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# BIOTA FILIPINA

March 2005

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## Getting to the Root of the Problem: Mangrove Reforestation in Bais Bay

**T**hey're suddenly popular, those mangroves. Gnarled, stilted trees, undecided whether home is on land or in water, they are recently enjoying a much deserved look over for their role against the devastating impacts of a tsunami.

In Bais Bay, Negros Oriental, populations of mangroves are also getting renewed attention with an on-going reforestation program that will cover 50 hectares of coast. It's not tsunami the Negrenses are worried about. They're concerned about food supply.

Studies from the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) show that as mangrove areas shrank, and as brackish water pond hectarage and aquaculture production increased, municipal fish catch also declined. A vital nursery for fish, shrimp, crab, and other invertebrates, even local anecdotes

reflected the obvious: as the mangroves disappeared, so did the fish and livelihood in Bais.

"It is true that total fisheries production remains the same. But there are more people relying on municipal fishing than pond culture. Municipal fisheries balance out the local fishing industry," Dr. Ari Bautista, WWF Project Manager of the Tañon Strait Initiative.

In the 1900s, Bais mangrove forests were once contiguous and covered almost 2000 hectares of tidal coasts. By 2003, this was whittled down to a mere 450 hectares due to unchecked logging and fishponds conversion.

Although suffering from a bleak environmental history, Bais Bay is far from hopeless. It is still considered as the largest and most productive estuarine area in



Tañon in terms of marine richness. It is host to 33 mangrove species and 10 families of associated species; has the largest seagrass cover in Negros Oriental; it is also primarily responsible for the presence of 5 species of whales and 6 species of dolphins on the strait. SEAFDEC made a valuation study on Bais mangroves and revealed that a hectare of healthy mangroves is worth US\$ 10,000.

The local government of Bais, US Peace Corps, WWF, the Siliman University Marine Laboratory, and the DENR are now working together to rehabilitate the barren mangrove areas in the Bay. The City Government of Bais has already committed P330,000 for mangrove reforestation while the Provincial Government of Negros Oriental has also pledged P500,000.

“We will soon plant mangrove species in key locations around the Bay that will effectively reduce sedimentation, return nursery grounds for valuable fish species and protect shorelines,” Dr. Bautista added

Another significant feature of this reforestation project is the active involvement of people across sectors.

“One activity that has shown much success is household-based plotting. Given the proper education and incentives, coastal dwellers can effectively nurture their marine resources back to health better than any NGO or academic institution.”

To know more about the mangrove reforestation program of WWF’s Tañon Strait Initiative, you may email Dr. Ari Bautista at [abautista@wwf.org.ph](mailto:abautista@wwf.org.ph) or call 035.422.3199. •



*Volunteers preparing seedlings for household-based plotting.*



*They might be giants – seedlings for reforestation.*

## What Goes Around Comes Around: Protecting the Waters of Mabini

When they ask, tell them, “It goes right back to the sea.”

Since September 2003, divers enjoying the waters of Mabini in Batangas have been paying a Conservation Fee each time they dive into one of the most spectacular underwater sights nearest Metro Manila. With an option to either buy a daily pass worth P50, or an annual pass for P1,000, the funds collected from the divers is one of the most crucial elements in protecting the waters of Mabini.

The 100 hectares of Mabini coastal waters are carpeted by 319 coral species and serve as home to 262 species of fishes. They also support around 100 small fisherfolks who rely on the sea for their livelihood. Because of its ecological and economic importance, Mabini requires an enormous amount of maintenance.

By the end of 2004, almost P1.2M has been collected from the divers and P400,000 more was donated by the Wolcott Henry Foundation through WWF. A major bulk of the collected fees were appropriated to construct a new Bantay Dagat patrol boat. This latest guardian of the sea is an 18-meter boat with a 6-valve

diesel fed engine equipped with GPS and radio communication system.

A portion of the fees also went to pay for salaries and stipends of the real heroes of Mabini – the Bantay Dagat volunteers. They are around 27 men and women who risk life and limb to protect the sea. The operational costs of the Bantay Dagat are estimated at P90,000 per month. Because of the Bantay Dagat, blast fishing has virtually stopped. Coral cover improved 30-40% more since 1993, and fish catch increased from 2 kg/day to an average of 10-12 kg/day for small-scale fishers.

The Conservation Fee also funds coastal clean-ups, information campaigns, production of dive passes, meetings and consultations to formulate CRM related policies.

“Conservation is everybody’s concern. The divers, the Bantay Dagat volunteers, fisherfolks, the LGU, the dive boat operators, and everyone else must do their share in protecting our natural resources. These partnerships are best demonstrated in Mabini’s Conservation Fee mechanism,” Riki Sandalo, WWF Project Manager of Balayan Bay. •



## The ‘Reel’ Thing Becomes the ‘Real’ Thing for NSMNP Trainees

**P**alanan, Isabela--Last week’s environmental legal enforcement training facilitated by WWF took an unexpected twist when the trainees’ hands-on session became actual enforcement.

About 40 local government unit (LGU) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) personnel from Maconacon, Dinapigue, Divilacan and Palanan underwent a successful 2-3 day transfer skills training at the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park. One component of the training was a video and digital still camera practicum on documenting future apprehensions of illegal fishing and logging.

On the last day of training in Brgy. Culasi, Palanan, Isabela, the LGU and DENR participants received news that a dolphin was caught by a fisherman. The participants rushed to the scene accompanied by WWF, to oversee the documentation and intervention.

After a curious 15 minute boat ride and a 1.5 km sprint on dirt roads and muddy paths, the trainees and WWF finally reached Brgy. Dialawyo where Ronnie Malacasta, the fisherman who accidentally caught the dolphin, lives. The group saw that the dead dolphin was already covered by a sack. Apparently, word got around that they were looking for the cetacean, so Malacasta’s friends and family tried to hide it.

The 6.4 feet cetacean was an Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin. Upon thorough inspection and interview with Malacasta, the group determined that the dolphin was only accidentally captured by Malacasta.

Malacasta left his fine-mesh 8 cm net in Palanan Bay at around 9 AM on Sept 27 to catch fish. He came

back at around 1 PM and found that there was already a dolphin trapped in it. He said the dolphin was dead upon his arrival. There were very few wounds on the animal and although the group was not able to do an autopsy, they concluded that its cause of death was by drowning rather than poaching.

After some coaxing, Malacasta surrendered the dolphin to the DENR. The carcass was then buried intact at the Isabela School of Fisheries in Brgy. Culasi, Palanan.

“Confiscating that dolphin was a landmark for cetacean conservation in NSMNP. Previous reports show that cetaceans caught in gill-nets or stranded on the beach are slaughtered afterwards,” Ricky Biyo, WWF Area Manager of Palanan.

He added, “Hopefully, the confiscation serves as a precedent that will discourage locals from intentionally or unintentionally harming these ecologically important species. It is hoped that this experience will encourage the authorities to enforce rules in protecting our natural resources without fail nor falter.” •



An accidentally caught Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*).

## Project SEA Starts with An Early Splash in 2005

WWF's Project SEA (Schools for Environment Action) kicks off the year among a sea of young and curious faces, eager to know more about environmental conservation.

It was marked with the first round of school visits to the Multiple Intelligence School in Katipunan and San Benildo Integrated School (SBIS) along Marcos Highway. In just two days, Project SEA touched hearts and challenged minds of about 750 students by screening feature videos on endangered marine animals and introducing them to enjoyable and educational activities.

WWF participated in celebrating SBSI Science Week themed, "Preserving and Conserving our Environment for a Strong Republic." An interactive lecture

session on endangered species was organized for the grades 4-6 populace. This also included film showings and fun environmental games. The festivities continued the following day with a Search for the Young Scientist Quiz Bee where WWF acted as one of the panel of judges. Our very own EE officer, Lissa Lesaca, handed awards at the closing event to the winners of the Science Week.

"As a teacher, our goal is to touch one's heart, encourage one's mind and inspire one's soul everyday. I think WWF does that every time they visit schools like ours," Teacher Cathy of SBIS.

"WWF left a valuable environmental message to our students and teachers as well. San Benildo will always be grateful to the organization." •



An awardee receives her certificate of participation to the Search for the Young Scientist Quiz Bee. From left: WWF's EE Officer with San Benildo Grade School Science Coordinators



Students participate in an LG Quiz Bee format. Representatives vary from grades 4 to 6. These students were selected after a series of tests in their respective Science classes.

## Species of the Month

Last November, a curious looking fish was stranded on the beach of Brgy. Namocan, Tigbauan, Iloilo. Experts soon identified it as a megamouth shark (*Megachasma pelagios*), one of the rarest sharks in the world.

The first sighted megamouth shark (*Megachasma pelagios*) was recorded in 1976 in Hawaii. Because of this, a new shark family had to be defined. The genus *Megachasma* is derived from the Greek word “mega- or megalos” meaning great and “chasma” meaning cave. The species name *pelagios* is Greek for the sea.

Megamouth sharks have a distinctly huge, broad mouth that is more than one meter wide (in adults) with approximately 50 rows of small, numerous hooked teeth on each jaw of which only three rows are functional. Studies reveal that females seem to have fewer rows of teeth than males. Their mouths are so wide that it extends behind the eyes when fully open!

Just like whale sharks, the megamouths are filter feeders, they strain huge amounts of plankton through a spongy tissue in their mouth. Other distinctive features include rounded but wide and long head, very short snout, gill slits moderately long which does not reach the back of the head, relatively low dorsal fins and asymmetrical caudal (tail) fin.

Very few sightings of megamouth sharks have been reported. This is attributed to the fact that they thrive in deep waters during daytime and go up to shallower midwater depths at night. They are also considered to be less mobile and poor swimmers compared to other sharks due to its flabby body, soft fins and asymmetrical tail.

Good news is, the 24th megamouth individual was found in Philippines with three megamouth recordings to date (one in Tigbauan Iloilo and two in Macalajar Bay, Cagayan de Oro). Unfortunately these three megamouths did not survive for long, for reasons still unknown according to experts.

Elasmobranch experts consider the discovery of the megamouth shark as one of the most notable in scientific history. There may still be little data on this spectacular marine creature but its presence is as significant as other first level predators in maintaining the balance of the marine ecosystem. •

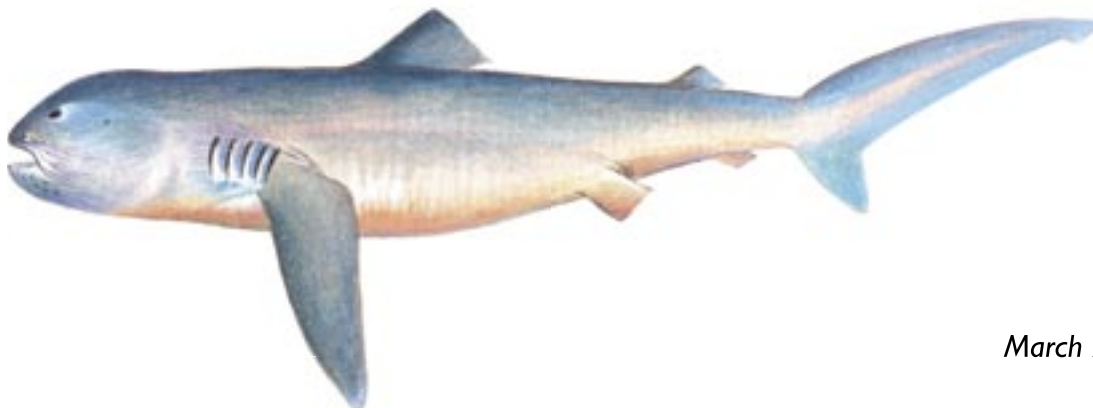
**MEGAMOUTH SHARK** (*Megachasma pelagios*)

Order - Lamniformes

Family - Megachasmidae

Genus - *Megachasma*

Species - *pelagios*



## Kyoto Protocol Comes Into Force After 7 Years of Debate

Only one year old and it's only going to get hotter.

The Kyoto Protocol, the only legally binding international treaty aimed to reduce carbon emissions—the main proponent to global warming—came into effect this month after years of public support and scrutiny.

For the agreement to be enacted, 55 countries emitting 55% of the industrialized world's emissions needed to ratify it, thus committing to reduce their collective emissions of 6 greenhouse gases by 5.2% from 1990 levels by 2012.

Big carbon-emitting countries such as the US and Australia once claimed that the Kyoto Protocol will never see the light of day. But when Russia – an equally large contributor of greenhouse gases—ratified it October last year, the former Soviet State along with 140 nations showed to the world that they believe in the guiding principles of the Protocol: economic efficiency, environmental integrity and sustainable development.

The Kyoto Protocol was formed in 1992 through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to strengthen the international response to climate change. It was then adopted by consensus at the third session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3) in 1997.

The Philippine Senate ratified the Kyoto Protocol two years ago with an overwhelming 19-0 vote. Although developing countries like ours are not expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Philippines already emitted 104,765 Gigagrams of carbon dioxide in 1994. When taken in the national context, this figure is already alarming. The energy sector accounted for 51% of the total carbon emitted. Clearly, alternative energy sources should be sought to address not just the climate issue, but power issue as well.

“The Kyoto Protocol gives the nation's new and renewable energy a leg up in the power sector. Tapping cleaner alternative energy sources is the brightest solution for the spiraling power costs and energy insecurity our country is currently faced with,” Raf Senga, WWF-Philippines Head of Climate and Energy Program.

For more information on the Kyoto Protocol and Renewable Energy, you may email Jasper Manlapaz, Climate and Energy Program Policy Officer, at [jmanlapaz@wwf.org.ph](mailto:jmanlapaz@wwf.org.ph) or call him at 63 2 9207931.

*Burning oil. Heavy oil pollution in a tundra forest due to pipeline leakage. Komi Republic, Russian Federation*

## Message from the Membership Services Officer

Dear Supporters of WWF-Philippines,

Since I became your Membership Services Officer, I've been receiving emails from members sharing their wonderful travel experiences within the Philippines.

Truly there are a lot of amazing places in our country that most of us are not aware of.

Because of that, I thought of coming up with a Photo Contest entitled "My Nature Trip" where members can share to others the wonderful places they've been to, as well as their interesting experiences.

With this contest, WWF hopes that people will be more appreciative of what beauty our country has to offer and further realize the importance of preserving the environment.

If you have wonderful photos of the places you have been to, recent or not so recent, email me a high resolution picture (at least 3.5 x 5 inches with 300 dpi save in jpeg format) with a title and a short description citing the place where the shot was taken plus your memorable experience (not exceeding 150 words). Keep in mind that the picture has to show the beauty of the place with or without people in it.

WWF will be picking one entry per month to be featured in our Biota Newsletter. The winner will receive one (1) gift certificate from one of our newest Conservation Circle partners, VX Boulder Gym.

In case some of you are not familiar with our Conservation Circle Partners, it is a group of discerning merchants who offer WWF members certain percentage discounts

or freebies.

Now, there's more good news for WWF members! We added new CC Partners this year and I hope you could take advantage of the special privileges they give especially this coming holiday break.

Aside from VX Boulder Gym, the Genesis group of hotels and resorts extends their support by giving percentage discounts on their room rates and F&B. If you've been planning to spend quality time with friends and family, this sounds like an opportunity too good to pass.

If you're fond of dining out, why not grab a bite from the nearest Taters Restaurant or enjoy a full meal at Segafredo, Bizu, Kitchen or Tavern on the Square, then finish the day with a great conversation with your friends over coffee at Seattle's Best. All these great establishments are CC Partners too!

And if you're the outdoor type, you can take advantage of the discounts from our CC Partners Oceana, Puerto Galera or in Pandan Islands. A great getaway from school or work! A full listing of the CC Partners is provided in the next pages.

If you're interested to be part of our CC Partners or know of someone who's interested to join, just send me an email at [vchua@wwf.org.ph](mailto:vchua@wwf.org.ph) or call at 9207931.

I hope to meet you guys in one of our Membership activities soon!

Best regards,

Vix

## Pic of the Month



**Middle Earth** by Vicson Chua, WWF-Philippines' Membership Services Officer

*I believe only a handful of people have seen the Candaba Swamp. It was practically unheard of or ignored, but that changed when it had its share of the limelight on the national dailies, radio and TV a few months back. Some say that Pampanga's Candaba Swamp once again reclaims its rightful spot on the map for being a significant habitat to various migratory birds.*

*That got me more curious about Candaba because I didn't know swamps also serve as home to birds. And add to that the honest fact that I wasn't aware that Philippines had swamps! True enough when I went there with my officemates, we were mesmerized with the different kinds of birds we observed like herons, egrets and kingfishers. It was an amazing sight. On top of that, the early morning scenery of the place captivated me more. For me, it was not just an ordinary swamp. It was like a scene out of the famous movie Lord of the Rings. It came to me as a mysterious place waiting to be discovered. I hope you can visit Candaba one of these days.*

## Conservation Circle Partners

### Travel Agencies

#### *Acropolis Travel Agency*

Discount on selected local and international packages

Contact Person:Weng

Contact Numbers: 9297039 or 9203903

#### *Dumaguete Outdoors Tours and Services*

10% discount on unbound and outbound tours

Contact Person: Michelle Villanueva

Contact Details: 2256079,

e-mail:dumagueteoutdoors@eudoramail.com or

Branch: 3-A Noblefranca St., Dunaguete City

### Restaurants

#### *Bizu Patisserie*

Get a free WWF “Rainforest” cake for a minimum order of 2 entrees

Branches: Alabang Town Center, Glorietta 4 and Greenbelt 2

#### *Kitchen*

Complimentary Sticky Situation or Monkey Business

Branches: Greenbelt 3 and Robinson’s Galleria

#### *Segrafredo Espresso Bar*

5% discount on food

Branch: Greenbelt 2, Liberty Plaza and HV Dela Costa and Salcedo Village

#### *Seattle’s Best*

10% discount on all drinks

Branches:All outlets

#### *Taters*

5% discount on all items (Cash payment only)

Branch: all outlets

#### *Tavern on the Square*

5% discount on all items (Cash payment only)

Branch: Greenbelt 3

### Shops

#### *Alfredulla Corporation*

10% discount on decorative animal figures

Contact Person: Jeffrey Bosales

Contact Details: 2459999, HYPERLINK “http://www.alfredulla.com” www.alfredulla.com

#### *The Maya Kitchen Culinary Art Center*

5% discount on one day/half day courses

Contact Person: Rory Subida

Contact Details: (02) 8921185, HYPERLINK “mailto:mayakitchen@pacific.net.ph” mayakitchen@pacific.net.ph

Branch: Makati City

#### *Ocean Colors*

15% discount on regular items

10% discount on specialty courses

5% discount on major dive trips

10-15% discount on Open Water and Medic First Aid courses for atleast 3-5 people

Free Discover Scuba Diving

Contact Person: Chester Lee

Contact Numbers: 8901785 or 8904142

more

## Conservation Circle Partners

### *Play Underground*

15% discount on Membership Fees and Party Rental Rates  
Free Gear Rental for Rock Climbing  
Branch: Powerplant Mall

### *Scuba Ventures Dumaguete*

15% discount on diving equipments and courses  
Contact Person: Andre Montenegro  
Contact Details: (035) 2257716,  
e-mail: scuba\_inc@yahoo.com  
Branch: Ponce de Leon Compound, Tubod, Dumaguete City

### *Softspot Inc. / the B Shop*

20% discount on all items (except items on SALE)  
Special discount on made-to-order stuffed toys and other giveaways  
Contact Person: Eric Jugueta  
Contact Number: 5325189  
Branch: Robinson's Galleria

### *Southbay Badminton Center*

Waived player's fee  
Contact Person: Marivic Campillo  
Contact Number: 8079576  
Branch: Villongco St., West Service Road, Sucat, Paranaque

### *VX Boulder Climbing Gym and Training Center*

Discount on regular climbing day passes  
Contact Person: Dennis Diaz  
Contact Details: 9342774  
e-mail: vx\_boulder@yahoo.com

### *Speedo*

10% on all merchandise (requires another ID with photo upon presentation of WWF card)  
Branch: all retail outlets

## Hotels/Resorts

### *Atlantis Beach Resorts Philippines*

20% discount on accommodation and diving  
Contact details: (035) 4252327  
e-mail: dumaguete@atlantishotel.com  
Branches: Dumaguete and Puerto Galera

### *Aqua One*

15-20% discount on Scuba Equipment  
5% discount on Scuba Courses and Dive Tours  
Free Intro Dive  
Contact Numbers: 8992831 to 32

### *Astoria Plaza*

Php 3,000 NET for 1 bedroom Suite  
Php 4,500 NET for 2 bedroom Suite  
10% discount on Café Astoria (bar and restaurant)  
10% discount on weekend social banquet functions  
10% discount on Streetscape Spa Center  
Contact Person: Vivian Ng  
Contact Details: (02) 6871111  
Branch: J. Escriva St. (former Amber Ave.) Ortigas Business district, 1600 Pasig City

### *Diamond Head Hotel and Convention Center*

30% discount on rooms based on published rates  
10% discount on water sports (once available)  
Contact Person: Roger Begre  
Branch: Baloy Beach, Bo. Barretto, Olangapo City

## Conservation Circle Partners

### *Discovery Suites*

10% discount on Local Residents package

Contact Details: 6852222,

e-mail: rsvn@discovery.com.ph

Branch: Ortigas

### *The Marikina Hotel*

10% discount on accommodations

10% discount on Food and Beverages except on promo items

Contact Person: Ed Endaya

Contact Numbers: 9988290 / 9988342 to 45

Branch: Pio Del Pilar St. cor. Tangerine St. Brgy. Concepcion II, Marikina City

### *Oceana*

10% discount on accommodations during weekends

30% discount on accommodations during weekdays

Contact Person: Tere

Contact Number: 6426215

Branch: Puerto Galera

### *Pandan Island Beach Resort Corporation*

15% discount on accommodations and buffet meals

Contact Person: Dominique Carlut

Contact Number: 0919 3057821

Branch: Pandan Island, Sablayan 5106, Occidental Mindoro

### *The Pearl Manila Hotel*

Php 1,900 NET for Superior

Php 2,450 NET for Junior Suite

Php 3,350 NET for 1 bedroom Suite

Php 4,250 NET for 2 bedroom Suite

Php 7,000 NET for Splendour Penthouse Suite

Php 8,500 NET for Oriental Penthouse Suite

Php 8,500 NET for Palazzo Suite

Php 10,000 NET for Enchantment

10% discount on Streetscape or massage services

10% discount on Food only

Contact Person: Mary Ann Valenz

Contact Details: 4000088,

e-mail: fo@pearlmanila.com.ph

Branch: Gen. Luna St. corner Taft and UN avenue, Ermita, Manila

### *Puerto Del Sol Beach Resort and Hotel Club*

10% discount on Local Rates for all room types (Mansion Villas, Casitas, BAhay Kubo) of non-peak season

5% discount on Local Rates during peak season

Contact Person: Rene Isidro

Contact Details: 6378963,

e-mail: csr@puertodelsol.com.ph

Branch: Bolinao, Pangasinan

### *Robbinsdale Hotel*

Php 1,200 NET for Standard Room

Php 1,500 NET for Deluxe Room

Php 2,000 NET for Junior Suites

Php 2,500 NET for Two-Bedroom Suite

Php 300 for Extra bed/Person

10% discount on facial and massage

10% discount on food and beverage minimum Php 1,000 on food purchases

Contact Person: Grace Enriquez

Contact Number: 7162581 local 234

Branch: 14 Araneta Ave., Quezon City



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