

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

It is not a secret that global biodiversity is currently in peril, especially in South and Southeast Asia, due to threats posed by human activities such as habitat destruction, pollution, illegal wildlife trade, and greenhouse gas emissions. The collective outcome of these activities may result in the extinction of populations or even entire species. Even with the most conservative estimates, the current extinction rates are comparable with previous mass extinction rates (Barnosky et al. 2011). Therefore, some scientists recognize the current extinction crisis as the sixth mass extinction.

Some species are disappearing from the face of our planet Earth even before we formally recognize them as species new to science. Although Meegaskumbura et al. (2007) described two shrub frog species new to science from Sri Lanka based on collections made in the late 1800s, they failed to identify any extant populations. This may represent the tip of the iceberg. Many species may have been disappearing from diverse and unique communities in tropical Asia without giving any clues to us.

One way to slow down untimely extinctions is to catalog undocumented biodiversity in local, regional, national, and international scales. Formal recognition of species is the first step of conservation. Given the extreme species diversity in South and Southeast Asia and the prevalence of large tracts of scientifically unexplored areas, it is critical to get help from citizen scientists in addition to efforts by professional scientists in cataloging biodiversity, especially on local and regional scales. Global biodiversity cataloging programs such as iNaturalist (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>) based on a simple, effective and engaging cell phone app may play a critical role in bringing youth and the general public into this monumental task and constructing freely available local and regional biodiversity databases. iNaturalist records have already proved its effectiveness in finding new populations of rare species and finding species new to science (Winterton 2020; Zhang et al. 2022).

Additionally, providing an effective and free platform for conservation scientists and ecologists to publish their regional and national findings is critical for biodiversity conservation. I commend *The Palawan Scientist* for bridging the gap between regional biodiversity information and global conservation efforts. Even the present volume of *The Palawan Scientist* features several biodiversity and conservation-related articles such as seahorse trafficking in the Philippines (pp. 8-14) and the status of coral reefs and its fauna in the Philippines (pp. 54-64). This freely available information may also help conservation practitioners and policymakers by providing necessary local and regional data for state-level and national-level biodiversity assessments and implementing legislation to conserve biodiversity.

Long live *The Palawan Scientist*!

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The Palawan Scientist, Vol. 14(2)

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