

## Wildlife Conservation Protecting ASEAN's natural heritage

Increasing global environmental pressures continue to threaten the survival of the world's species and ecosystems. Thousands of species are on the brink of extinction, which may result in the irrevocable loss of both endemic and economically important species. The Convention on Biological Diversity Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 focuses on wildlife conservation and the prevention of species extinctions through Aichi Biodiversity Target 12, which is vital in a region where the overexploitation of biodiversity is a major driver of biodiversity loss.

The ASEAN hosts some of the world's most iconic and increasingly vulnerable wildlife, which are essential to the cultural and natural heritage of the region. These include the Asian elephant; Sumatran, Malayan, and Indo-Chinese tigers; Bornean, Sumatran, and Tapanuli orangutans; Sumatran and



Wildlife conservation is addressed in Aichi Biodiversity Target 12, which focuses on the conservation of threatened species. Target 12 is particularly significant to ASEAN where overexploitation of biological resources is a major driver of biodiversity loss.

Malayan rhinoceros; and a number of hornbills, including the oriental pied hornbill, great hornbill, and wreathed hornbill, among many others. The region is also a global hotspot for poaching, trafficking, and consumption of illegally traded wildlife parts and products.

### ASEAN's response

Various projects have been established to strengthen the populations of the region's most at risk species. Biodiversity assessments evaluate the status of species and ecosystems and help

### Some of the most illegally traded wildlife in ASEAN

Species	Common Name	Country	Traded Through	Red List Status	Individuals	Year
<i>Dendrobium hybrid</i>		Thailand	Exported orchids		10,000,000	2012
<i>Phalaenopsis hybrid</i>		Thailand	Exported orchids		3,000,000	2012
<i>Aquilaria crassna</i>	Agar Wood; Eagle Wood	Thailand	Exported noncacti/nonorchid	CR	600,000	2012
<i>Aquilaria crassna</i>	Agar Wood; Eagle Wood	Viet Nam	Exported noncacti/nonorchid	CR	450,000	2012
<i>Vanda hybrid</i>		Thailand	Exported orchids		900,000	2012
<i>Scleropages formosus</i>	Asian Arowana; Asian Bonytongue; Golden Arowana; Golden Dragon Fish; Kelesa	Indonesia	Exported fish	EN	70,000	2012
<i>Hippocampus kuda</i>	Yellow Seahorse; Estuary Seahorse; Oceanic Seahorse; Spotted Seahorse	Viet Nam	Exported fish	VU	40,000	2012
<i>Crocodylus siamensis</i>	Siamese Crocodile	Cambodia	Exported reptiles	CR	38,000	2009
<i>Acipenser schrenckii</i>	Amur Sturgeon	Malaysia	Imported fish	CR	20,000	2012
<i>Crocodylus siamensis</i>	Siamese Crocodile	Viet Nam	Exported reptiles	CR	13,000	2012

Source: UNODC, 2013

designate Important Bird Areas and Key Biodiversity Areas, some of which may not be part of existing protected area systems. Transboundary protected areas (PAs) are being established among AMS that are land-linked, share specific resources and ecosystems, and provide habitats for migratory species. Transboundary cooperation is essential to overcome different policy, legal, and institutional structures; management and governance regimes; and social, cultural, and economic contexts and systems.

Species conservation is managed through a number of measures, such as the establishment of PAs; species-specific conservation programs; creation of wildlife corridors and flyways to allow movement in fragmented landscapes; enhanced *ex situ* programs through wildlife rescue centers, natural history museums, arboreta, gene banks, and others; and measures to address the illegal wildlife trade.

ASEAN Member States (AMS) have made significant progress in the development of wildlife legislation and policies, including the development of other legal remedies such as the Writ of Kalikasan of the Philippines, which was designed to protect the constitutional right of Filipino citizens to a balanced and healthful ecology.

Institutional and community support to wildlife conservation is also evident in ASEAN. Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), in particular, are crucial to monitoring and law enforcement activities because of their familiarity with the territory and biodiversity in protected areas. Capacity building activities enhance biodiversity and wildlife conservation efforts, especially in the following areas: taxonomy; ecological studies and assessment; environmental law and policy; patrolling and monitoring on land and sea; arrest and apprehension; paralegal training; biodiversity information and management; community development; and communication, education, and public awareness.

### Wildlife conservation in the ASEAN region

Park rangers and PA staff have been trained in the identification of threatened species, international wildlife protection policies, and patrolling and monitoring techniques in collaboration with regional partners, including the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN). The ASEAN-WEN has since merged with the ASEAN Experts Group on Convention on International Trade of Endangered

Species (CITES) to form the ASEAN Working Group on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement (AWG CITES-WEN).

The ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) Programme helps protect the region's most representative wildlife through training programs in taxonomy, monitoring, enhanced database management, ranger and patrolling activities, equipment support, and development of Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) strategies, among others. ACB uses various media platforms and knowledge products to promote the conservation of ASEAN's endangered species and AHPs.

The Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP 12) was held in the Philippines on 23–28 October 2017 and adopted resolutions that recognized the role of migratory wildlife in achieving global sustainable development goals, approved the establishment of marine-protected networks in the ASEAN region, and promoted the conservation of intertidal and other coastal habitats for migratory species. The CMS COP 12 provided additional protection for 12 species of mammals, 16 species of birds, and six species of fish (including the up-listing of the *butanding* or whale shark). Other approved resolutions include the Manila Declaration on migratory species conservation vis-à-vis sustainable development and the establishment of marine protected area networks in ASEAN (Mayuga, 2017).



Photo by Dede Sudiana





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## Call for Action

The ASEAN region is vulnerable to heavy wildlife traffic due to a growing global market for wildlife use. Addressing issues in wildlife depletion requires comprehensive international and ASEAN collaboration in wildlife monitoring, enforcement, and demand reduction strategies. Other initiatives include region-wide conservation programs and efforts, database of wildlife conservation laws and status of endangered species, repository of best practices that may be replicated across ASEAN, and a venue for interaction and sharing of expertise among practitioners in various aspects of wildlife conservation.

Below are some immediate actions necessary to strengthen wildlife conservation in the region:

- Strive for effective PA management.
- Reduce pressures on the environment through the development and promotion of environment-friendly enterprises that do not use wildlife and wildlife parts.
- Enhance *ex situ* programs through wildlife rescue centers, natural history museums, and others.
- Optimize the use of technology to support wildlife law enforcement.
- Support and fund stronger law enforcement and strengthen national wildlife enforcement networks.
- Develop and implement an ASEAN Strategy and Action Plan on Wildlife Law Enforcement and Reduction of Illegal Wildlife Trade as a follow-up to the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Trade in CITES Wild Fauna and Flora (2011–2015). This will serve as a cooperation framework to clearly identify and delineate tasks of various agencies and organizations to optimize resources and prevent duplication of efforts. It should establish a financing mechanism for effective law enforcement, facilitate sharing of expertise, and implement a CEPA program to generate public support for wildlife law enforcement.
- Intensify CEPA campaigns using messages and materials tailored to target audiences. Engage stakeholders in wildlife conservation through innovative social media tools.

## References

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# Wildlife Conservation

## Protecting ASEAN's natural heritage



## ASEAN's Response



## Allies in Wildlife Conservation

