

## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

It is my great privilege and honour to write this Editorial for the December 2024 issue of **The Palawan Scientist** Journal, a publication of the Western Philippines University. Having partnered and collaborated with the institution while undertaking my environmental social science PhD fieldwork in the Philippines, I commend their ongoing commitment to both multi- and interdisciplinary research as evidenced by the range of topics and disciplines included in this issue.

Something that struck me when reading the diverse set of articles published here is the presence of two core thematic threads running through them: 1) a commitment to research that demonstrates the intrinsic connection between people and nature; and 2) a clear drive for research that benefits the public good. A number of the articles in this issue draw together important learnings related to two of the great challenges humanity has experienced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century so far: the COVID-19 pandemic (as discussed in *Lim et al. and Foronda et al.*) and the ongoing biodiversity crisis and potential impact on ecosystems and peoples' livelihoods (as discussed in *Dangan-Galon et al and Salazar et al.*)

What is evident is that these and other major challenges have and continue to impact humanity differently, both between different regions of the world and across different social groups within societies. It is thus imperative that we continue to listen to and learn about these varied experiences so that the current and future challenges we face recognise and account for these differences in the strategies we develop and undertake to address them. This is of particular importance for those whose voices may be less heard, whether that is small nation states in global governance fora, or groups on the margins of the societies we are part of.

This journal issue includes studies with a clear aim of equipping policymakers and resource-users with knowledge that can support sustainable management of natural resources, so fundamental to the lives and livelihoods of rural communities in the Philippines and across so much of the world. This knowledge can play a powerful role in complementing what is already known, for example the Indigenous wisdom and traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous peoples and local communities that is so fundamental to the effective and equitable conservation of nature. I was delighted to see an article that shines a lens on the oft-ignored gendered differences in women's and men's use, access to, knowledge of, and actions related to natural resources and conservation (*Bauyot et al.*).

Increasing the accessibility of education (as discussed in *Junsay and Lagura*) and the continued democratisation of knowledge are key as we seek the current and future solutions to society's biggest challenges. Western Philippines University's commitment to early career researchers and support of open-access knowledge without paywalls or associated fees are pivotal steps in advancing the equity of science and academia.

To conclude, I would like to thank the authors of all the articles published in this issue for your excellent submissions, and my fellow **The Palawan Scientist** Editorial Board members for taking the time to review these. For those reading this issue interested in submitting to this journal, we strongly encourage you and welcome your future submissions!

Let us continue to be curious and committed in pursuit of the wellbeing of people and planet!

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