

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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**DENR**  
**IN THE NEWS**

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Healthy ecosystems means resiliency, faster recovery against climate change

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

**S**CIENTISTS say there is a direct link and evidence that biodiversity boosts the resiliency of ecosystems against the impacts of climate change—a reason the protection and conservation of the country's rich biodiversity can never be overemphasized.

Experts believe that the country's strength or resiliency against intense typhoons and extreme weather events, like prolonged wet or dry season, is anchored on natural defense—the diversity of habitat-forming species both in land and in water—which are seriously threatened by destructive activities. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources

of forest and coastal habitats for agriculture, fisheries, residential and commercial purposes, tourism and other development projects, such as mining, quarrying, logging and land reclamation—weakens the country's natural defense against natural calamities.

While the Philippines remain as one of the 18 most megadiverse countries in the world, it is also a

## Serious threat

IN the Philippines the more serious threat to biodiversity is the effects of climate change, which are strongly felt in coastal and marine environment.

Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) underscored the need to protect and conserve the country's rich biodiversity to strengthen the country's resiliency against natural calamities and effects of climate change that may hasten the extinction of vulnerable species.

Lim, who is currently in Cancun, Mexico, for the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, said there is a direct link between climate change and biodiversity loss.

With the theme, "Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Well-being," COP13 focuses on biodiversity and ecosystem services,

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### Altering animal behavior

CLIMATE-CHANGE has strange effects on animal behavior. Various studies suggest that sudden change in temperature alter migration patterns of marine mammals and waterfowls, affecting feeding habits, breeding and reproduction eventually leading to imbalance or worse, species extinction.

Sightings of animals outside their natural habitats is a sign of change in animal behavior.

Lim cited the behavior of marine mammals—like whales, dolphins and sharks—marine turtles and even migratory birds during the peak of El Niño in 1997 can be attributed to the extremely hot weather. Climate change's effect on animal behavior, in particular, and life cycles, she said, offer scientists an opportunity to study the effects of climate change in the Philippines and contribute to the global effort to mitigate its adverse impact to biodiversity.

### Sea-level rise

VINCENT HILOMEN, executive director of the DENR-BMB's Coastal and Marine Division, said climate change affects coastal and marine ecosystems in varying degrees.

Sea-level rise, coral bleaching, ocean-temperature rise and ocean acidification are taking place globally.

Marine scientists have observed these climate-change effects to the country's coastal and marine environment for decades, Hilomen said.

Sea-grass beds and mangroves are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise. The deeper the ocean become, the harder it is for sunlight to reach sea-grass beds, preventing

Certain species of mangroves, he added, can only survive on brackish water. Such species will be the first to go in case of sea-level rise.

"If their particular species can tolerate low level of salinity,

then they will die in case of sea-level rise," he explained.

### Threats to corals

SUPERTYPHOONS that trigger storm surges, meanwhile, cause massive destruction of coral reefs. This, he said, have devastating impact on a wide variety of fish species.

El Niño, or extreme heat, also triggers bleaching that may lead to the death of corals, forcing fishes to migrate and find healthy ecosystems, where they can feed, and breed.

"In 1997 and 1998 the Philippines experienced intense El Niño. This caused massive bleaching of corals. Nearly 90 percent of our corals died. In fact, the coral in Bolinao, [Pangasinan], has not yet recovered until now," he said.

Corals are breeding and feeding ground of spawning fish.

They provide protection to small fish against predators, thus, allowing them to grow and replenish the ocean with fish for people to catch and feed human population.

### Ocean acidification

OCEAN acidification caused by excessive emission of carbon is the most feared effect of climate change to coastal and marine environment. While the ocean is a big carbon sink, its carbon-absorption capacity would soon reach breaking point because of excessive carbon emitted into

seaweed and sea grass. This will definitely affect food security," Hilomen said.

He said the Philippines is on the right track in joining other countries to cut carbon emission under the 2015 Paris Agreement. Limiting the global temperature increase to below 2 degrees Celsius by 2030 means deep cuts on carbon emission.

The Philippines, although not a big emitter of greenhouse gas, committed to reduce by 70 percent its carbon emission by 2030, subject to assistance it gets from developed countries.

Scientists have warned that global-temperature increase of 2°C would spell not only the extinction of animal and plant species, but the human population, as well. "It is only right to demand accountability from big polluters. But we should also do our part in reducing our own carbon footprint," he said.

### Resiliency, faster recovery

Having healthy ecosystems and rich biodiversity make the ecosystems, whether in land or water, resilient to climate change.

Dr. AA Yaptinchay, director of Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines, said there are various studies that suggest the direct link between biodiversity and climate change.

"Climate change affects everything. Change in temperature, sea level, even the chemistry of the water will impact any living thing in the ocean."

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he said. Water temperature increase, he said, will change water current. "Certain organisms have specific habitat preferences. There are species that prefer to stay in coral reefs. Change in temperature, say increase in temperature, will drive them away or they will die because they will not survive unless they move to higher latitude," he said.

Migratory species, he added, will be affected once the food source becomes scarce or vanishes.

"Our problem in the tropics is that fish will not go here because they would go in higher latitude," he said. Yaptinchay underscored the need to maintain a healthy ecosystem, whether in land or water, to strengthen the resiliency and allow faster recovery in the event of climate-change effects.

The richer the biodiversity, he said, the higher the probability of species surviving, allowing the food chain to have minimum disruption. "Think of it this way. If you have only three species and lost one, it will be harder for the two other species to survive. Whereas, if you have a thousand species, and you lose one species, you still have hundreds of species left, allowing a higher chance of survival for other species," he said.

The diversity of species, he said, also allows faster recovery in case of damage to ecosystem, citing the case of coral bleaching, which will allow faster recovery if coral-reef fish continue to dwell on other parts of the reef. "The

fish will eat the algae on this coral. Without fish, the algae will grow on the coral. It will later die. Once algae starts engulfing the coral, new coral will not grow," he explained.

"The diversity of ecosystems allows interaction that makes it healthy and strong. The Philippines is one of the most diverse when it comes to marine biodiversity. What we need is to prevent the threats, protect our biodiversity to maintain the services the ecosystem will provide, to combat climate change," he said.

### Protecting the marine environment

ACCORDING to Lim, the DENR-BMB's strategy to mitigate the impact of climate change is to strengthen the protection of existing marine protected areas.

That way, she said, habitat-forming species from mangroves to sea grass and corals will be protected against destructive human activities, ensuring the survival of fish and other marine life that thrive within.

The DENR, however, is taking a different tack in rehabilitating damaged marine ecosystems, which Hilomen said would cost around P500,000 to P5 million per hectare.

"We don't have the resources for massive rehabilitation. What we are going to do is to reduce the threat and protect our marine environment against destructive activities to allow natural rehabilitation," he said.

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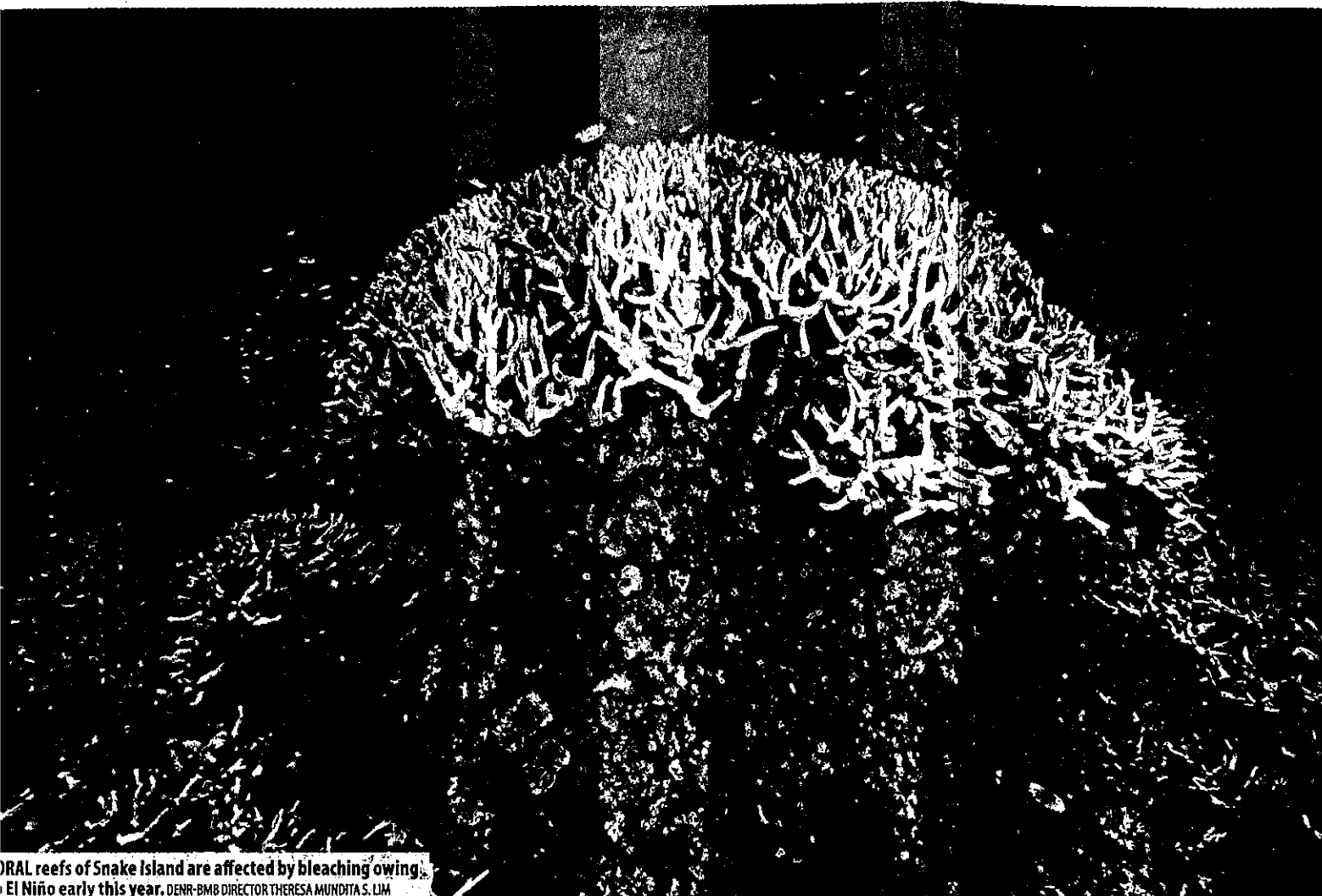


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ORAL reefs of Snake Island are affected by bleaching owing  
El Niño early this year. DENR-BMB DIRECTOR THERESA MUNDITA S. LIM



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### DENR to hire workers of suspended mining firms to fight climate change

**WORKERS** of suspended mining firms can be hired for the government's planned expansion of bamboo and mangrove plantations to fight climate change and poverty.

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez said this during a recent dialogue with small-scale miners from Paracale town in Camarines Norte held at the DENR central office in Quezon City.

The miners had sought an audience with Lopez to ask assistance for mine workers who lost their jobs as a result of the environmental audit conducted on all metallic mining operations in the country.

Lopez urged the miners to get involved in more sustainable livelihood that does not only help the environment but also protect their families from the negative impacts of climate change.

She told miners and local government officials that she could not allow small-scale mining for the moment be-

cause it uses mercury that threatens the environment and public health.

"Small-scale mining is illegal, and you don't want to be caught or have the Ombudsman bar you from public service forever. I cannot help you if it is illegal," Lopez said.

"Help us by growing bamboo and mangrove seedlings. We will fund it, but your earnings will be your own," she added.

During a recent climate change conference in Morocco, Lopez said the country will embark on a massive expansion of mangrove and bamboo plantations to strengthen the ecological and economic resilience of local communities in the face of climate change and its devastating impacts.

Considered as one of the fastest growing members of the grass family, bamboo is also known to sequester as much as 400 percent of carbon per unit area, while giving off 35 percent more oxygen than other trees. **Cory Martinez**

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# MGB passes int'l surveillance audit

By MADELAINE B. MENDOZA

**T**he Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), tasked to regulate and develop the controversial mining industry, passed an international surveillance audit ensuring the agency's management system reliability and if it meets the applicable statutory, regulatory, and contractual requirements of an organization.

A statement showed that MGB successfully passed the first surveillance audit by the SGS Philippines, Inc. (SGS) for an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2008 Certification for its Quality Management System (QMS).

SGS, the certifying body, recommended the continuing validity of the Certification after its four auditors completed the said surveillance audit on November 28, 2016.

The main purpose of the surveillance audit is to verify the MGB's compliance with the management system.

The surveillance audit covered the provision of services provided by the MGB, particularly the processing and approval of Exploration Permit application including renewal; the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program and Final Mine Rehabilitation and/or Decommissioning Plan; and Laboratory Testing Services for mineral industry.

The objectives of the audit also

include: (1) to determine conformity of the management system with audit criteria and its ability to ensure applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements are met; and (2) to determine its effectiveness to ensure the client can reasonably expect to achieve specified objectives.

MGB has always been at the receiving end of all the criticisms against the country's highly challenged mining sector.

"Despite all the adversities, the MGB has proven to be a steadfast champion in the conservation, administration, development, and proper use of the country's mineral resources," DENR Undersecretary and Concurrent MGB Director Mario Luis J. Jacinto said in his message delivered by MGB Assistant Director Danilo Uykeng.

"We have faced up to the challenges and never wavered in demonstrating whatever it takes to be able to pursue our goal of having a mining industry that is pro-people and pro-environment in sustaining wealth creation and improved quality of life," he added.

As of now, MGB is finalizing the Provincial Mineral Profile for the whole country.

These are targeted to be completed by the first quarter of 2017 and shall be uploaded in the MGB website.

The officials of MGB recently undergone training to upgrade their working knowledge as they anticipate more activities in the industry.





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## *Green group lauds Manila's move to fix crematorium*

Environmentalists lauded a move by the Manila city government to fix the public crematorium after it was found to be violating the Clean Air Act.

"We find the remedial steps being undertaken by the Manila Health Department (MHD) very encouraging. We trust that all environmental control measures will be satisfactorily fulfilled to allow the crematorium to resume its service in a manner that will not pollute the surroundings and harm the public health," EcoWaste Coalition national coordinator Aileen Lucero said yesterday.

Last Tuesday, EcoWaste received a copy of MHD's response to the Notice of Violations (NOV) issued by Vizmindia Osorio, regional director of the Environmental Management Bureau-National Capital Region (EMB-NCR) on Nov. 29.

Osorio said the crematorium violated provisions of the Clean Air Act's implementing rules and regulations and other environmental measures.

The group had earlier complained to the EMB-NCR about the crematorium's lack of a permit to operate, which expired on May 13, 2014, and its air pollution emissions.

In his reply to the NOV, acting city health officer Dr. Benjamin Yson promised to secure a permit to operate for the crematorium and register the facility as a hazardous waste generator.

The MHD likewise confirmed that "corresponding fees and penalties shall be paid" with a request for reduced amounts since the crematorium provides free cremation for the remains of indigents.

To lower the crematorium stack emissions to "acceptable levels," the MHD vowed to replace or install pollution control devices.

According to the MHD, 770 bodies were cremated in 2015 at the facility. For the past three quarters of 2016, 573 remains were cremated there.

- Rhodina Villanueva

# PH leads talks on access to int'l climate funding

DELAINA FLOR

**T**he Philippines has strengthened its global ties by leading the talks on speedier access to international climate funding.

In a follow up to the Marrakech climate negotiations, Finance officials and specialists from the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal convened in Manila last week to tackle access to international climate funding.

The eight countries agreed to "call for urgent climate action and support from the international community" and at the same time mobilize all available resources, including their own, to ensure that their domestic institutions can deliver climate finance far sooner and with far greater impact.

The two-day meeting focused on how national governments, banks, and companies can help each other solve the challenges of applying for accreditation and approval of projects to the United Nations' Green Climate Fund, which aims to mobilize US\$100 billion per year by 2020 to support climate action in developing countries. "We must now put climate justice into action. We need to operationalize access to resources and deploy funds to communities that need it the most," said Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman of the Climate Change Commission.

The countries also discussed the mobilization of domestic climate funds, such as the People's Survival Fund in the Philippines, now worth ₱2 billion, which

recently approved ₱120 million to support climate adaptation projects for Del Carmen, Surigao del Norte and Lanuza, Surigao del Sur.

Bangladesh also has its US\$1-billion Climate Change Trust Fund that the country uses for both adaptation and mitigation projects. "Asia's developing countries, the Philippines included, urgently need climate finance to protect their communities from the already-staggering loss of life as well as escalating damage to the region's economies," said Renato Redentor Constantino, Executive Director of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC).

"Governments in the region are eager to learn from one another how public and private institutions can most quickly and effectively leverage climate finance in pursuit of truly transformational, climate-resilient development," he added.

ICSC organized the climate finance meeting in partnership with the World Resources Institute, the German development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit or GIZ, and the United Nations Development Programme.

Over sixty participants representing the finance departments, financial institutions, and other organizations from eight countries participated in the event.

The Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities is a policy group in the Philippines promoting low-carbon development strategies, sustainable energy solutions and fair climate policy in vulnerable countries.

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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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## Climate change policies integrated in disaster-prone areas

By ELLA LYNNE DEVERA

Climate change policies were integrated by the local governments in their protected landscape and ecotown projects in disaster-prone areas in Marikina City and Rizal.

In a multi-sectoral project together with the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL) will demonstrate climate change integration in agriculture and natural resources management.

"Even if you don't have data, you know the climate change has influence in agricultural production. Here we're mainstreaming how we should plan for climate change so that benefits go down to the grassroots," said SEARCA Director Gil Saguiguit Jr.

The project, which will allow local government units (LGUs) to adapt to climate change through proper agricultural and environmental management practices, aims to help farmers and residents in the towns of Tanay, San Mateo, Rodriguez, Baras, and Antipolo City, all in Rizal province.

"Now you can [schedule planting], and you know where to avoid putting

certain crops because erosion is rampant there. It's a whole thing about environmental management and even bigger than climate change," he said.

The new planning tool being pushed by SEARCA involves Adaptation Mitigation and Mitigation Initiative (AMIA), which is currently used by the Department of Agriculture in its programs.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) climate change specialist Ancha Srinivasan said among the specific measures piloted by SEARCA's AMIA concept are the bio-charcoal briquetting for Marikina, San Mateo, Rodriguez, Tanay, and Baras, said.

Furthermore, it employs species establishment and rehabilitation in Tanay, Rodriguez, and Baras.

Check dams, which is a source of cheap irrigation from naturally regenerated rainfall and aquifer replenishment, are also implemented in Antipolo City and San Mateo.

### AMIA project

Under AMIA, LGUs use toolkits like vulnerability assessments and Geographic Information System to determine if a site for agricultural production may be vulnerable to typhoons, landslides, flooding, or tsunami.

They use greenhouse gas inventory and tools to determine polluting carbon dioxide (CO2) emission in an area and the capacity of a certain agroforest area to sequester CO2.

"Our hope is that our LGUs will use and maximize results of this project in updating their Comprehensive Land Use Plan and in preparing local climate change action plan," Saguiguit said.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Experts hold forum on business and biodiversity in COP13 in Cancun

To discuss ways on how businesses can contribute in mainstreaming biodiversity, the Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (SCBD) and the government of Mexico gathered more than 250 experts from businesses, governments and non-governmental organizations by hosting the 2016 Business and Biodiversity Forum in Cancun, Mexico, on December 2 and 3.

The forum focused on the concept of mainstreaming biodiversity from the business point of view, investment opportunities and legal frameworks that give more certainty to investments, as well as better decision-making, which factors in the value of

biodiversity and the services it provides to businesses. Other important issues relevant for businesses that were addressed included natural capital accounting and financing, examining the links between climate change and biodiversity, and supply-chain policies.

"It is from biodiversity that businesses acquire raw materials for their products. Hence, the business sector must be equipped with knowledge on the values of biodiversity for them to come up with science-based decisions in operating their businesses, and to avoid overexploitation of natural resources," Executive Director lawyer Roberto V. Oliva of Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) said. Oliva served as the

moderator of the first session of the forum.

"When companies place resources sustainability at the core of their brand, they experience long-term revenue and experience positive impact in social and economic space," International Union for Conservation of Nature Director General Inger Andersen said.

The forum is part of the 13th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP13). The conference provides a critical opportunity for countries to address strategic actions to enhance implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and promote the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity targets.

"Achieving the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 is not possible without the active participation of the business community. We need to move from a scattered approach in engaging businesses to a truly inclusive one in order to achieve the broad mainstreaming of biodiversity within and across business sectors," said Dr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD executive secretary. One of the outcomes of the 2016 event is a Business and Biodiversity Pledge. The pledge provides an opportunity for business leaders to acknowledge the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for businesses, and to state their commitment toward taking positive action on biodiversity.

### Asean reiterates commitment to biodiversity conservation

MEMBER-STATES of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) reaffirmed their commitment to biodiversity conservation and reduce global biodiversity loss.

This commitment was contained in their joint resolution at the CBD COP13. The CBD COP13 is ongoing in Cancun, Mexico, with the theme "Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Well-being."

In the joint statement, the Asean member-states (AMS)—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam—reaffirmed their commitment to

implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its sustainable development goals, particularly Goals 14 and 15 on the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources, and terrestrial ecosystems, respectively.

The AMS remains committed to biodiversity conservation, as the rich shared natural heritage of the region provides important services—such as food, water, climate regulation, soil formation, recreation and education—which contribute to the region's socioeconomic well-being and benefit around 618 million Asean nationals.

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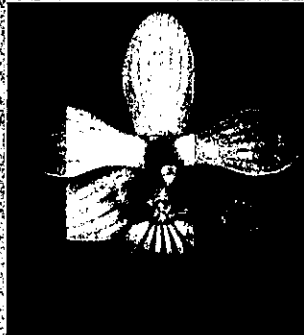
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# A Quintet of *Phalaenopsis*

By JIM COOTES and RONNY 1993

**W**e have written three previous articles on the "Large-Flowered *Phalaenopsis* Species," "Variation of *Phalaenopsis equestris*," and the "Star-Shaped *Phalaenopsis* Species." In this article, we are including a quartet of species, plus a natural hybrid, which have not been mentioned previously.



*Phalaenopsis lindenii*  
(Jim Cootes)

There are clones which are solid reddish-brown through to clear green-yellow individuals. The most commonly seen coloration of the flowers is yellowish-green marked with reddish-brown spots and blotches; the labellum is white. An interesting feature of this species is the inflorescence, which, as the specific

alludes to, resembles the antlers of a deer. A well-established plant of this species is seldom without a flower.

*Phalaenopsis cornu-cervi* is one of the most widely distributed of all the *Phalaenopsis* species and it has been recorded from north-east India, the Nicobar Islands, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra, Java, and Borneo. In the Philippines, it is only known from the island of Palawan. As would be expected from such a widespread orchid there is considerable color variation between populations from different countries.

*Phalaenopsis intermedia* is probably the most commonly seen orchid species in the Philippines. We cannot recall a province we have visited without seeing this delightful orchid growing somewhere. Another great feature of this orchid is that it thrives in the heat of the lowlands. There is considerable variation in the coloration of the labellum, and we have observed



*Phalaenopsis cornu-cervi* (Jim Cootes)

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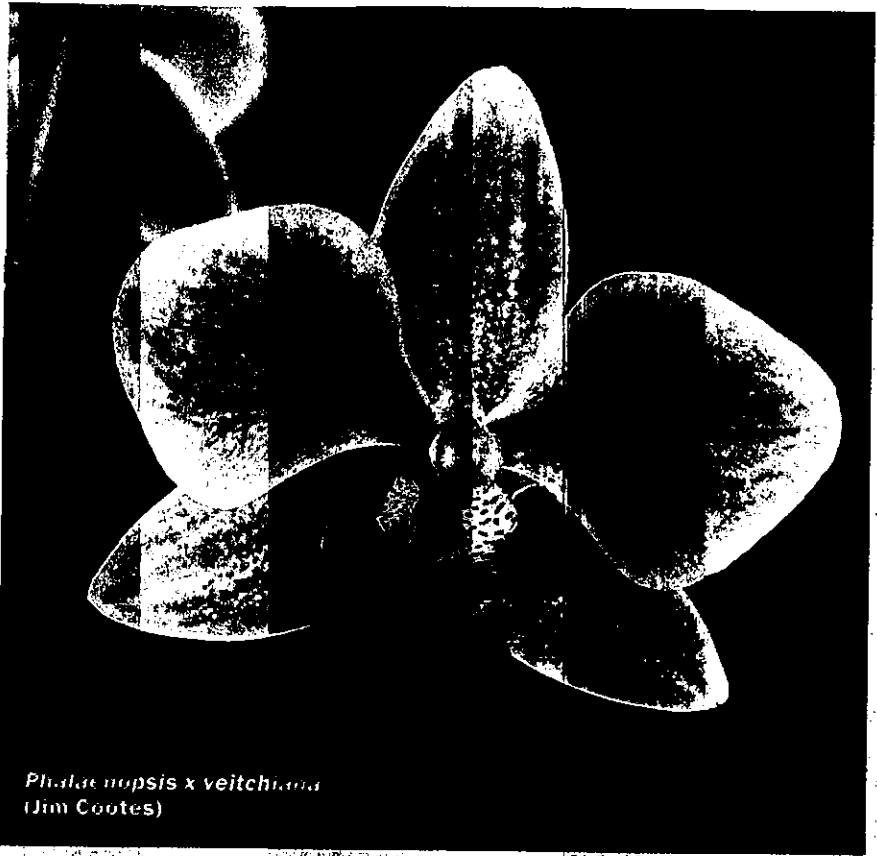
### A Quintet of Phalaenopsis



*Phalaenopsis intermedia* (Ronny Boos)



*Phalaenopsis micholitzii* (Ron Parsons)



*Phalaenopsis x veitchiana*  
(Jim Coates)

individuals with red (var. *portei*), peach, yellow, and striped labella (which is the plural form of labellum.) Usually the sepals and petals are milky white, but occasionally there are clones with pale pink floral segments. This species is endemic to the Philippines and found nowhere else.

*Phalaenopsis lindenii* is a highland species, from the mountains of central Luzon, and its natural habitat is some of the wettest places in the Philippines. Being a species of high elevations, where it receives constant, cool, air movement and high humidity, it will **NOT** grow or flower in the heat of the lowlands. The foliage is deep green, with silvery mottling. The inflorescences will branch on adult plants and there is considerable variation in the intensity

of the striping on the floral segments. *Phalaenopsis lindenii* is also endemic to the Philippines.

*Phalaenopsis micholitzii* is, without a doubt, the rarest *Phalaenopsis* species known to occur in the Philippines, and the senior author (JC) has only ever seen three plants, in cultivation, in his countless visits to the Philippines since 1977. It has only been recorded from the province of Camarines Sur on Luzon, and the southern province of Zamboanga on Mindanao. One can only wonder, with such a disjointed distribution record, whether one of the localities is erroneous. Amazingly this species is more readily available to growers and lovers of orchid species, in Europe and the United States of America, than it is in the Philippines.

This is because people will swap pollen of different clones of this orchid, so that this rare species can be grown in flask, to make it readily available to growers. Another Philippine endemic species.

*Phalaenopsis x veitchiana* is a beautiful, seldom seen, natural hybrid between *Phalaenopsis equestris* and *Phalaenopsis schilleriana*. Usually the inflorescences are upright and branching, bearing many delightful pink blooms. It is found, occasionally, in the areas where *Phalaenopsis equestris* and *Phalaenopsis schilleriana* grow together. The man-made version of this hybrid is known as *Phalaenopsis Schiller's Horse*, and it was not registered until 2006. This beautiful natural hybrid is another Philippine endemic.