

## **WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY (JUNE 5) AND PHILIPPINE ENVIRONMENT MONTH (JUNE)**

**THEME: Go Wild for Life, Combat Biodiversity Loss  
#GreenEnvironmentGawingForever**

World Environment Day is celebrated every 5th of June, to raise global awareness to take positive environmental action to protect nature and the planet earth. This celebration aims to inspire people to take action to prevent the growing strain on planet Earth from reaching its breaking point.

The theme for World Environment Day has been dubbed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as "Go Wild for Life". Illegal wildlife trade endangers both known and lesser known species, which remain at risk despite international campaigns to influence policy, investment, conservation and law enforcement. World Environment Day encourages everyone to celebrate and protect all species which are on the danger of extinction. Zero tolerance for illegal wildlife trade, in both words and action, can definitely make a difference.

June is also declared as the Philippine Environment Month, with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as the primary focal agency, implementing different activities. The theme for this year is "**Go Wild for Life, Combat Biodiversity Loss #GreenEnvironmentGawingForever**".

Aside from illegal trade and various human-made activities, climate change can also be a threat to biodiversity, especially to various species and living life forms, including humans, which we sometimes overlook. World Environment Day and the Philippine Environment Month aim to raise awareness in the fight against illegal wildlife trade and biodiversity loss, and climate change. Combatting the loss of biodiversity, wildlife, and resources, can be aimed for if we beat climate change, through simple steps.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

**Go wild for life, and combat biodiversity loss.** The Philippines is part of the 18 "mega-diverse" countries in the world, and is also considered as a biodiversity hotspot. It also contains two-thirds of the earth's biodiversity. In addition, more and more new species are being discovered year after year. Because of this, the rate of endemic species also continues to rise. DENR Administrative Order 2007-01 established the National List of Threatened Species of Plants and Other Wildlife, indicating that 99 are critically endangered, 187 are endangered, and 176 are vulnerable. And it continues to get worse, especially with the rise of illegal wildlife trade.

Combating biodiversity loss and being an advocate of wildlife protection starts with being vigilant. Report any illegal trade activities, any plant or animal species that are on the verge of abuse, or maltreatment, or any illegal activities being held in protected areas to agencies like the DENR, World Wildlife Fund and local government units. Support the

endeavors and initiatives of these organizations as well. Truly doing little can go a long way.

**Clean the air.** Doses of toxic pollutants that stay in the air, can not only harm the human body and different species, but can also disrupt the natural flow of ecosystems. Various gases that are released from fossil fuel burning, for example, can also spread in the air, and can be inhaled, as well as absorbed by plants and soil. Simple ways of addressing air pollution include the use of cleaner fuel, especially in vehicles. Reducing activities like open burning can also make a difference.

**Clean the waters.** Water pollution kills aquatic life. Pollutants can include agricultural and industrial waste, pesticides, and other human-made or artificial pollutants, and even discharge from sewage. In turn, pollutants deplete water of oxygen, lessening the survival of aquatic life. Wastes should not be disposed of in water bodies. Even activities like dynamite fishing can kill fish and different species, and pollute water bodies.

**Manage solid wastes.** Solid waste, especially biodegradable waste, when not managed or disposed of properly, can also affect wildlife and the flow of biodiversity. The formation of landfills and dumping sites is the result of the improper disposal and management of wastes, especially from households and industries. In turn, this deprives various wildlife species, the chance to enjoy their natural habitat. Exercising proper solid waste management starts by doing best practices like recycling, segregation, and using products with environment-friendly materials.

**Beat climate change.** Climate change refers to changes in climate patterns, which is attributed largely to global warming and increased level of atmospheric carbon dioxide, produced by the use of fossil fuels. Rapid and serious climate change is not only a threat to humans, but also to different species forcing them to leave their natural habitat and adapt or migrate to different areas with more favorable conditions. Addressing climate change starts with reducing our carbon footprint. Use energy- efficient devices and appliances. Utilize renewable energy like solar power. Segregate, recycle, and dispose of waste properly, so as to avoid the use of landfills, and support eco-friendly businesses. By helping to address climate change, we are not just doing ourselves a favor, we are also protecting natural resources, including biodiversity.