

DENR to hit biodiversity conservation targets

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is on track to achieve all its 2019 goals in terms of biodiversity conservation as the agency was able to do its job of protecting the country's rich biological diversity.

Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu reported that the DENR, through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), said the agency has surpassed its targets in the areas of cave assessment and issuance of wildlife permits as early as last October despite also being busy with the rehabilitation works in Manila Bay and Boracay.

"This is palpable evidence that the DENR is not only focused in the rehabilitation of Manila Bay and Boracay, but also in the conservation of the country's flora and fauna," Cimatu said.

He added that the DENR never wavered in fully enforcing Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001, which aims to conserve and protect wildlife species and their habitats to promote ecological balance and enhance biological diversity, and regulate the collection and trade of wildlife species.

As of October this year, the BMB has assessed 52 caves or 137 percent of the annual target of 38.

The BMB, through the Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife or Task Force POGI, also confiscated a total of 72 heads of different wildlife species and 15.6 kilograms of agarwood (*Aquilaria* spp.) in different operations in the country.

Task Force POGI is a composite team of wildlife enforcers from various agencies including the BMB, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police.

The bureau has issued a total of 7,926 wildlife permits, which greatly surpassed the target of 4,026 by 197 percent. Examples of the permits issued are gratuitous, wildlife farm, wildlife local transport, wildlife collector, import, export and re-export permits, as well as certificates of wildlife registration.

The high accomplishment was due to the fact that the issuance of permits was demand-driven, the BMB explained.

In 2019, the BMB maintained 42 wildlife rescue centers and 384 ecotourism facilities nationwide, accomplishing 89 percent and 98 percent of the targets.