

COURSE REPORT

TRAINING ON BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

November 20-27, 2018

Baybay City, Leyte; Cabucgayan, Biliran; Inopacan, Leyte;
and Hindang, Leyte, Philippines

A field training organized by:

Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)

Institute of Tropical Ecology and Environmental Management at Visayas State University (ITEEM-VSU)

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD),

Municipal Government of Cabucgayan, Biliran,

Municipal Government of Inopacan, Leyte,

Foundation for These-Abled Persons Inc. (FTI), and

Municipal Government of Hindang, Leyte



Participants setting up a net to capture birds.

Background: The Philippines is regarded as one of the world's megadiversity countries on account of its high level of endemism at the species, genera, and family level. The country's ecosystems, however, continue to suffer widespread degradation on account of unsustainable management practices. Recognizing the need to begin reversing the damage to the environment, ITEEM-VSU, in collaboration with the German Agency for

ELTI is an initiative of: **Yale SCHOOL OF FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**



Participants collecting herpetiles in Cabucgayan, Biliran.

Technical Cooperation (GTZ), developed Rainforestation in the early 1990s. Rainforestation is a participatory approach to forest restoration that uses mixtures of native forest trees, fruit trees, and agricultural crops to rehabilitate degraded land, restore key ecosystem services, and provide alternative sources of livelihood.

Research conducted on early Rainforestation demonstration sites has shown that wildlife will begin returning to a site once it is restored. Little is being done, however, to monitor the return of biodiversity to more recently established sites. To increase its capacity to conduct rapid biodiversity assessments, ITEEM-VSU and ELTI held an internal staff development training (i.e., a training of trainers) so that staff would have the ability to appropriately handle wildlife when working with other Rainforestation practitioners. The training was held at four different Rainforestation sites in Leyte and Biliran in conjunction with the respective municipal governments. While staff from ELTI and ITEEM-VSU were the main participants, they were often joined in the field sites by representatives from the local government units.

Objectives:

- Provide an introduction on the importance of wildlife and biodiversity conservation efforts;
- Demonstrate techniques needed to properly collect and handle wildlife;
- Provide a basic orientation on species identification and data gathering; and
- Give participants experience conducting both a daytime and nighttime rapid biodiversity assessment.



Mr. Boladula demonstrating proper handling of frogs and collecting measurements.

Course Format

Day 1

The training for ELTI and ITEEM-VSU staff started with a formal opening program, including a prayer, a welcome message given by Dr. Marlito Bande (ITEEM-VSU Director), and an inspirational message from Prof. Efren Saz (VSU Director for Extension). The training then continued with a lecture on Philippine Biodiversity by Dr. Bande, who highlighted the importance of the environment in providing ecosystem services and discussed the threats to biodiversity which affects the Philippines. Afterwards, Mr. Rene Vendiola (an ELTI Alumnus who served as the main resource person) shared his success story of developing Liptong Woodland, a Rainforest site in Negros Oriental which has seen a significant return of wildlife. Mr. Felix Boladula (another ELTI Alumnus) then explained the usage of a variety of different materials and equipment needed to conduct a biodiversity assessment.

Day 2

The second day of the training consisted of a range of fieldwork activities conducted at the ITEEM-VSU nursery site, including bird watching, catching and handling herpetological specimens, and setting up mist nets. After lunch, captured wildlife species were identified, measured, and recorded. Fieldwork continued until 10 PM in order to include nocturnal animals.

Day 3

Similar assessment activities continued on the third day. The nets were transferred to another location within the ITEEM-VSU nursery area. Later in the afternoon, a closing program (for the VSU portion of the training) was conducted wherein participants could share their insights and experiences during the training. Prof. Saz then gave his closing statement and distributed certificates to the participants. Despite the official closing, some of the participants continued the biodiversity assessment until 10 PM in order to record more bat species. A total of 36 species of birds, 4 species of bats, 5 species of frogs, 4 species of lizards, and 1 snake species were recorded at the ITEEM-VSUnursery site.



Mr. Boladula demonstrating proper handling of a snake.

Day 4

Participants travelled to Cabucgayan, Biliran in the morning of the fourth day, where they were joined by staff from the municipal government. The location visited was a site chosen under the DSWD's KALAH-CIDSS Project for future establishment of a Rainforestationsite in Barangay Looc. The area had been previously affected by a landslide and the rapid assessment was conducted to provide baseline data. Ms. Angelita Orias (ITEEM-VSU faculty) started the program with an opening message. This was followed by an introduction of the participants and a message from Mr. Vendiola on the importance of conducting a biodiversity assessment at the start of Rainforestation site development. Mr. Boladula then demonstrated the equipment and materials to be used during the handling and release of wildlife. The assessment formally started after lunch with the participants collecting herptiles and bird watching. Nets were also placed in the area and were used to capture bats until 9:50 PM. Species collected in the area were then identified, measured, and recorded. After the assessment, Mr. Vendiola gave his closing remarks and the participants shared their thoughts about the training. A total of 16 species of birds, 4 species of bats, 2 species of frogs, and 1 lizard species were recorded at the first site in Cabucgayan.

Day 5

The fifth day of the training was held at the DSWD's KALAH-CIDSS Project's proposed Rainforestation site in Barangay Casiawan. New participants from the barangay office joined the training. Ms. Orias gave an opening message for the new participants. An introduction of participants was also done before Mr. Vendiola gave his inspirational message on biodiversity conservation. This was once again followed by an overview given by Mr. Boladula on the activities to be conducted and materials to be used during the assessment. In the afternoon, participants placed the nets, engaged in bird watching, and collected herptiles. Due to heavy rain, the assessment ended earlier than usual in the evening. Species collected in the area were also identified, measured, and recorded. During the closing program, the participants shared what they had learned. The resource people also gave their closing statements. A total of 18 species of birds, including a possible sub-species of Scops Owl, 1 bat species, 3 species of frogs, and 1 lizard species were all recorded.



Mr. Boladula demonstrating proper handling of bats trapped in nets.

Day 6

The sixth day of the training was held at the Municipal Rainforestation demonstration site in Barangay Baso, Cabucgayan, which was a coconut tree farm prior to its establishment as a Rainforestation site in October 2017. Upon the arrival of the local participants, Ms. Madel Maarat (ELTI Research Assistant) gave an opening statement to the new participants. This was followed by an introduction of participants. Mr. Vendiola then gave a message on the importance of biodiversity and conducting rapid assessments. After that, Mr. Boladula gave his demonstration on the proper techniques in collecting, handling, and releasing wildlife. Participants then set up nets, recorded birds sighted, collected herptiles, processed and recorded captured wildlife. The assessment continued until 9 PM. A total of 15 species of birds, 2 species of bats, and 2 species of lizards were recorded. The day's activities ended with a closing statement from Mr. Vendiola and comments from the participants about their experience attending the training.

Day 7

Participants travelled to the Rainforestation research site in Sitio Batuan, Barangay Linao, Inopacan, Leyte, which is a 7-hectare marginal upland area where a series of research projects on native species are being conducted by ITEEM-VSU. The program started with an opening message for the new participants from Ms. Maarat and was followed by a short orientation from Mr. Vendiola about the value of biodiversity and conducting site assessments. Mr. Boladula then demonstrated the materials used and explained the proper collection, handling, and releasing of wildlife. Participants then engaged in bird watching, collecting herptiles, setting up of nets, and the processing of captured wildlife. The assessment continued until 10 PM in the evening. A total of 18 species of birds, 4 species of bats, 5 species of frogs, and 1 lizard species were recorded at the research site. Mr. Vendiola gave a closing statement and the participants shared their thoughts about what they had learned during the training.



Participants identifying captured wildlife and collecting measurements.

Day 8

The final day of the training was conducted at an 8-month old Rainforestation site established by the Hindang Persons with Disability Agriculture Cooperative (HIPEDAC) in Barangay Katipunan, Hindang, Leyte. The program started with an opening statement by Ms. Lyra Chu (ELTI Program Assistant) for the new participants and was followed by a message by Mr. Vendiola on the importance of ecological balance and the need to conserve biodiversity. Mr. Boladula then gave his usual demonstration on the materials needed for the assessment and the process of wildlife collection. After this, the participants conducted bird watching, collected herptiles, and set up the nets. Later in the afternoon, participants recorded the collected species. The assessment continued until 10 PM. During the closing program, the participants shared their experiences and what they learned during the training. This was followed by a message from Mr. Vendiola and Ms. Martha Villafane (Forest Program Officer of FTI). The training ended with a closing statement from Ms. Chu. A total of 18 species of birds, 4 species of bats, and 2 species of frogs were recorded in the area.

Participants:

The training was attended by a total of 108 participants: 27 from ELTI and ITEEM-VSU, 51 from Cabucgayan, 16 from Inopacan, and 14 from Hindang.

Follow-up:

ITEEM-VSU and ELTI will continue coordinating with the training participants from the three municipal governments in order to provide assistance in the further development of their respective Rainforestation sites. They will also help conduct follow-up biodiversity assessments and identify additional species recorded in their areas as needed.

This event was possible thanks to Arcadia, whose Environmental Conservation grants support programmes that protect and enhance biodiversity, and provide field training and academic research.