

DENR slams vandalization of corals in Batangas

[Elizabeth Marcelo](#) (The Philippine Star) - October 18, 2018 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Tourists as well as diving operators should strictly observe the standard practices on responsible diving and snorkelling following reports of vandalization of corals in Batangas, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

“We call on those who visit underwater sites to dive carefully and avoid damaging the reef or disturbing underwater life by chasing, touching, poking or moving them,” Cimatu said in a recent statement.

“Corals are incredibly brittle and fragile, and they take a really long time to grow,” he added.

Cimatu cited the report of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which said that some corals grow at just 0.3–2 cm per year. Starting from larvae, it can take up to 10,000 years to form a coral reef, and 100,000 to 30,000,000 years to fully form larger coral reef structures like barrier reefs and atolls, the report added.

Cimatu issued the statement after seeing the viral photos of two separate vandalized corals at the house reef of Bauan Divers Sanctuary in Batangas.

Cimatu said diving operators “must adopt sustainable ecotourism practices as early as now” to prevent similar incidents especially in nearby Verde Island Passage and Apo Reef – known sanctuaries of marine biological diversity.

Verde Island Passage, exposed to the West Philippine Sea, has an array of highly diverse reefs, most of which are endemic and considered globally endangered.

Apo Reef, on the other hand, is considered “the second largest connecting coral reef system in the world.” The site is also proclaimed as a protected area under the Natural Park category by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 868.

The DENR said its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) has started mainstreaming the implementation of the Green Fins Approach “to lessen the adverse impacts of diving and snorkelling on the environment.”

“The Green Fins Approach is a set of standards for environmentally sustainable diving and snorkeling tourism activities. It also includes a robust system of assessment criteria to identify high-risk practices both above and below water,” BMB director Crisanta Marlene Rodriguez explained.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/business/science-and-environment/2018/10/18/1860851/denr-slams-vandalization-corals-batangas#GGBTwaoMhvZf14WD.99>