic, our collaboration is highly timely and relevant," Lim said.



Scorpion at Virachey National Park  
Photo by Moang Viseth

## Baby elephant gives hope for elephant conservation in Indonesia's ASEAN Heritage Park



Boni, a female elephant calf, uplifts the spirits of the park personnel of Gunung Leuser National Park and their stakeholders. Photo by VESSWIC

The management of Indonesia's Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP) and conservation groups are in high spirits following the birth of a Sumatran elephant calf within the protected area.

Weighing 69 kilogrammes and with a body circumference of 90 centimetres, the female elephant calf was born at the Special Animal Training Center of the said national park on 1 February.

Indonesia's Director General of Conservation of Natural Resources and Ecosystems (MoEF) Ir. Wiratno named the baby elephant "Boni."

"The baby and her mother, Sari, are both in good health. We are regularly monitoring their conditions, apart from overseeing the feeding and the mother's vitamin injections," Ir. Jefry Susyafrianto, M.M. head of the GLNP Office said.

A designated ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP), GLNP is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra. Covering an area of about 830,000 hectares, GLNP straddles the border of the provinces of North Sumatra and Aceh.

The national park has a high conservation value as it serves as home to iconic wild animals, such as orangutans, tigers, rhinoceros, leopards, and elephants.

### Dwindling population

Under its care, the Special Animal Training Centre of GNLN now has nine elephants in total. The mother elephant, Sari, was among the wild elephants captured in the 1990s as part of the government's efforts to support *in situ* elephant conservation.

Sumatran elephants have been placed on the list of critically endangered species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List due to their rapidly dwindling population.

It is against Indonesian laws to keep, hunt, trade, and smuggle these species. According to the Law Number 5 of 1990, which concerns the Conservation of Living Natural Resources and Ecosystems, a sentence of 5 (five) years in prison and a fine of IDR 100,000,000 are meted out on violators.

Before Boni, three elephant calves, namely Christ, Albertina, and Eropa, were born in 2015.

"The birth of Boni is very meaningful to the park management and conservation advocates, including our local guides. These recent births

...continued on page 16



## Baby elephant gives hope for elephant conservation

continued from page 15

demonstrate how the elephants' living environment has significantly improved. We are likewise hopeful this will have a positive contribution to the park's tourism," Mr. Susyafrianto said.

Female elephants give birth every five years on average and continue to mate until about the age of 50. Each pregnancy lasts up to 23 months.

### Proper veterinary care

With the assistance of civil society organisation Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation (VESSWIC) under the *Small Grants Programme*, a partnership between the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the German Development Bank (KfW), the GLNP

management is likewise ensuring that the baby elephant is properly cared for and nurtured.

"Special care must be provided to the young, especially because they are at risk of contracting the Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV), which attacks and infects elephants under five years old," Dr. Muhammad Wahyu, director of VESSWIC said.

VESSWIC has been helping the park in the routine health monitoring of captive elephants and training of mahouts, or persons tending the elephants.

Last year, the organisation conducted an analysis to check cortisol levels in the stools of the elephants in order to determine their stress levels, along with

a series of diagnostic tests to detect diseases, such as EEHV and tuberculosis.

"Taking care of the Sumatran elephants' health at the AHP is part of our holistic and integrated approach in protecting and conserving wildlife and their habitats. Caring for Boni highlights wildlife protection as an important aspect of protected area management," the ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

She explained that the Sumatran elephants as seed dispersers positively contribute to healthy and balanced ecosystems. In forest ecotourism sites like GLNP, protecting wildlife likewise ensures the sustainability of livelihoods for communities, as well.



Photo by BBTN / Ari Iswandari