



MINDORO

Biodiversity

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The official newsletter of Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc.

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Start of a new decade in conserving
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The year 2019 set a different challenge for the organization—a challenge to strive harder as we start a new decade for the foundation. With all the organization's accomplishments from 2008-2018, we are enthusiastic to do even more for the environment and communities of Mindoro for the years to come.

As we jump into a new decade, we also celebrate the realization of one of our greatest visions—the Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Center (MBCC).

Aimed at establishing an enormous emblem representing biodiversity conservation in Mindoro, the center will be built in the Municipality of Puerto Galera, the tourism gateway of Mindoro. Puerto Galera boasts not only its beautiful beaches but also its unique biodiversity.

MBCC will be a one-story building with facilities such as museum, library, audio-visual room, conference and training rooms, among others. Establishing this center was never easy. We started the year losing our initial architectural and engineering designer, which left us with no other choice but have it bid out again. We are fortunate enough to finally have a designer before the end of the first quarter. Schematic designs and plans were ready by the end of the year. As we focused our initiative in the construction of the MBCC, we also hired staff for the said project, including a project development officer and museum curator.

Conceptualized in the late 2000s, MBCC will become the physical exemplar of the synergistic relationship between biodiversity conservation and sustainability.



Sebastian Quiniones Jr.

Chairman

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

OUR VISION

*Sustained conservation of Mindoro's natural treasures
for future generations.*

OUR MISSION

*To lead scientific research and catalyze collaborative and
participative conservation efforts in key biodiversity areas
of Mindoro resulting in empowerment of
Mindoreños through increased awareness and care.*

After years of providing assistance to the communities through the MISSION Program, MBCFI is now preparing them towards the sustainability of their own People's Organizations (PO). PO leaders and members were trained to increase their knowledge and skills on organizational management such as leadership skills and their capacity to manage financial records. Livelihood opportunities were also improved through different trainings including food processing and agroforestry and non-timber forest products-related trainings.

Minimal assistance were also provided in the maintenance of their established projects, for them

to be able to manage them in their own capacity. Through the joint project of the three core programs (RESEARCH, MISSION, CARE), we were able to award the best woodlot cooperators from the different priority areas of MBCFI. We are hopeful that these cooperators and their POs will continue to maintain their woodlot and restoration areas for the coming years. These communities are vital in saving the biodiversity of Mindoro.

As we geared towards broader support, through the RESEARCH Program, we were able to receive funding for our surveys on the Ilin Bushy-tailed Cloud Rat and the Tamaraw. The CARE Program also broadened the scope of its awareness campaign through different talks, exhibits and environmental events held not only in Mindoro, but also in other parts of the Philippines, like Manila and Leyte. The importance of Mindoro in the aspect of culture and biodiversity should not be contained only within its islands, but in a wider reach, gaining more collaboration nationally and internationally.

For the past ten years, MBCFI have been in close partnership with various stakeholders, including communities, academes, local government units and national government agencies. With this, we aimed to continue our strong collaborations with them and build new partnerships toward one common goal –the conservation of Mindoro’s biodiversity. These can be proven through the renewal of conservation agreements with our POs, our accreditation from the Local Government Units and the Philippine Council for NGO Certification, and our memberships from the Protected Area Management Boards of the four protected areas in Mindoro and the Regional Development Council and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Amidst the challenges of a new era, MBCFI still was able to provide what is expected from us by our partners and more. Facing those challenges taught us to be more resilient and therefore sustain efforts all for the conservation of Mindoro’s unique biodiversity.

The past decade was challenging for the foundation. Creating good track records and building decent partnerships aside from establishing its own organizational management is not an easy feat.

The total fund from the Malampaya Joint Venture Partners for this fiscal year, was mostly allocated to the MBCC, and some were distributed to maintain our three core programs MISSION, RESEARCH, CARE, and continued our operational and administrative costs below the mandated limit.

RESEARCH

1) Lead the Annual Asian Waterbird Census

- a) Naujan Lake National Park- the waterbird census on January 17-28, 2019 showed 2665 birds compared to the 5523 count on 2018.
- b) Apo Reef Natural Park- The Bridled Tern is considered a rare species, and its nesting population at the ARNP is possibly among the largest in the Philippines.

- 2) Participated in the Annual Tamaraw count, with an estimated 480 Tamaraw individuals in its core habitat in Mts. Iglit-Baco Natural Park.
- 3) Our licensed forester evaluated woodlot areas by cooperators from four priority sites.
- 4) Participated in the Mts. Iglit-Baco Natural Park Management Planning
- 5) Provided assistance to the Naujan Lake National Park Protected Area Management Office and the DENR Regional Office- MIMAROPA in the lobbying to become a full-fledged protected area, including the presentation to Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Oriental Mindoro and the Regional Development Council of MIMAROPA.
- 6) The 28th Biodiversity Conservation Society of the Philippines presented three different papers
 - a) Seabird fauna of Apo Reef Natural Park (ARNP) and Apo East Pass off western Mindoro, Philippines
 - b) Retracing the largest land mammal in the Philippines
 - c) Strengthening Environmental Education for Development: Integrating biodiversity to the K-12 curriculum
- 7) Participated in the Tamaraw Expedition in Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary together with the Tamaraw Conservation Program and the Protected Area Management Office of MCWS on June 17-21, 2019, confirming the presence of Tamaraw in the PA after 25 years.
- 8) Provide technical assistance to the Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro and the Municipalities of the province and reviewed seven (7) comprehensive land use plans.



Asian Waterbird Census 2019



Tamaraw count 2019



Tamaraw expedition at Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary

- 9) Conducted the Ilin Cloud Rat verification survey through ethnobiological survey and camera trapping resulting to no confirmed presence of the elusive animal.
- 10) Presented "Establishing the Naujan Lake National Park as a Protected Landscape" at the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Congress elusive animal.
- 11) Two project proposal submitted to international organizations were approved
 - a) William Oliver Philippine Champion Award by Chester Zoo for the project on the Dietary Analysis of Wild Tamaraw
 - b) Global Wildlife Conservation for the project Purposeful search for the Ilin Bushy-tailed Cloud Rat

MISSION

Mt. Halcon

- 1) Two (2) conservation agreements with IP communities renewed
- 2) Two (2) capacity building activities related to agroforestry and/or non-timber forest products conducted
- 3) 1200 Wildlings propagated
- 4) Maintained approximately 39.5 hectares of woodlot and restoration areas
- 5) Maintained one (1) vermicomposting bed
- 6) Balay sandigan constructed
- 7) SARIG and KAWARAS requirements for Sangguniang Panlalawigan Accreditation submitted

Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary

- 1) Two (2) conservation agreements with IP communities renewed
- 2) Capacity building activities conducted: food processing, agroforestry and/or non-timber products
- 3) Maintained approximately 40 hectares of woodlot and restoration areas
- 4) Maintained vermicomposting beds and harvested 31 sacks of organic fertilizer
- 5) Balay sandigan constructed
- 6) PSU and SABACAP requirements for Sangguniang Panlalawigan Accreditation submitted

Ilin and Ambulong Islands

- 1) Two (2) conservation agreements with IP communities renewed
- 2) Capacity building on food processing conducted
- 3) 2200 Wildlings propagated
- 4) 833 Siniguelas planted
- 5) Maintained approximately 10 hectares of woodlot and restoration areas
- 6) Maintained vermicomposting beds and harvested eight (8) sacks of organic fertilizer
- 7) Balay sandigan constructed
- 8) NAGSAMAKAPA and IAMBAG requirements for Sangguniang Panlalawigan Accreditation submitted
- 9) Assisted PO on proposal writing, Php 100,000 grant received by the PO

Mts. Iglit-Baco Natural Park

- 1) Three (3) conservation agreements with IP communities renewed
- 2) Three (3) capacity building activities on agroforestry and/or non-timber products conducted
- 3) 9000 Wildlings propagated
- 4) Maintained approximately 40 hectares of woodlot and restoration areas



Food processing of siniguelas at Ilin and Ambulong Islands



Regular meetings of PO's



Food processing of siniguelas at Ilin and Ambulong Islands

- 5) Maintained vermicomposting beds and harvested 12 sacks of organic fertilizer
- 6) Balay sandigan constructed
- 7) PSBB and NTTPK requirements for Sangguniang Panlalawigan Accreditation submitted
- 8) Bio-intensive gardens maintained
- 9.) Assisted PO on proposal writing, Php 50,000 grant received by the PO



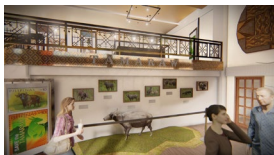
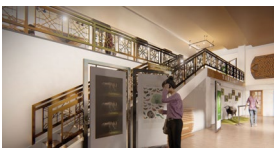
Bio-intensive gardens for the people's organizations



From left to right: Grace Diamante, Elyza Hazel Tan, Dr. Letty Afuang, Sebastian Quiniones Jr. and Kathy Lene Cielo at the Quill Awards

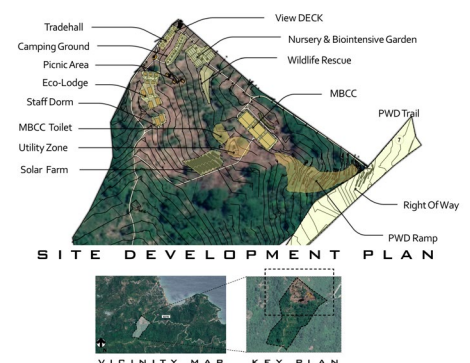
CARE

- 1) 3,000 pieces of Quarterly Newsletter produced and distributed
- 2) Membership to the PAMBs of 4 Protected Areas in Mindoro 9000 Wildlings propagated
- 3) Membership to the RDC
- 4) 17 environmental events, talks and exhibits
- 5) Quill award for the environmental sourcebook "Mindoro TREASURES: Teaching Reference for Environment Awareness and Sustainable Use of Resources", under the category of Communication Training and Education
- 6) 15 Success Story videos produced



MINDORO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION CENTER

- 1) Relocation and topography survey
- 2) Architectural and engineering design
- 3) Concept design
- 4) NCIP Certification of Non-overlap secured
- 5) Site clearing and fencing
- 6) Schematic Design
- 7) Museum Storyline



These accomplishments further drive us to move forward and do more to conserve Mindoro's biodiversity. We will continue to improve our process maps and business policies, monitor and regularly evaluate our outputs and outcomes through our key performance indicators, invest in staff development, maintain partnership with our stakeholders and sustain our programs.

We can never do all of these alone, and we are thankful to our funders and partners in conservation for their continuous support and understanding.

Together we will conserve Mindoro's treasures, its biodiversity and culture for future generations. Kayang-kaya kung sama-sama!

Species in Focus

The Philippine Teak

Common Name: Philippine Teak
 Scientific Name: *Tectona philippinensis*
 Conservatuib Status: Critically Endangered



The Philippine Teak is locally known as “Malabayas” which translates as “guava-like” due to its distinguishable flaky bark similar to guava (*Psidium guajava*). The people from Ilin and Ambulong Islands also call it in its Visayan name “Bunglas”. The Philippine Teak is a small to medium-sized tree with bright purple blossoms. The species was previously classified to belong to the Family Verbenaceae but was phylogenetic studies (Catino et al 1992; Wagstaff et al 1998) reclassified it along with the rest of the species in genus *Tectona* as well as many other genera to the family Lamiaceae or Labiatae (Mint or Deadnettle family).

The species is known to occur only in or near coastal areas of Ilin and Ambulong Islands in the Municipality of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro and from municipalities of Lobo and San Juan in Batangas Province, Luzon Island.

Ecology. The species is found in coastal to lowland limestone forest. The species tends to dominate the semi-deciduous forests and occurs in association with *Terminalia polyalthia*. Other associated species as Molave (*Vitex parviflora*), Sampaloc (*Tamarindus indicus*), Mango (*Mangifera indica*), Kapok (*Ceiba pentandra*), Kupang (*Parkia roxburghii*), Figs (*Ficus sp.*) and *Syzygium sp.*

Threats: This critically endangered (IUCN: CR) endemic tree species is known only from Ilin and Ambulong Islands and a couple of municipalities in Batangas Province, Philippines on which forest habitat loss and degradation have been extensive, owing primarily to clearance for agriculture. The forests of Mindoro was estimated to cover 70% of the entire island in 1900s (ESSC1999) is down to only 193.372 square kilometers or 19.26% of the island’s 1,039 sq km total land area in 2003 (De Alban 2009). On Ilin and Ambulong Islands there are only a few remaining patches of large trees whereas most of the land area (42.18%) is covered by wooded grassland. Remaining natural habitat of the Philippine Teak is severely fragmented and in continuing decline.

Recommended Conservation Actions: Conduct a comprehensive survey to locate and tag Philippine Teak trees for protection of the species and its habitat on Ilin and Ambulong Islands. Conduct additional surveys to determine if the species occurs in other parts of Mindoro other than the known localities and to quantify the population. Participative consultations with concerned stakeholders to update the critical habitat management plan of the area is needed. A multi-sectoral management body for forest conservation and natural resource management of Ilin and Ambulong Islands needs to be established. Ilin and Ambulong Islands have been recently declared as critical habitats for the Philippine Teak through a municipal ordinance and a forest restoration project is ongoing on both islands.

Virtual Tour of Mindoro's Key Biodiversity Areas

Ilin and Ambulong Islands



Ilin and Ambulong Island located at the lowest southwestern tip of Mindoro Island. Ilin Island measures 7,338.20 hectares composed of 10 barangays while Ambulong is 968.52 hectares that constitutes one barangay. Elevation in Ilin reaches 100 meters above sea level with a flat to moderate rolling topography. The soil is limestone with sedimentary loam along valleys and agricultural areas. There are nine (9) major land cover types in Ilin and Ambulong Islands based on the 2010 land cover map of DENR. The majority of these land cover types are classified as wooded grasslands that account for about 3,499 ha or 42% of the total area. It stretches from barangays Inasakan, Iling Proper, Labangan Iling, Ansiray, Ipil, Bangkal and Ambulong. Grassland areas around 912 ha or 11% of the total area and found mostly in the southern barangays of Ilin Island, barangays Natandol and Pawican. Magrove areas, on the other hand, are situated in the eastern portion of Ilin Island, most specifically in barangays Ansiray, Ipil, and Bangkal, covering about 143 ha or 2% of Ilin and Ambulong Islands.

Ilin and Ambulong Islands is one of the 11 priority areas of MBCFI due to the presence of the critically endangered Philippine Teak and the single-island endemic mammal, the Ilin Bushy-tailed Cloud Rat. It is the smallest among the priority areas but should not be underestimated due to numerous endemic species present in the island. Both islands have been declared as critical habitats for these significant species through a municipal ordinance.



Philippine Teaks at Ilin and Ambulong Islands

The MBCFI Way

Asian Waterbird Census 2020

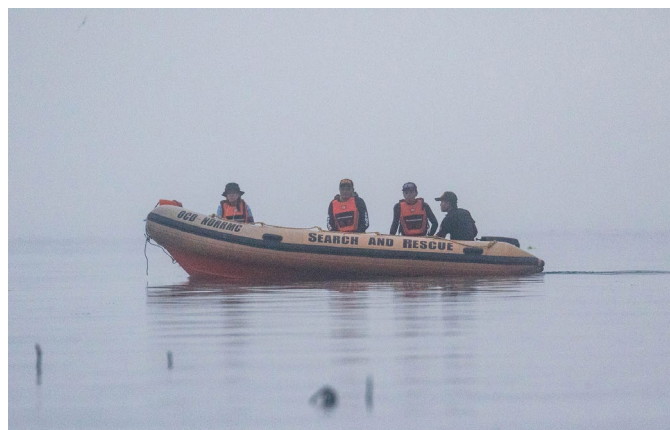


It's the time of the year again!

The Protected Area Management Office (PAMO) of the Naujan Lake National Park (NLNP) together with the Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. spearheaded the conduct of the Annual Waterbird Census in Naujan Lake National Park, held on January 16-17, 2020. They are joined by MinSCAT...etc... Waterbird censuses are conducted regularly for long-term monitoring of wetlands. The presence and number of observed waterbirds are important indicators to determine the health and quality of wetlands.

NLNP is a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site), an initial component under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS), and a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) in Mindoro. As part of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, many migratory bird species seek temporary refuge in its habitat during the non-breeding season, between the months of September and April.

For the past five years, there has been a steady decline in the total number of waterbirds observed in the protected area. From 10,821 estimated number in 2016, to 6,932 in 2017, 5,912 in 2018, 3,635 in 2019, and this year with 2,808 individuals. According to our RESEARCH Program Manager, Geoff E. Tabaranza, there is no hard evidence as of yet to determine the cause of the decline. The NLNP-PAMO, headed by its Protected Area Superintendent (PASu) Ricardo R. Natividad, is conducting monthly monitoring surveys to identify the cause.



This year's records are 29 identified species and 7 observations identified at the family level only. Among the 29 identified species of waterbirds, 13 are migratory species (45%), 13 are resident species (45%), and 2 Philippine endemic species (7%) were recorded. There are 1,886 migrants comprised mostly by Whiskered Terns (*Chlidonias hybrida*; 46%) and Tufted Ducks (*Aythya fuligula*; 42%), which comprise 88% of the total count.

With the two new records documented during the survey, we are still hopeful of the possibility of new discoveries in the future. Aside from the monthly monitoring, it is also recommended that Naujan Lake National Park be declared as a full-fledged protected area under the E-NIPAS for better protection of its habitat.

There are two regular migrant visitors in NLNP, namely, the Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) and Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybridus*).

The Tufted duck is an uncommon migrant in the Philippines recorded between October to March, preferring open water habitats in deep lakes, marshes, and occasionally estuaries where they can dive for food. In Naujan Lake, they are usually seen in large groups and typically comprise most of the counts during the annual Asian Waterbird Census. The population in Naujan Lake has declined over the past five years, with the lowest count of only 117 recorded in the previous AWC 2019. Their numbers slightly increased in this AWC 2020, with 791 individuals recorded.

Whiskered terns are the most common migratory tern species in the Philippines. This species has a very wide range from Western Europe &

Africa to Australia and SE Asia, including the Philippines. Usually found in coastal waters, mouths of rivers, bays shallow coral flats, and inland freshwater bodies. A total of 867 individuals were recorded during the 2020 AWC.

Aside from the two regular visitors, we are hoping for the third one -the Garganey (*Anas querquedula*). A common migrant in the Philippines usually recorded from October to May. These surface-feeding ducks prefer freshwater marshes and shallow lakes with abundant emergent vegetation usually in small groups but sometimes may congregate. They are first recorded in Mindoro, particularly at Naujan Lake during the Asian Waterbird Census on January 18, 2018, with a large flock estimated at 832 individuals. The species was recorded for the second time during a waterbird monitoring survey on October 30, 2019, with at least 89 individuals observed. Within the same migration season, six individuals were recorded on January 17, 2020 and the chances are high that this species will become a regular find in Naujan Lake.



The MBCFI Way

World Wetlands Day 2020



Some 100 elementary and high school students recently attended a symposium on biodiversity in Socorro, Oriental Mindoro, that focused on wetlands as part of the World Wetlands Day celebration. The Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. organized this symposium, in partnership with the Protected Area Management Office of Naujan Lake National Park and the Municipality of Socorro, on February 3, 2020, at the Municipal Gymnasium of Socorro. The event was graced by the Municipal Vice Mayor Roy De Claro. The participants were students from Mina de Oro Catholic School, Socorro Central School, and Leuteboro National High School.

Roderick Makiputin, CARE Program Officer of Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. (MBCFI), said the symposium, which carried the theme “Wetlands and Biodiversity” highlighted the importance of Naujan Lake National Park, the fifth largest lake in the Philippines. He focused his presentation on Philippines and Mindoro biodiversity.

Rayson C. Alfante, Ecosystem Management Specialist of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources- Naujan Lake National Park Protected Area Management Office, shared in his talk the importance of NLNP as a wetland.

Naujan Lake, with an area of 21,655 hectares, was proclaimed a protected area in 1968 by virtue of a Presidential Proclamation and is recognized as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 1999 and part of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway for migratory birds. It is inside the jurisdiction of



four municipalities-- Naujan, Pola, Socorro, and Victoria.

The lake provides important ecosystem services to Mindoro, such as wildlife habitat, tourism and livelihood opportunities for the surrounding communities and nearby towns.

Mr. Alfante also added that "Wetlands act like sponges that absorb floodwaters and function as shock absorbers during typhoons and tsunamis," Alfante said. He, however, pointed out that wetlands are vanishing three times faster than forests due to several natural and human-made causes such as climate change and pollution compounded by destructive fishing methods and encroaching human settlements brought about by increasing population.

Aside from the talks, the kids from grade school had a coloring activity wherein nine students with best output were selected. Kyle Cielo, CARE program manager of MBCFI announced the winners-- Angel Asi, Julia Charisse Ola, Richer Kuen Magnaye, Rochelle Mae Velasco, Khiezel Anne H. Bautista, Jellian Beverly B. Lazo, John Darrel Acuzar, and Benedict Reynoso.



Getting-to-know our Family

Juan D. Valdez Jr.
MISSION Program Manager

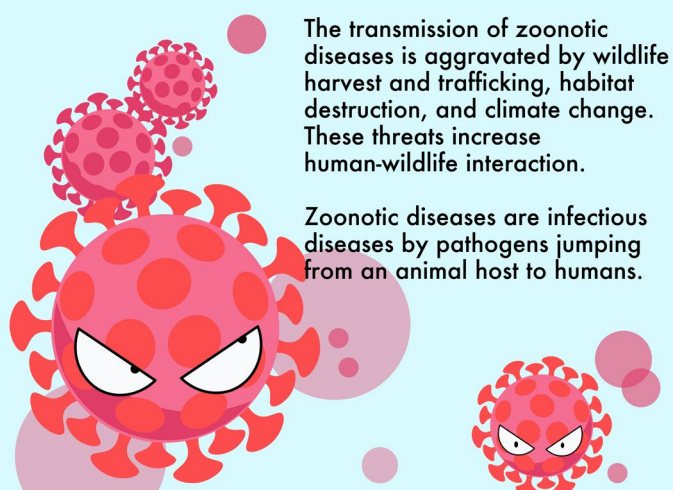
Juan D. Valdez Jr., Kuya Jun, as we fondly call him, is our manager for the MISSION Program. He finished his Bachelor in Elementary Education at Zaragoza College, Pangasinan. He spent most of his career time on community development, which started in 1995. It has been innate to him to help local communities in uplifting their living conditions by establishing local cooperatives. It began in his own community in Tuy, Batangas, where he established a cooperative called, ??? which up to now exists (for verification). With his hard work and perseverance, he was able to increase the fund of the cooperative and eventually got additional support from different agencies. Many recognized his efforts and one of them (can we mention the sponsor??) sent him to school for further studies on cooperative management.

As Program Manager, Kuya Jun leads the MISSION team in reaching out to communities especially the indigenous peoples in MBCFI priority areas. Community organizing is his forte and he leads them towards community empowerment. He ensures proper planning process, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation of every peoples organization are in place. His scope includes issues management and conflict resolution. He enjoins community members in conservation actions and disseminates proper information on biodiversity.

Since 2015 with MBCFI, he was able to facilitate the establishment and registration of 13 different peoples' organizations in MBCFI priority areas.



Where did the COVID-19 come from?



The transmission of zoonotic diseases is aggravated by wildlife harvest and trafficking, habitat destruction, and climate change. These threats increase human-wildlife interaction.

Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases by pathogens jumping from an animal host to humans.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the virus strain that causes **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**, a respiratory illness, is an example of pathogens that came from wildlife trafficking, including SARS-CoV, Ebola, Bird Flu, among others.



1. WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING AND POACHING

Animals are hunted, trapped, and sold in markets and illegal trades, for traditional medicine, food, and pet, among others.

2. RESERVOIRS OF DISEASE

Wild animals that appear healthy can possess pathogens that can cause illnesses to other animals, including humans. Diseases can spread when animals are brought to markets.



3. PATHOGEN EXCHANGE

Spillover infection happens when humans hunt wildlife or destroy their habitats, causing the jump of pathogens from reservoir population to novel host. We must fight against wildlife trafficking and stop dangerous wildlife consumption.



STOP THE SPREAD



Stop illegal poaching and trafficking of wild animals. It will help prevent the spread of diseases, and also address one of the major drivers of species extinction.

Original concept by: Wildlife Conservation Society, in partnership with Global Wildlife Conservation
Link: <https://oneworldonehealth.wcs.org/>

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