

What are mangroves?

You may not know it, but mangroves are actually forests! In fact, they are a special kind of forest because they can thrive in salt or brackish water conditions.

- You can spot them along tidal mudflats and shallow water coastal areas. These coastal areas extend inland along rivers, streams and their tributaries.
- Mangroves are a unique ecosystem because they offer a sanctuary to both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. For instance, birds, snakes, and monkeys live in the trees while various fish and other coastal water species live among mangrove roots.
- Just like tropical rainforests and coral reefs, mangroves are one of the most productive ecosystems!



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Just how important are mangroves?

Mangroves are a major life-support system.

- This means that many organisms count on mangroves for their survival. These forests provide nursing grounds and a safe hiding place to young fish, shrimps, crabs, and other water creatures, allowing them to grow to full size.

Mangroves produce nutrient-rich leaf litter.

- The muddy waters surrounding these forests are rich in nutrients, thanks to the decaying leaves and organic matter from mangroves. Microorganisms break down leaf litter, thereby nourishing fish, crabs, shrimps, and shellfish.

Did you know?

A healthy hectare of mangrove forest can support fisheries worth P20,000 per year (DENR, 2000).



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Just how important are mangroves?

Mangroves protect the environment.

- We have the massive root system of mangroves to thank for safeguarding our coastal communities from storms, erosion, and floods. Moreover, their one-of-a-kind roots trap sediments from the uplands, thereby purifying water.



Mangroves reduce pollution.

- These forests help absorb pollutants, such as heavy metals and other toxic substances. As such, mangroves serve as a line of defense, preventing many land-based and near-shore pollutants from reaching deeper waters.



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Where have all the mangroves gone?

Yes, you read that right:
our mangroves are in trouble!

- In the early 1900s, the Philippines had an extensive mangrove coverage of around 450,000ha. Unfortunately, toward the end of the century, this number dwindled to 120,000ha—almost one-fourth of what we used to have. What's more saddening is that today's mangroves are not as vibrant as they used to be.
 - Up until it was banned in 1982, we used to convert mangrove areas to fishponds.
 - It is now illegal to cut down mangroves in the Philippines but once upon a time we exploited them for their high-quality firewood and building materials.
 - Mangrove deforestation is also a product of urbanization, particularly intrusion of human settlements and conversion of mangrove areas for reclamation. (DENR, 2001)
- Many mangroves remain vulnerable to these threats. If we don't act now, we will continue to lose our mangroves—our life-support system.

In turn, our coastal communities and fisheries industry will suffer more losses, and our coral reefs and seagrass beds will be further endangered.



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How can I pitch in?

It doesn't take a grand gesture to save our mangroves. But we must act now if we want our individual efforts to make a major, collective impact!

Let us count the simple ways we can help rehabilitate and manage mangroves:

1. Help establish mangrove nurseries. Before we can plant mangrove trees, we need to raise and tend mangrove propagules until they are ready for planting.
2. Plant mangrove trees. It is the next step to restocking diminishing species and enhancing habitats.
3. Volunteer in efforts to recover abandoned fishponds and re-establish them as mangrove areas.
4. Report any violations of laws protecting coastal habitats. Give your ENRO a heads-up by contacting this number: (044) 791-8164.
5. One is fun, but more is merrier! Ask your friends to join you in your quest to protect mangroves. After all, this call of nature requires us to work as a team—Together, Everyone Achieves More!



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Pledge for the Mangroves

Being an environmental advocate, I pledge to do the following:

- Help rehabilitate mangroves by joining mangrove planting and nurturing activities;
- Reduce, reuse, recycle so that my wastes do not end up in mangrove areas;
- Help our leaders, parents, and fellow students understand the importance of mangroves to the environment and encourage them to participate in activities for mangroves;
- Spread the word about the need to take care of our mangroves; and
- Support environmental causes in general, and mangrove rehabilitation advocacies in particular;
- Use my abilities to improve the sustainability of mangroves that support communities in which I live, learn, and work...

Because I believe that mangroves support life, protect the environment, and reduce pollution.

So help me God.



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