

SAVING PHILIPPINE WILDLIFE



IT WAS at a meeting of Filipino foresters early this year when President Marcos first enunciated his policy of conservation. In this gathering he did not limit himself to the subject of the conservation of forests but talked of the preservation of "everything that constitutes our national patrimony."

Recently this program of conservation received a boost from no less a personage than Charles Lindbergh who once thrilled the world with his solo flight across the Atlantic. Now this famous flier is concerned with the conservation of wildlife particularly in the Philippines.

Last summer Lindbergh joined a 12-day trip to Mindoro, Palawan, and Mindanao to scout the conservation problem. He did so, because as he put it, "the Philippines are one of the last frontiers of conservation" and because he felt he could spur its conservation program.

During this trip he participated with President Marcos in dedicating a marker for a national sanctuary for the tamaraw of which only about 100 heads remain. He also travelled to Mindanao to visit a project designed to help the aboriginal Mansaka tribe survive and to see the nesting grounds of the monkey-eating eagle.

In Palawan he received a message on wood from the Tagbanwas who told him: "We understand that you are a good pilot. We are grateful that you are able to visit our island of Palawan. We would appreciate it if you could teach us to fly, so we could visit your island someday."

Lindbergh's concern with conservation tallies with President Marcos's own policy.

In a gesture never before made by a Philippine chief executive, Marcos declared Bird Island in Palawan as a wildlife sanctuary. He has ordered law enforcement agencies and the Games and Wildlife Office to go after hunters, especially the predators of the ta-

maraw and other rare species such as the tarsius monkey and the monkey-eating eagle. He has also asked relevant agencies of the government to prepare a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan. He pledged that during his incumbency he would do everything to conserve our forests and wildlife.

It is easy enough to appreciate the idea of conservation. The despoiling of forests, for instance, through indiscriminate logging and *kaiñgin* methods, leads to the disturbance of the ecological balance. Once the balance of nature is disturbed the consequences are uncontrollable.

Rat infestation becomes a problem when birds, reptiles, and beasts that prey on rodents have been wantonly decimated through the annihilation of forests.

The depletion of fish through destructive fishing methods and water pollution can lead to the *gamu-gamu* menace; fish naturally feed on the larvae of the *gamu-gamo*.

The conservation of forests, wildlife, and fish resources is itself worthy of the efforts of the people. It is just one step away from the idea of conserving other resources of the nation, for instance, manpower, the cultural heritage, the national arts.

As President Marcos enjoins the people: "Let each of us become a conservationist, a manager of our forests and waters, a protector of wildlife, a chronicler of our deeds, and a poet of the nation."

In plain terms, he rightly calls conservation as the alternative to national suicide. **PM**



SORRY DEAR, I'VE DECIDED WE SHOULD HAVE A TRIAL SEPARATION.