

DENR calls for tougher measures to protect native wildlife

March 4, 2018 | 9:55 pm



Philippine palm civet -- WIKIPEDIA

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it will call for the review of the country's wildlife protection laws to put more teeth into penalties for those trafficking in wildlife.

DENR Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Rodolfo C. Garcia on Friday said a stronger enforcement arm is what the department needs.

"We need enforcement, because without enforcement, we just have the laws. And the law can be trampled upon by the people who see an advantage for

themselves. Somebody must tell them that what they are doing is wrong and charge them for it," he added.

In October, the DENR formed a task force to investigate and prosecute violators of environmental rules. Shortly after, Environment and Natural Resources Roy A. Cimatu signaled his intention to form a separate enforcement bureau to ensure the DENR does not rely too heavily on other law enforcement agencies.

While plans to set up a separate enforcement bureau remains uncertain, Mr. Garcia said that the time is right to review and amend the laws.

"As in other cases, we found out that laws are outdated. That's why we need to review the laws and the penalties for violations. I think it's very important now to deter those people so we need to increase the penalties for the violations of such laws," he added.

On Tuesday, the DENR is set to hold a consultation on the proposed amendments to Republic Act No. 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.

In celebration of world wildlife day, the DENR issued awards to 20 National Bureau of Investigation operatives and eight police officers for their enforcement of wildlife laws in 2017.

This year's world wildlife day focuses on big cats, of which the Philippines has none. Nevertheless, the DENR would like to promote protection for the Asian palm civet, which is thought to be threatened because of its role in making specialty coffee from beans that go through its intestinal tract.

Another wild cat the DENR is putting in the spotlight is the Visayan leopard cat found in Negros, Cebu and Panay. It is currently listed as a vulnerable species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature due to deforestation.

The wildlife trade in the Philippines was worth P160 million over the last decade, with 28 convictions of wildlife traffickers obtained.

Among the most highly traded wildlife from the Philippines are seahorses, pangolins and freshwater eels. — **Anna Gabriela A. Mogato**

<http://bworldonline.com/denr-calls-tougher-measures-protect-native-wildlife/>