

# ACBeats

The Official Newsletter of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity • APRIL–JUNE 2022

## ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard: real-time conservation information at your fingertips



Conserving and protecting our valuable biological resources entails relevant, up-to-date biodiversity data and knowledge that are accessible and reliable.

To celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity, or Biodiversity Day, on 22 May, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) launched the ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard, an online platform that presents biodiversity trends, status, and indicators in an interactive and visual format. With biodiversity information shared between and among the ASEAN Member States and the ACB, as well as data from the ASEAN Clearing-House Mechanism and trusted global sources, the Dashboard aims to inform and contribute to science-based decision- and policy-making processes in the region.

“We cannot protect or conserve what we do not know,” Dr. Arvin C. Diesmos, Director of the ACB Biodiversity Information Management (BIM) Unit emphasised. “Thus it is important that the policymakers are informed and are knowledgeable on the current state of the biological resources of their country or the region in general.”

As the ASEAN gears towards the finalisation and eventual implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard brings relevance to its realisation - its accessibility makes it easy for various users to visualise the region’s biodiversity status and challenges, making monitoring, reporting, and assessment of the framework target’s implementation and processes more efficient at all levels.

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Connecting collective actions for the future of the oceans



Oceans and seas may physically divide the Earth's land mass, but these bodies of water actually connect our lives, our biodiversity, and our natural heritage.

Imagine the humble larvae: it may be minuscule in size but their dispersal and migration patterns are huge indicators of the health of marine ecosystems. According to Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), healthy marine ecosystems are an assurance that there is a consistent supply of larva of many species of fish and invertebrates. Coral and fish larvae can be brought to far distances by ocean currents, demonstrating the ecological connectivity of habitats in every marine ecosystem in the planet. Larval migration pattern also helps to pinpoint important areas that must be protected to ensure the survival of fish and invertebrates, and thus, the productivity of coastal and marine ecosystems.

Unfortunately, the marine biodiversity in the oceans and seas is declining at an alarming rate, said Dr. Lim. Ninety-five per cent of reefs are threatened; while hard coral cover

on reefs is declining at an average rate of two per cent per year since the 1980s. This trend indicates that conservation and revitalisation need to be done in ensuring the sustainable use of marine ecosystems, considering their fragile state and the benefits we derive from their management.

**Regional efforts for a science-based support system**

Facilitating the connection and cooperation among the 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS) is among the main thrust of the ACB, the region's centre of excellence for biodiversity. For 16 years, the organisation has been pooling and providing support for the conservation actions in the AMS, often in the form of capacity enhancement, experiential learning programmes, livelihood support and communication, education and public awareness activities.

One of the recent efforts undertaken by the ACB in cooperation with the AMS was the consultation on the development of a regional science-based decision support system. By determining the conditions, needs, and challenges in biodiversity

information of the AMS, the ACB hopes to help harmonise access to biodiversity data through a cooperative and well-coordinated intergovernmental approach.

"Addressing the challenge of marine biodiversity loss would require better implementation and operationalisation of environmental policies, regulation, and enforcement," said Dr. Lim. "The response should be reinforced with apt institutional and technical capacity as well as ardent coordination and strong community support and involvement."

"Decision-making for conservation and management actions will be made more effective if key stakeholders are informed by accurate, reliable, and timely scientific information."

**Cross-sectoral cooperation for biodiversity information**

A series of online surveys, national consultations, and regional discussions led by the ACB in collaboration with the Government of Norway through the project *Mobilising Stakeholders to Inform the Development of a Science-*

Second Asia Parks Congress kicks off in megadiverse Malaysia



Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Hajiji Haji Noor, Chief Minister of Sabah opened the 2nd Asia Parks Congress. Photo by the ACB.

**KOTA KINABALU, Malaysia**— "Now is the moment to ensure a dignified existence for ourselves and future generations by preserving and protecting the global commons, which include the atmosphere, oceans, and ecosystems that support us."

Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Hajiji Haji Noor, Chief Minister of Sabah emphasised the importance of nature protection during the opening ceremony of the Second Asia Parks Congress, which convened representatives from protected area authorities, other government agencies, NGOs, academia, youth, the private sector, indigenous peoples, and local communities from all over Asia.

The five-day Second Asia Parks Congress hosted by Malaysia sets the agenda for Asia's protected and conserved areas for the next ten years. The online and on-site discussions were focused on the following thematic areas: nature-based solutions for health and wellbeing; governance of

protected and conserved areas; connectivity and transboundary conservation; effective protected and conserved areas; economic and financial sustainability of protected and conserved areas; and urban conservation and a new generation.

Investing in the region's natural capital, including strengthening protected and conserved areas, was poised to provide significant contributions to the pressing challenges today.

During the plenary discussion, Dr. Madhu Rao, Chair of the World Commission on Protected Areas, further remarked that "protected and conserved areas are the critical piece linking the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change." The declarations manifesting from the Congress are set to open opportunities and promising pathways towards recovery and resilience-building.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) led a session that emphasises the diversity of governance

mechanisms for protected and conserved areas in the region, as well as lessons from these grounded experiences.

ACB executive director Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim highlighted that "the region harbours more than 700 thousand and 300 thousand square kilometres of terrestrial and marine protected areas respectively." She stressed that these areas are directly linked with the well-being of close to 700 million citizens of the ASEAN. Lim added that "as one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, the ASEAN presents rich perspectives and valuable lessons to the rest of Asia and the world."

Congress participants also experienced the ACB's physical and virtual exhibits that highlight the region's flagship programmes: the ASEAN Heritage Parks and the ASEAN Green Initiative.

To know more about the ACB, log on to [www.aseanbiodiversity.org](http://www.aseanbiodiversity.org).

## Shy cats, large turtles, colourful birds: A look at ASEAN's precious fauna

The ASEAN is home to some of the world's most unique and precious wildlife. While the region covers only three per cent of the world's total land area, its terrestrial habitats and bodies of water host some 18 per cent of known plants and animals.

The region, however, is also a biodiversity hotspot. It faces several environmental threats, such as poaching, overexploitation, habitat

loss, and climate change, which pose challenges to the continued survival of many species.

To help safeguard important wildlife, ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) were established across the 10 ASEAN Member States. There are currently 51 AHPs, which are protected areas and reserves that are recognised to have regional importance based on their conservation values.

As part of its efforts to protect these wildlife and their habitats, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity has launched the #WeAreASEANBiodiversity campaign, a three-year effort to promote awareness and mobilise support for biodiversity conservation across different sectors.

Here's a look at a few wild animals that can be found across the ASEAN:



1. **Clouded leopards** (*Neofelis nebulosa*)

**Habitats in ASEAN:** Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Thailand

**Conservation status:** Vulnerable

Named for their spotted coats, these wild cats are found in forests across Southeast Asia. They are known to be great climbers and are among the few animals that can climb down trees headfirst, similar to common squirrels. Not much is known about their population sizes and behaviour in the wild, but they are threatened by poaching and habitat loss.



7. **Blyth's kingfisher** (*Alcedo hercules*)

**Habitats in ASEAN:** Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam

**Conservation status:** Near threatened

Named after English zoologist Edward Blyth, this kingfisher is a visual treat, donning a rufous or reddish-brown underpart, with a blackish blue breast patch, paired with cobalt blue upperparts. Its wings are blackish green with blue speckles.

A shy bird, it often favours small waterways and habitats that are fragmented by human activity. As a result, human disturbance and habitat loss are the main threats to its numbers which are already believed to be dwindling.



4. **Smooth-coated otter** (*Lutrogale persipicillata*)

**Habitats in ASEAN:** Singapore and across mainland Southeast Asia

**Conservation status:** Vulnerable

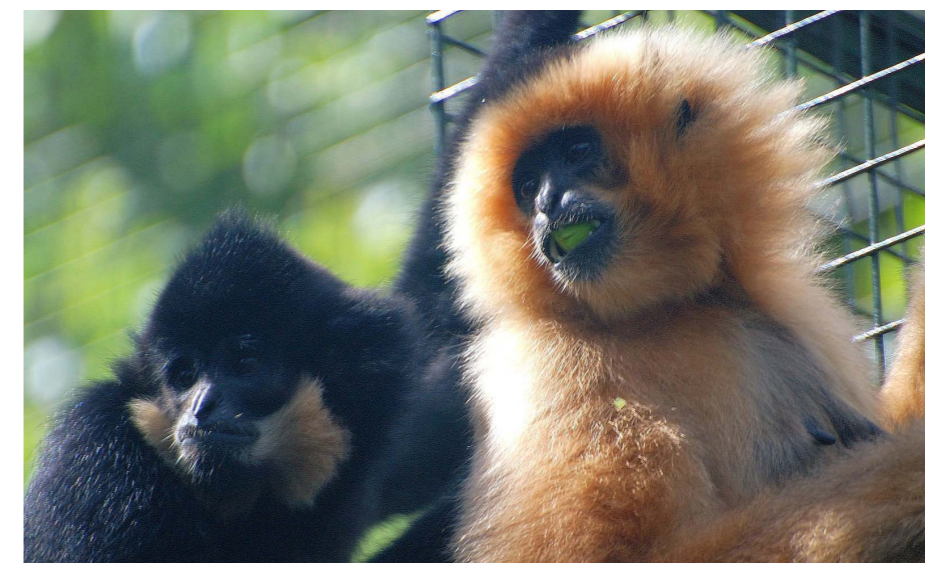
As evident in its name, this specific otter has sleeker, smoother, and shorter fur compared to other otter species. Smooth-coated otters live and hunt fish in groups and are strong swimmers. Aside from the use of scent, they communicate using vocalizations, such as chirps, wails and whistles. A major threat to their population is the loss of wetland ecosystems due to conversion to agriculture and human settlements.

6. **Yellow-headed temple turtle** (*Heosemys annandalii*)

**Habitats in ASEAN:** Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Thailand, Viet Nam

**Conservation status:** Endangered

Only found in Southeast Asia, the yellow-headed turtle lives in freshwater ponds, slow-flowing rivers, canals, and flooded fields. Its common name came from the fact that it is often seen near Buddhist temples within its species range. Cambodia, particularly in Tonlé Sap, was once a stronghold for this turtle, but overharvesting and habitat loss have led to the decline in its numbers.



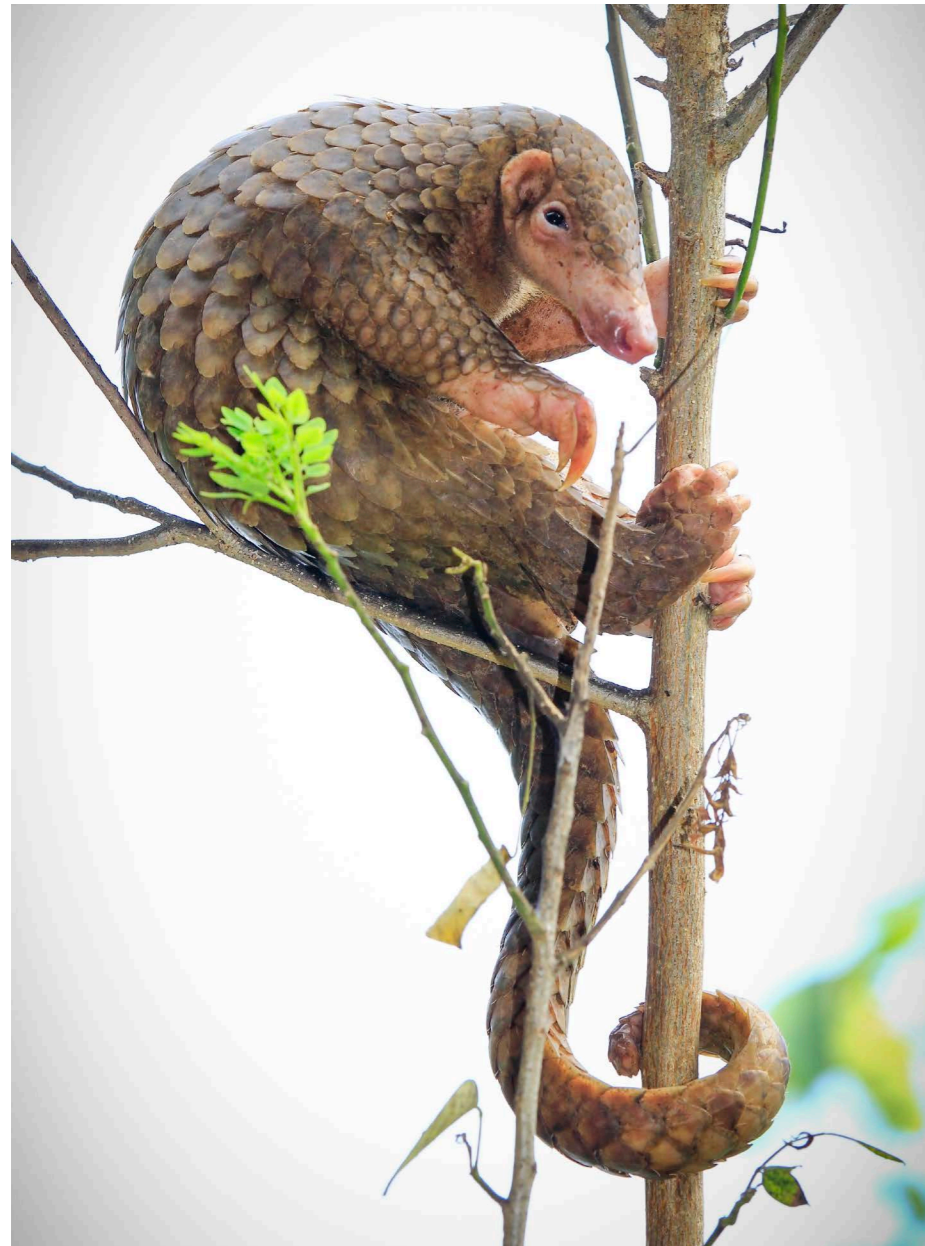
2. **Red-cheeked Gibbon** (*Nomascus gabriellae*)

**Habitats in ASEAN:** Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam

**Conservation status:** Endangered

Highly territorial and social, these gibbons are known for their "singing" as their means of communication. Adult males and females usually sing in duets that can last about 12 minutes long. They are difficult to observe in their forest habitats. Unfortunately, they are hunted for wildlife trade, food and traditional medicine.

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5. **Sunda pangolin** (*Manis javanica*) and **Palawan pangolin** (*Manis culionensis*)

**Habitats in ASEAN:** (Sunda) Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam; (Palawan) Philippines

**Conservation status:** Critically endangered

The ASEAN region is home to two out of eight species of pangolins, namely the Sunda pangolin and the Palawan pangolin. The latter was only recently described as distinct from the former species, with its smaller scales and shorter head and body to tail length ratio.

The name “pangolin” comes from the Malay word “penggulung,” which means “roller.” These scaly, elusive and nocturnal creatures curl up into balls as part of their defence mechanism. Sadly, due to the demand for their scales and meat, they are among the world’s most widely trafficked mammals.

Identifying species key to protecting ASEAN biodiversity



to help facilitate the use of science and research for decision-making and policy development in biodiversity conservation.

“With the sharing of expertise from some of the top barcoding scientists, we can enhance the capacity of the ASEAN to better apply technologies in understanding our biological resources, including the multiple tangible and intangible benefits we can derive from these,” said Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, ACB Executive Director.

As a region with high species diversity, the ACB continues to explore innovative ways to contribute to the efforts addressing illegal wildlife trade, appropriate the rightful values for the region’s natural capital, and aid in realising the Nagoya Protocol for Access and Benefit-Sharing’s vision.

The event included discussions and hands-on laboratory work at the University of the Philippines Institute of Biology and a trek at the Mount Makiling Forest Reserve’s mudspring trail, which is one of nine ASEAN Heritage Parks in the Philippines and the source of the specimens used for the DNA barcoding exercise.

The workshop is a major activity under the *Taxonomic Capacity Building on DNA Barcoding of Common Vascular Plants in the Tropics* project of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), which is funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), and implemented in collaboration with the Institute of Biology, College of Science, University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD); Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); and the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems (MCME).

Despite the breadth of studies focusing on species, gaps in taxonomic identification still exist, thus impeding the effective protection and conservation of the ASEAN region’s rich biodiversity. To address these information gaps, technologies such as deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) barcoding in biodiversity science are being advanced.

native flora and fauna for wildlife forensics and scientific research purposes. Holding learning and sharing sessions about this technology with the AMS accelerates the application of DNA technology and innovations in biodiversity conservation, monitoring, and management.

Genetic technology such as DNA barcoding will increase the efficiency and rate of species identification, thus complementing efforts to halt species loss, protect endangered species, and control invasive alien species.

“DNA barcoding has become an essential means to eliminate taxonomy-related limitations and constraints. In biologically diverse countries like the Philippines, it is indeed useful in supporting biodiversity and wildlife conservation and protection initiatives in the field of research and wildlife law enforcement and regulation,” said Assistant Director Amelita DJ Ortiz on behalf of Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Natividad Y. Bernardino.

From 18 to 22 April, representatives of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) conducted a workshop to enhance capacities in taxonomy to better protect the diverse but increasingly threatened biodiversity of ASEAN. Dr. Giovanni A. Tapang, Dean of the College of Science of the University of the Philippines Diliman opened the hybrid workshop that welcomed participants from various AMS.

Recently, the ACB conducted a regional consultation on enhancing common data and knowledge platforms to help further develop the technical capacity of some AMS in managing marine biodiversity data. These workshops exemplify the collaborative efforts to develop capacities and share knowledge, and

In the Philippines, DNA barcoding is currently being used to build a reference collection of Philippine

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## Get to know the Voices of ASEAN Biodiversity: Antoinette Taus



Biodiversity conservation was never truly in the plans of Filipina actress Antoinette Taus, but today, it is where she finds the most meaning.

The Filipino-American celebrity started her career in television as a teen actress in the 1990s, becoming one of the most recognisable faces in the Philippine entertainment industry. Later on in her life, she made the pivot to humanitarian work, advocating for several causes such as mental health and environmental protection.

Driven by her passion for sustainability and protecting the planet, Taus founded the Communities Organized for Resource Allocation, or CORA. The non-profit organisation, which began its work in 2016, is centred on volunteerism to help solve global challenges, such as hunger, poverty, inequality and climate change.

She is also one of the ambassadors of the #WeAreASEANBiodiversity campaign of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), a three-year

campaign that aims to raise public awareness and mobilise support for biodiversity conservation across different sectors.

Taus said she was primarily inspired by her mother Cora, whom she lost to cancer in 2004, to help and bring people together for a common good.

“CORA is really about volunteers, people that give whatever they can in their own capacity,” said Taus, who is also a UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Goodwill Ambassador.

They were initially inspired by a movement in Los Angeles, California called #HashtagLunchbag, a feeding programme for people in need. Along with friends and family, she replicated this act of kindness, which eventually led to the creation of CORA, which was named after Taus’ late mother.

### Women for the planet

After learning about food waste and sustainability, CORA began its work

on the environment and climate change. It started with coastal cleanups in the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area, a 175-hectare protected area. Designated as a Ramsar site in Metro Manila, the wetland hosts a mangrove forest and is an important habitat for migratory bird species that traverse the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

During these cleanups, CORA also partnered and engaged with other celebrities, including Angie Mead King, who is also an ambassador of the #WeAreASEANBiodiversity campaign.

As an ambassador for equality and working against poverty, Taus said she also learned about gender-based issues and began to incorporate them into CORA’s projects. Her organisation works with Bakawan Warriors, who are primarily composed of women, during the coastal cleanups.

“Women don’t just need to be supported,” she said. “They are true agents of change and are needed in all aspects of change and solutions.”

Understanding the important and unique role of women in environmental protection, CORA launched the WoMangrove Warriors programme in Leyte province to help rehabilitate degraded mangroves and protect existing ones. Powered by women, this nature-based solution protects coastal areas, helps mitigate climate change, and provides opportunities for livelihood and support for women and children.

In 2018, CORA also launched “Clean Seas Pilipinas” as part of the UNEP #CleanSeas global campaign. The yearlong campaign engaged governments, civil society, the private sector and the general public to work on solutions to the plastic pollution crisis.

This June, the first ever Circular Center in the country, “Clean Cities,



Blue Ocean” programme, a pilot project by CORA, was made official through a signing of an agreement with key partners from the local government of Parañaque, the local parish and CORA.

The circular centre, located at the Materials Recovery Facility of Barangay San Isidro, is envisioned to serve as a comprehensive model for the recovery and division of clean, dry and segregated solid waste and to support existing mechanisms in the city’s solid waste management. It will be operated by 10 women hailed as CORA’s “Circular Center Champions”.

Creating partnerships, networks Building and nurturing an organisation is by no means an easy task. Taus said that she also did not know how to start CORA at first but knew that taking the first step was important.

“If there’s one thing I really learned, it’s that you can start in your own space, and that’s exactly how CORA began. Start wherever you are,

wherever that positive energy is, with like-minded people,” she said. “For us, we did not know that we were going to have a nonprofit [organisation]. That wasn’t the goal or the intention. It was just really to make an impact.”

“That first step will lead to that incredible journey ahead... You don’t have to have the whole journey mapped out; just have the beginning prepared for,” she added.

Taus said forming a community is significant in making waves. This includes finding and creating the right partnerships, such as with ACB, which she said has really empowered CORA to continue its work.

“CORA is very, very proud to have the #WeAreASEANBiodiversity campaign as one of our superstar initiatives for us to be able to reach out not just to people across the Philippines but across the ASEAN region,” she said.

“Our issues across the ASEAN region may look a little different

on the ground, but in reality, they are still interconnected... The local actions that we take in each of our communities—from forest to coastal areas—also have a united and collective impact towards the different species that visit the different countries,” she added.

Taus said young people who are also seeking to act and influence positive change in their own communities can find valuable partners in and with ACB.

We are all united in every aspect of how the world is impacted by human activity,” she said. “By being able to work closely in the ASEAN region, with the different partners that are connecting us in the ACB, there is so much more of a sustainable and meaningful impact that we can make by working together.”

## Harnessing the ASEAN youth's powers for the environment



In the multiverse theory, there exist alternate realities where we have Earths that are untouched, lush, and teeming with biodiversity.

But our reality is we only have one Earth, and this World Environment Day, we once again contemplate its health and existence to ensure that we protect our own as a species. The loss of biological diversity in this planet translates into deterioration that affects all who inhabit it. In Southeast Asia, some 221 species are considered critically endangered. Projections show that the region is poised to lose 13-42 per cent of species and 70-90 per cent of habitats by 2100 if drivers such as habitat fragmentation, pollution, and climate change are unabated.

For the people of the ASEAN, the rich biodiversity not only underpins the region's economic development and prosperity, it also is an integral part of our identity. Our culture, our knowledge, and our practices are intricately connected with the diversity of life that surrounds us. Nature also holds the solution to the challenges that our region, and indeed the rest of the world, are currently facing. Healthy and intact ecosystems help in mitigating

climate impacts and even regulating disease outbreaks. Irreversible damage to this natural wealth thus will have a huge negative impact on our lives and livelihoods in the Region.

And no other sector will be most affected by the cumulative effect of the negative actions of the past towards nature than the youth who will inherit its outcomes. This realisation has driven our youth in the ASEAN to care for and protect the resources that not only nourish us but also shape the future before us.

Thus the youth, in particular, are crucial in transforming our collective relationship with nature.

With their boundless energy and creativity, the youth are important actors in communicating the values of biodiversity through various platforms. In this day and age where information is easily accessed, storytelling plays an important role in paving the pathway to recovery and resilience. Thus, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) considers the youth as our dynamic partners in conserving the rich biodiversity of the ASEAN.

In time for World Environment Day, the ACB officially announced the impressive roster of Young ASEAN Storytellers (YAS), innovative youths who hope to inspire others to learn about and care for our shared biological and cultural diversity through poems, visual arts, songs and other creative mediums. The 20 YAS, hailing from the different ASEAN Member States will craft powerful stories of conservation of the region's rich natural and cultural heritage teeming in select ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP).

The YAS are called upon to wield their superpowers to raise awareness of the value and importance of biodiversity. Their hopes and aspirations told through stories are powerful tools that can communicate to the ASEAN and to the world the wonders of the AHPs, and the significance of ASEAN biodiversity as our home and heritage.

Indeed, we must assemble our power and collectively act to keep our only one Earth safe for many more years to come.

## ASEAN Member States urge Parties to work together on ambitious yet realistic biodiversity targets



Nairobi, Kenya – Focusing on commonalities was the resounding call made by the ASEAN Member States during the last working group meeting of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework held from 21 to 26 June 2022 in Nairobi.

The negotiations in Kenya were conducted to reach a consensus on the proposed parts of the global agenda in preparation for the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15).

Key discussions highlighted the contribution of nature to climate change mitigation and adaptation, cost and benefit-sharing, as well as digital sequencing information on genetic resources. Financing and the development of a plan for resource mobilisation and other means of implementation were also negotiated.

The discussions also strengthened the role of indigenous peoples, local communities, women, youth, and

other stakeholders to ensure that all voices will be heard and that no one will be left behind.

In a closing statement, the participating ASEAN Member States (AMS) reiterated their willingness to reach a consensus on targets covering protected areas and resource mobilisation. Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam called for greater openness and compromise to guide the progress of crafting the targets. They urged developed country Parties to deliver on their commitments to fund and support capacity-building activities of developing country Parties to the CBD.

ACB Executive Director Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim remarked that "As the world gathered to discuss and clean up the text of the monumental framework, we echo the call of the ASEAN Member States to work together in finalising a realistic framework." She highlighted that a framework that responds to the

needs of the ASEAN can better complement the region's extensive efforts in addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, and pandemics.

"We thank the leadership of Cambodia, as ASEAN Chair, and the Philippines, as Chair of the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity for championing regional solidarity in these crucial negotiations," said Lim.

In view of the final gathering set for the latter part of the year, the Meeting agreed to conduct a string of activities following the Nairobi meeting to facilitate building a consensus among the Parties. These gatherings would prepare a text for final negotiation by Ministers and their delegations in December in Montreal, Canada.

CBD Executive Secretary Elizabeth Mrema acknowledged the efforts of the Parties to produce a text that "...will be the basis for reaching the 2050 vision of the Convention: a life in harmony with nature."

## ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard: real-time conservation information at your fingertips

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The Dashboard's Biodiversity Data page features several data categories that will enable users to identify regional species distribution, vulnerable areas in need of conservation, and the extent of protected areas and their interconnections through its organised set of data, profiles, time animations, and maps available.

The online launch event was hosted by Antoinette Taus, one of the Voices of ASEAN Biodiversity and founder of CORA Philippines; and Mark Nelson, international host and environmental advocate. Armi Millare, singer, advocate, and former vocalist of the locally-renowned band Up Dharma Down, gave an intermission performance of her version of the Visayan song, Rosas Pandan.

"The dashboard is very user-friendly, and students from high school to college can easily navigate through it," Dr. Diesmos said. "For example, if you want to see how the forest cover of your country changed through time, the dashboard has a "time animation" feature which will easily visualise the increase or decline of forest cover in your country from 1990 to 2020."

Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, ACB Executive Director, stressed the importance of raising people's awareness on the challenges that biodiversity face and why up-to-date biodiversity information is necessary for informed and science-based decision and policy making.

"By having the means to measure and approximate the state and health of our ecosystems and

species, we can develop concrete and more practical solutions and actions towards achieving, not just our national targets, but contribute to regional, and to a more ambitious global biodiversity targets."

The ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard is a collaboration between the ACB and NatureServe, supported by the European Union through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* project, with technical inputs from regional experts, convened through an Informal Advisory Group. The knowledge platform can be accessed at <http://dashboard.aseanbiodiversity.org/>.

## Connecting collective actions for the future of the oceans

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based Decision Support System for Coastal Wetlands in the ASEAN Region which commenced late last year underscored the importance of establishing an information support system that will cater to the wide range of needs of the different stakeholders.

Discussions around the information requirements highlighted that government institutions are more inclined to use the data for planning, decision-making, and reporting. Research centres and the academe, on the other hand, emphasised the use of data for research, education, and the monitoring physical conditions of ecosystems. For NGOs and other sectors, these valuable knowledge are used for evaluating and monitoring initiatives.

"The ways forward for ASEAN biodiversity should be four-pronged,

with the involvement of policymakers, corporate sectors, conservationists, and the general public," said Mr. Christian Elloran, Database Specialist for the Biodiversity Information Management, as he emphasised the role of effective data management, understanding how to bridge gaps, and implementing best practices in managing data as keys toward the efficiency of knowledge platforms such as the ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard, ASEAN Clearing-House Mechanism, and the ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook.

Strengthened participation from various sectors can help ensure that biodiversity information databases are interoperable, accessible, understandable, and reliable.

### Collective action for the ocean

With the theme *Revitalization: Collective Action for the Ocean*,

the World Ocean Day celebration highlights the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration and synergies to enable more powerful and near-real-time biodiversity target tracking. Fostering cooperation can help better identify and address critical emerging issues facing coastal and marine biodiversity in the ASEAN region.

"Indeed, just as our oceans and seas are interconnected, so must our actions be, to make the necessary transformation to a better and more resilient ASEAN," Dr. Lim said. "May we also take inspiration from this year's ASEAN Summit theme, *ASEAN ACT: Addressing Challenges Together*, as we enhance our efforts in protecting our coastal and marine biodiversity."