



When the Light Hurts Nature: Light Pollution and Urban Wildlife in the Philippines

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In many cities in the Philippines, the night is no longer dark. Streetlights, billboards, buildings, and vehicles all keep the city glowing. While these lights help people feel safe and allow work and activity to continue, they cause harm to something very important—our wildlife. Light pollution is a serious problem for animals that are active at night. These animals depend on darkness to live, move, and reproduce.

Nocturnal animals, such as bats, frogs, insects, and owls, have patterns that follow the natural day and night cycle. However, because of too much light at night, their routines are disrupted. For example, fireflies use flashing lights to find a mate. But when there is too much brightness from streetlights or homes, their natural signals cannot be seen. In the Philippines, people now see fewer fireflies in places where they used to be common (UP Diliman Wildlife Biology, 2023).

In a study about bats in Mindanao, researchers found that bats avoided areas with too much light (Guido & Kalaw, 2021). This means they lost places where they usually searched for food. The same study showed that artificial light made it harder for bats to hunt and made them more visible to predators. Other animals, like frogs, also suffer. They stop calling to one another during mating season when it is too bright, which affects how they reproduce.

In Metro Manila, changes in light use have raised concern. At the University of the Philippines Diliman, new lights were placed around the oval. While these lights were meant to help people jog or walk safely at night, they became too bright and disturbed birds and insects (San Jose, 2022). Reports say that some nocturnal birds no longer visit the area. Local people and scientists believe these lights are chasing away animals that used to live in the campus.

Studies in other Philippine cities also show growing light pollution. In Mandaluyong and Pasig, researchers used satellite images and confirmed that bright lights have increased in recent years (Dela Cruz, 2021). These lights form barriers that many animals cannot cross. Birds that migrate at night also get confused and may fly in the wrong direction, crash into buildings, or become tired and fall from the sky (PIA, 2022).

Some experts believe we can reduce this problem. According to the International Dark-Sky Association, cities should use lights that point down instead of spreading light everywhere (CMS, 2023). They also say that we should avoid using very bright and blue-colored lights, because these are the most harmful to animals.

It is possible to keep people safe and still protect wildlife. Local governments can set rules about what kind of lights to use and how long they should stay on. Schools, campuses, and parks can turn off some lights late at night or use dimmer options. In a report from UP Diliman, scientists suggested that keeping some places



dark can help frogs, owls, bats, and insects return and survive in cities (UP Diliman Wildlife Biology, 2023).

People often think of pollution as plastic, smoke, or dirty water. But light can be a kind of pollution too. It does not look dangerous, but it affects the lives of many animals that need the night. If we do not act, we might lose more than just fireflies. We may lose the songs of frogs, the silent wings of bats, and the beauty of night wildlife.

Let us make our cities friendlier to nature. If we protect the night, we help protect the animals that live in it. Let us use light wisely, so we can enjoy safe streets and still let the wild stay wild.

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