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DENR official sees revival of native monkey farming amid global virus contagion

By
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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking into the population boom of an “aggressive” disease-carrying native monkey species in Banton, Romblon, following the reported jump of the ape population in the island municipality.

DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon said a team was sent by him to conduct preliminary investigation in the area and verified the report.

“We have already sent a team on the island and we verified the report that there was indeed an increase in the number of monkey population on the island,” Calderon reported.

The Philippines’s long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis philippensis*) is a subspecies of the crab-eating macaque. Aside from being a potential carrier of a deadly virus such as Ebola, they are also known to be very aggressive as they tend to be protective of their troop.

Although there are still no recorded, or reported unprovoked attacks on the human population, so far, these monkeys that became highly dependent on food handouts by tourists sometimes go out to raid houses for morsels.

In Romblon, Calderon said, there are reports that they are not only raiding houses but are destroying farms—targeting small banana and cassava farms, including those planted by subsistence farmers.

With the increasing number of monkeys on the island, Calderon said the DENR is now mulling over to start issuing special permits that will allow the capture of these monkey for research and development and purposes.

“Monkeys are usually exported for purpose of scientific research to produce a cure to diseases, or vaccines, because monkeys are closely associated with humans,” he said.

In the Philippines, he said, there are at least seven monkey farms with special permits to breed native species of monkeys.

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