

# 'Establish center to conserve tarsiers'

by Cris Evert B. Lato  
CONTRIBUTOR

A Czech scientist and conservationist called for the establishment of a tarsier conservation center in Bohol province to ensure the continuity of the species and care for captive bred ones.

"The increasing demand for captive tarsiers (also) increases the number of tarsiers illegally caught in the wild. (As a result), the tarsiers are slowly disappearing from the forests," said Dr. Milada Petru.

The conservation center can get a license from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and work with local government units in Bohol, Petru said.

Petru, who has been working on tarsier research and conservation since 2007, met with Bohol's local government officials in December 2010 to discuss the viability of the center that will serve as the focal point in preserving the tarsier.

She said hopes for the establishment of a tarsier conservation center are bright since Bohol Gov. Edgar Chatto is a staunch advocate of tarsier protection.

Petru and her team first visited Bohol in 2007 and focused on research and



SMALL AND DWINDLING. A Chinese tourist poses with a tarsier, the world's smallest known primate, in Loboc town, Bohol province.

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conservation efforts of the tarsiers under the Tarsius project documented through a website [www.tarsiusproject.org](http://www.tarsiusproject.org).

The study was done using radio-telemetry, which measures tarsier behavior based on data transmitted by radio waves.

She said they aim to integrate conservation activities of the species by conducting research on tarsier behaviour and training of local workers and young conservationists.

They noted that tarsiers have become tools for owners to earn money since they are major attractions to visitors in Bohol.

"Tarsiers are seen on main tourist roads and shown as attraction despite inappropriate conditions in captivity," Petru said.

"Unfortunately for them, they started to play a main role in tourism and business. The Philippine tarsier is threatened especially due to habitat loss in the Philippines but also due to direct human threat."

Bohol-based Philippine Tarsier Foundation Inc. estimates that only 1,000 tarsiers thrive in the hills of Corella town.

Tarsiers (scientific name *Tarsius syrichta*), are found in the forests of Bo-

hol, Samar and Leyte provinces but Bohol is their best known habitat since tarsier viewing in the island is managed by the government.

The tarsier is one of 1,197 species eligible for adoption under DENR's Adopt-A-Wildlife Species program.

Under the program, adoption can be done by directly implementing a wildlife conservation project, financing a new or chosen project, or donating money to an existing species conservation program.

Petru said the Philippines is a biodiversity hotspot with many highly

## TARSIER fast facts

**Scientific name:** *Tarsius syrichta*

**Range:** Endemic to southeastern Philippines; Found in Bohol, Dinagat, Leyte, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, South Cotabato, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Samar, Basilan, Biliran, Maripipi and Bukidnon.

**Habitat and ecology:** Lives in both secondary and primary forest (most abundant in the latter), from sea level up to 750 meters; fewer in secondary growth with many pole-sized trees and low-stature vegetation, as well as in gardens and habitats including agricultural areas and plantations; feeds on small lizards, frogs, and insects

**Major threats:** High infant mortality rates, highly specialized diet; relatively limited geographical range; high population density, extensive habitat destruction, heavily harvested as food and especially for the pet trade.

**Source:** International Union for the Conservation of Nature



LEGEND: ● Some of the provinces where tarsiers are found

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threatened species.

Conservation efforts should be intensified in areas where endangered species thrive.

Petru holds a doctorate from Charles University in Prague in the Czech Republic and works for that country's Decin Zoo.

# Firms target planting of 400,000 seedlings this rainy season

by Cris Evert B. Lato  
CONTRIBUTOR

MORE trees are being planted this year as Cebu struggles to mitigate the impact of climate change.

A total of 452, 791 tree seedlings will be planted in about 268 hectares that will be reforested by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP).

At least 50 participating companies or 5,000 volun-

teers are participating in the Cebu Hillyland Reforestation Caravan from June to October this year.

The 19-year-old program kicked off on June 18. It will run for 18 Saturdays or until October 15.

At least 800 volunteers joined the kick-off activity in sitio Cantipla 2 in barangay Tabunan, Cebu City last month, said Maria Luisa Largo, PBSP program coordinator.

Native and endemic tree species such as Cebu cinnamon tree, almaciga, lanutan and narra were

planted during the caravan.

Largo said the volunteers were treated to a different treeplanting experience this year as "four guests" enlightened volunteer employees about Cebu's biodiversity.

Lisa Marie Paguntalan, wildlife biologist and ornithologist, shared her knowledge about wildlife conservation.

Another wildlife biologist and ornithologist, Philip Godfrey Jakosalem, led a birdwatching activity.

A basic wildlife photog-

raphy clinic was conducted by photographer Nilo Arribas, vice president of the Cebu Ornithological Society and executive director of Animansys.

Forester Orlyn Orlanes-Roxas, researcher of the Cebu cinnamon tree and PBSP consultant on dendrology (study of wooded plants), delivered a lecture about some native plants and trees.

The caravan aims to protect the Central Cebu Protected Landscape, Metro Cebu's major source of potable water and conserve Cebu's eco-

logical heritage.

The CCPL spans 29,062 hectares and is composed of three watersheds (Buhisan, Mananga and Kotkot-Lusaran) and two national parks (Central Cebu and Sudlon).

The entire protected area covers portions of the cities of Cebu, Danao, Talisay and Toledo and the towns of Balamban, Compostela and Consolacion, Liloan and Minglanilla

PBSP's reforestation effort started in 1992 and has since gained support from various companies and institutions.

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