

Wildlife Rescue Centre DENR

The official government initiated rescue centre is called the Wildlife Rescue Centre and is located in Quezon City in the Ninoy Aquino Park and Wildlife Nature Centre. This centre is an activity of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Government of Philippines (Toledo et al., 1998).



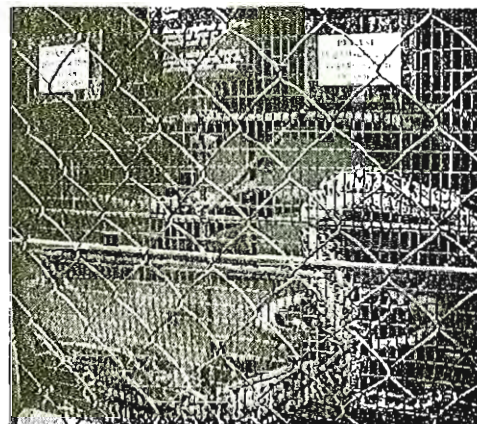
Originally a Mini-zoo, established in the first part of the 1970's for the entertainment and education of local visitors, it was converted to a wildlife rescue centre to fulfill requirements of CITES when Philippines became a member. The centre consists of 51 holding cages, three quarantine units and two large enclosures for deer and larger mammals. In 1997 it housed 775 wild animals, nearly half of which were endemic to Philippines and the remainder exotic (Toledo, et al., 1998).

The centre allows visitors for a small fee. There are rules against feeding, etc. and other regulations as in a zoological park, or perhaps a bit stricter. For example, commercial filming is not allowed and use of flash at any time is prohibited. The centre permits students to do intern or practical studies there if they obtain a permit from the Director of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau. The animals at the centre are the property of the Government of Philippines. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources decides what is to be done with them and how they are to be managed (Toledo, de Leon & Lim, 1998).

The centre faces many problems similar to other rescue centres, the most severe probably being overcrowding. The Government of Philippines stepped up their implementation of the laws against illegal collection and trade of wildlife so that many individual animals are being brought to the centre, straining its capacity. Cages are



insufficient and some animals have to remain in quarantine until space becomes available. Laboratory, hospital and medical facilities are inadequate. There are insufficient staff to adequately care for the facility or even to preserve specimens so that many animals which die are buried instead of preserved for museums or schools. The inadequacies are recognised but funds are not sufficient for addressing them and facilities for accessing funds are cumbersome and restrictive. However, some funds have been granted through a trust fund provided by the government so that some improvement of facilities can be undertaken (Toledo et al, 1998).



Python
"climbing
the walls of
chain
mesh
in an
unenriched
environment
at the
rescue
centre

New developments are afoot however which promise to make better conditions for animals as well as permit the public to see them in attractive, enriched naturalistic enclosures. The Lungsod Kalikasan development project is in the midst of constructing such enclosures in another part of the park. If sufficient quantity of these can be constructed, it will mean a completely different outlook for the rescue centre.

The Development Plan for the Park
is prominently displayed.



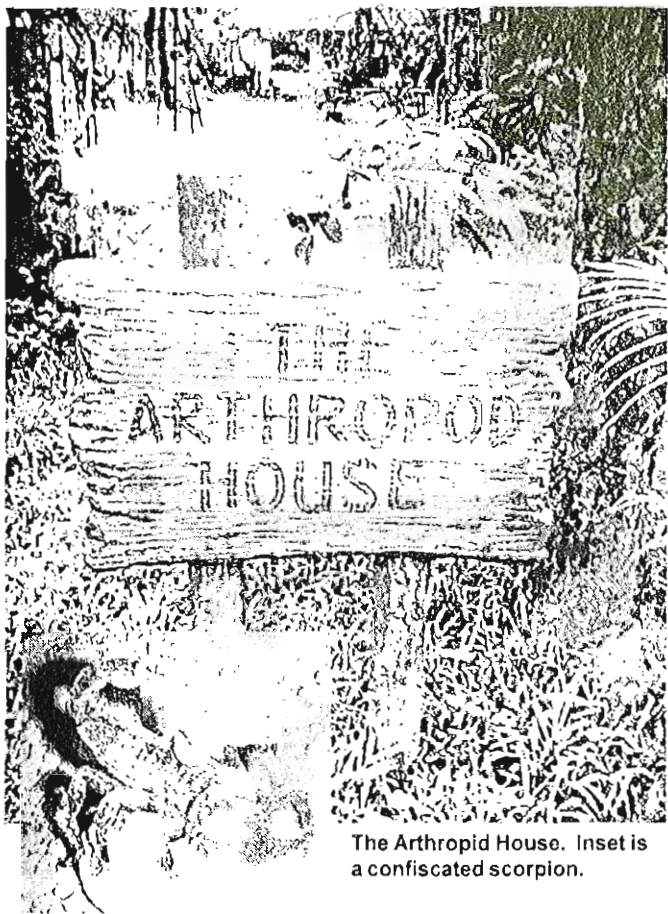
Simple, bamboo, wood, and chain mesh enclosures have been constructed for several important species such as the Philippine Rufous Hornbill (*Anthracoceros marchei*) or Kalaw which is close to being classified as threatened, the Philippines Vysan pig, the Philippines deer, and others as well as some groups of animals (such as butterflies and spiders). An attractive butterfly exhibit has been included as well as a surprising Arthropod House!

A government order has been passed recently establishing regional wildlife rescue centres which aim to institutionalise wild animal shelters in different regions of Philippines, serve as a venue for conservation education and even captive breeding. It is possible that these centres could take some of the burden from the Manila shelters.

In any case, it was clear that the government is making an effort, at the very least to cooperate with citizens and foundations which want to help. The difference between the old mini zoo/rescue centre and the new facility across the park demonstrates what can be done with a lot of will and a little money.



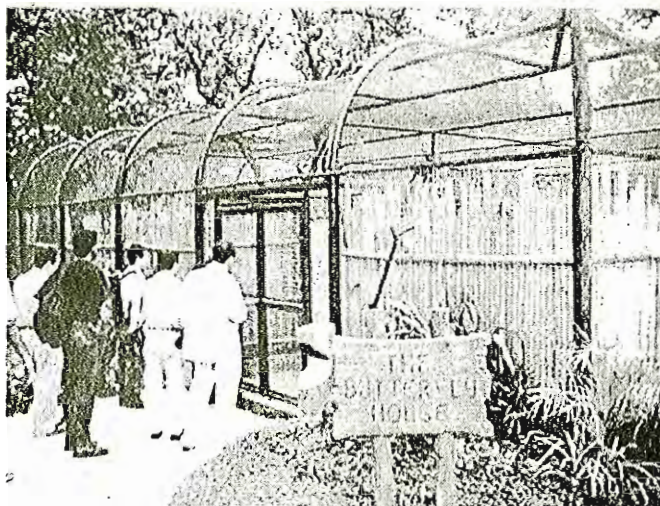
Welcome sign for the new Lungsod Kalikasan animal centre. All the signs are made of crude wood attractively decorated, giving a naturalistic look.



The Arthropod House. Inset is a confiscated scorpion.



Very attractive enclosures have been constructed for native species in the park, such as this diorama with a waterfall. None of the enclosure in this park are very expensive and could provide aesthetic solutions for mini-zoos.



SEAZA participants visit the Butterfly House



Dramatic aviary for flying birds is attractive as well as an enriched environment for the birds.