Photo courtesy of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS IN REPORTING WILDLIFE CRIME IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Investigative Environmental Journalism

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Philippine wildlife criminals get away with a slap on the wrist

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> Measly court penalties and weak laws are doing little to stop a lucrative business where kingpins evade justice, and small-time smugglers take the fall. Data investigation by **Jhesset O. Enano**

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TOOLS

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#MineAlert allows you to track and share mining applications and licences

"With the environmental damage that wildlife criminals do, it's an intergenerational crime."

Teodoro Jose Matta, executive director, Palawan Council for Sustainable Development

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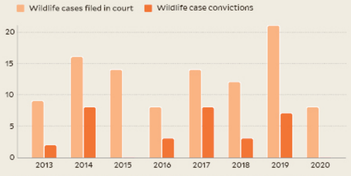
PHILIPPINE WILDLIFE CRIME CASES AND CONVICTIONS



SOURCE: Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB)

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES Enforcement operations against wildlife criminals have intensified in the past few years, but prosecuting them remains a challenge, wildlife law enforcers and conservationists say. In 2014, 12 Chinese fishermen were sentenced to six to 12 years in jail for poaching, after the discovery of nearly 10 tons of dead and frozen pangolins (above) in their ship that ran aground at Tubbataha Reef National Park in Palawan. The foreigners were released in 2016 after the Court of Appeals overturned their conviction. In 2019, a wildlife criminal was sentenced to two years in jail for trading peregrine falcons (left) and other wild animals, but immediately applied for probation. He was arrested for the same offense last year. —PHOTOS COURTESY OF PALAWAN COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND DENR-BMB

NEWS

Firms need not donate half of jabs to gov't

Private companies can use all of their purchased vaccines for their workers, instead of donating half of these to the government as spelled out in a multiparty agreement, vaccine czar Carlito Galvez Jr. said on Monday. Officials, however, said there would be a delay in the arrival of up to 12 million doses for economic front-line workers and indigent population under the A4 and A5 priority categories, respectively. —STORY BY MARICAR CINCO

A2

NEWS

2 dead as 'Dante' swirls to Samar

A 14-year-old girl and a 71-year-old man drowned in swollen rivers while another man was reported missing as heavy rains spawned by Tropical Storm "Dante" (international name: Choi-wan) flooded parts of Mindanao on Sunday. Tropical storm signal No. 1 was raised over the eastern portion of Northern Samar and the northeastern portion of Eastern Samar, as the storm swirled northwestward, packing maximum winds of up to 75 kilometers per hour. —STORY BY EDWIN O. FERNANDEZ

A4

BUSINESS

As temperatures soar, brownouts hit Luzon

Parts of Luzon were hit by rotating power interruptions on Monday as high temperatures pushed electricity demand too close to available supply, according to the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines. Temperatures rose to a high of 35 degrees Celsius in Metro Manila, leading to the increase in electricity use for cooling devices. Officials said there was a power generating capacity supply shortage. —STORY BY RONNEL W. DOMINGO

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CHALLENGES

- access to data
  - absence of a centralized database for wildlife crime
  - absence of a single agency tasked to oversee all wildlife/ environmental crime in the Philippines
  - gaps and inconsistencies in data and information

Photo courtesy of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development

CHALLENGES

- access to sources & case studies
    - pandemic lockdowns
    - geographical limitations
- answering the reader's question: "so what?"

Photo courtesy of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau

Photo courtesy of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau

LESSONS

- need for consistent coverage and reporting on wildlife crime
    - importance of cross-checking and verifying data
    - importance of collaboration
- need for (extra) resourcefulness and determination
- keeping close communication and building trust with sources

WAYS FORWARD

- significance of resources and newsroom support
- significance of continuous training on data journalism and environment reporting

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Photo courtesy of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development