

## EDITORIAL

**Dear Readers,**

Each new issue of **The Palawan Scientist** represents an impressive amount of work from both local and international scientists. More importantly however, with each new issue of the journal, we improve our understanding of topics from various fields, ranging from the natural sciences to sociology. This knowledge can be applied to build a better, fairer and more sustainable future both for ourselves and our next generations.

This December 2021, we proudly present the Volume 13(2) of the journal. Working in the aquaculture and fisheries sector, I am delighted to see that it includes several papers related to fish and the aquatic environment.

As we all know, our planet is in a dire state due to overconsumption and a rapidly growing human population. This is especially true for the aquatic environment. Unknown to most however, is that water covers a whopping 71% of our planet, with our oceans and seas containing over 96% of the world's water. Due to the depth of our oceans, the livable volume that they represent is 900 times larger than the livable habitat of all our combined terrestrial environments. Yet, we comparatively know very little of the aquatic environment: over 80% of our oceans remain unmapped and only 5% of the seafloor has been properly topographically imaged, leaving 65% of our planet's surface largely unexplored.

As Dr. Gene Carl Feldman, an oceanographer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, recently said in an interview with conservation nonprofit Oceana: "In some ways, it's a lot easier to send people into space than it is to send people to the bottom of the ocean." Although the number of land species we have discovered is about 25 times higher than the number of species we have found in oceans and seas, the greatest diversity of phyla is present in the marine environment- which is estimated to be 300 times larger compared to the diversity in land habitats. One of the key species groups found in salt water is algae. These lifeforms form the basis of the food chain and produce 50% to 70% of all the oxygen on Earth. Because life on Earth would not be possible without our seas and oceans, we should take great care of them.

Most life in the sea is concentrated in the coastal zone. Equally, many humans also live in this zone, with roughly 40% of all people living within 100 kilometers of the coast. In addition, over three billion people rely on the sea for their livelihood. As the human population grows, economic activity intensifies and pressure on coastal ecosystems increase. This has already caused the depletion of an estimated 90% of big fish populations, with 50% or so of the planet's coral reefs lost or severely damaged.

To reverse this trend, we need to increase our understanding, awareness and appreciation of the aquatic environment. This starts with solid science. We cannot protect what we don't understand and I strongly believe that conservation should start from the bottom-up, by creating a stronger appreciation for our natural environment. We can do this by sharing our discoveries with the world.

**The Palawan Scientist** has the opportunity to encourage scientific research and share newly-gained scientific insights. The current and future generation of scientists will play a key role in this. As such, we encourage researchers to submit papers that are multidisciplinary in nature, result from collaborative research, and will contribute to the collection and conservation of knowledge.

Feel free to reach out for assistance. We are here to help you.

United, we walk towards a sustainable future!

Mabuhay,

**Jonah van Beijnen**

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