

WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

By

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TOPICS FOR DISCUSSIONS:

1. Updates on Philippine Biodiversity, with emphasis on Birds.
2. Major threats to habitats and species e.g. habitat destruction (harvesting/logging) and illegal trade.

3. Salient features of R.A. 9147 or “Wildlife Resources and Protection Act” of 2001 in relation to wildlife law monitoring and WEOs & their deputation
4. PAWB as Management Authority under CITES, with creation of Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Units

UPDATES ON PHILIPPINE BIODIVERSITY

The Philippines is an archipelagic country with 7,100 islands.

Due to its biogeographic isolation, there is high level of endemism and biological diversity

About 50% of plants and animals are endemic in the country, such as:

Birds – 576 avian spp., with 195 (34%)

Reptiles – 253 spp., with 167 (66%)

Amphibians – 95 spp, with 51 (54%)

Mammals – 202 spp., with 110 (51%)

Plants – 8,120 spp., with 5,800 (71%)

Coral reefs – 500 spp, out of 700 spp.
worldwide

Fishes – 2,000 spp., w/ most freshwater spp.
are endemic

Unfortunately, the country is also one of the most significantly “hotspots” in the world, with most number of Critically Endangered or Endangered Endemic Spp.

What are major threats to Philippine Biodiversity:

- a. Habitat destruction due to socio-economic factors involving logging activities, slash-&-burn activities, etc.

b. The combined factors of hunting (game and food) and trade (esp. illegal ones) that threaten about half of bird population in the wild.

For example, large charismatic birds like hornbills, parrots, doves, cockatoo are most favored targets for pet trade.

Likewise, various bird species like **Indonesian parrots** are smuggled into the country either to be sold here or en route to nearby countries.

- **Philippine Legislation Re: Wildlife (Bird) Trade**

At present, the PAWB-DENR is implementing R.A. 9147 (2001). Its scope include all wildlife species (flora and fauna) in all areas, including Protected Areas (under RA 7586) and critical habitats, as well as exotics that are traded, cultured, maintained and/or bred in captivity/propagated in the country.

RA 9147 is jointly implemented by DENR, Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD)

DENR – responsible for terrestrial plants and animal species, wetland spp., amphibians and dugong (sea cow).

DA – responsible for aquatic habitats and resources (fishes, aquatic plants, invertebrates and marine mammals, except dugong).

PCSD – for all wildlife species found in Palawan areas (RA 7611).

● **RA 9147 in relation to Wildlife Trade**

a. It mandates the creation of Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Units in every region. This is similar to CITES which emphasize the creation of the same units nationwide

b. It authorizes the deputation of Wildlife Enforcement Officers (WEOs) composed of NGOs, citizens groups (CBOs/POs), LGUs and community volunteers. It allows designation of Officers from Phil. National Police (PNP), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Natl. Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and other law enforcement agencies as WEOs.

- At present, a MOA between the DENR and the Bureau of Customs (BOC) is underway, since BOC is tasked to supervise & control exports, imports, foreign mail cargoes, clearance of all vessels/aircrafts in all ports of the country (based on RA 1973).

Moreover, WEOs are given full authority to seize illegally traded wildlife and arrest violators.

● Structure of Bird Trade in the Philippines

Wildlife like birds collection/farming and trade are legal (with permits) providing livelihoods and income to local communities (trappers, hunters, middlemen, transports), including pet shop owners in towns/cities.

However, high rewards with lower risk of detection and punishment made by those engaged in illegal bird trade, e.g. informal markets w/ peddlers, pet lovers, rest'rants



- **Tricks of the Bird Trade**

- a. Concealment

- b. Misdeclaration

- c. Permit Fraud

- d. Diplomatic baggage

● Major Transport Routes and Chains

The mode of transport by passenger jeeps/buses and cargo boats/ships from provinces/towns (harvesting/collection areas) to consumers/market via Cebu (or other transit areas) to Metro Manila.

They also use the “back door” coming into the Philippines via Southern Mindanao, especially Gen. Santos, Zambo or Davao via Tawi-tawi and Sulu.

- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**

It is the largest and most important wildlife conservation agreement to combat threat of illegal trade on animals and plant species.

PAWB is the Management Authority for terrestrial Species, BFAR for aquatic/marine spp., while PCSD for Palawan.

- PAWB is an active member of CITES since 1983. It issues permits and certification for wildlife under certain conditions, to regulate international trade of endangered wildlife species listed in CITES (Appendices 1-3).

Accomplishments and Ways Forward

CITES creates a common mechanism for countries to conduct legal and sustainable wildlife trade, including coordination on CITES concerns

- Philippine legislation (RA 9147) and its Implementing rules and regulations
- Mobilization of Regional Wildlife Monitoring Units, including their trainings
- Participatory approach through involvement of concerned agencies with law enforcement tasks

Recommendation : To continue on with series of dialogue meetings/ capacity-building exercises for closer and better working relationships.