

The endangered plants of Palawan Island, Philippines

LITA B. SOPSOP^{1*} and INOCENCIO E. BUOT, JR.²

Palawan, one of the most botanically diverse islands in the Philippines, harbors 1,700 to 3,500 flowering plant species with 15-20% endemism. Recognizing its significance to global biodiversity, the entire island of Palawan is designated Man and Biosphere Reserve and a Philippine Priority Area for Biodiversity Conservation. Despite several existing conservation policies and regulatory mechanisms, threats to its biological diversity continue to escalate.

A checklist is herein presented based on published data from previous botanical expeditions and recent fieldworks done by Conservation International-Philippines, Palawan Program. A total of 278 vascular plant species are listed with 77, 81 and 272 included in the different threatened categories of the 2007 IUCN Red List, Fernando *et al.* (2008) list and that of the authors', respectively. There are species not assessed in one of the lists, but threatened in another or in the authors'. Most of the plant species considered by Madulid (1987) as rare are given a vulnerable status because their local population is becoming low due to the continued destruction of their habitat. It is expected that conservation status of Palawan plants will change as more botanical expeditions will be conducted in the near future.

There is a need to address critical gaps in biodiversity knowledge in order to compliment the conservation efforts being implemented elsewhere in the island. Most importantly, tangible evidences on the global value of Palawan Island are needed to influence politicians and decision makers to take a stand and support the conservation program in Palawan.

Key words: vascular plants, endangered plants, floral diversity, biological diversity, IUCN Red List, checklist, threats, conservation status, Palawan Island, Philippines.

¹College of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, Western Philippines University, Aborlan, Palawan, Philippines. *Corresponding author: e-mail - lbsosop@yahoo.com

²Plant Biology Division, Institute of Biological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences and School of Environmental Science & Management (SESAM), University of the Philippines Los Baños, College 4031, Laguna, Philippines.