Biodiversity

Philippine Species: A Unique and Distinct Multitude



To illustrate the extent of species biodiversity, rate of endemism, and approximate number of threatened species in the Philippines (at least as far as taxonomically described species are concerned), below is an overview of the vertebrate animal species based on the most recent data published by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (formerly the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau).

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	Known/Described Species	Endemic Species	Threatened Species
Mammals (Terrestrial)	231	130	42
Birds	612	190	127
Reptiles	301	196	24
Amphibians	116	95	14
Total	1260	611	207

The estimates above suggest a rate of endemism of roughly half of the land-dwelling mammal, bird, reptile, and amphibian species alone. Alarming numbers of species that are considered at risk of extinction may also be noted.

Fish numbers include 3,172 marine and 351 freshwater species, with approximately 121 species – mostly freshwater ones – being endemic. In general, marine species endemism is difficult to qualify due to the migratory behavior of species across open and connected bodies of water that allow high transferability of organisms from one location to another. The number of threatened species relative to the total number of known species is not as high compared with the terrestrial vertebrate species, but it should not make the level of concern for the loss of biodiversity in aquatic habitats any less serious.

Well over 20,000 species of insects have also been identified in the Philippines. Reliable endemism and extinction threat numbers were yet unable at the time of writing, however.

As for the plant species diversity, the DENR-BMB summarizes the scenario as follows:

	Known/Described Species	Endemic Species	Threatened Species
Angiosperms	8,120	c. 5,800	409
Gymnosperms	33	6	11
Pteridophytes	1,100	285	104
Bryophytes	1,271	195	2
Algae	1,355	(Undetermined)	-
Fungi, slime molds, water molds	3,555	(Undetermined)	-
Lichens	789	(Undetermined)	-
Total	16,223	< 6,286	< 526

As pointed out in the section, "Species Diversity in the Philippines," various limiting factors such as available technology and methodology, among others, make accurate identification and description of species a challenging task. This can be seen in the inadequacy of available information regarding the number of species for invertebrate animals, as well as non-vascular plant species and micro-organisms.

References

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