

KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY

JUNE 2021 SUMMARY Pandanan and Bugsuk Balabac, Palawan



21

Bilang ng nagawang
patrolya



78.6

Kabuuang kilometrong naabot
ng patrolya



19.5

Kabuuang oras ng
patrolya



Bilang ng illegal na
kailangang aksyunan



0

Bilang ng nai-report sa KFI



0

Bilang ng naaresto



226

Pinakamataas na bilang
sa tulugan ng Katala



153

Bilang ng cavity nesters



24

Bilang ng naitalang
namumunga at
namumulaklak na puno



0

Nakuhang mga silo o patibong



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KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY

PANDANAN AND BUGSUK ISLANDS, BALABAC

June 2021

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I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSERVATION AREA, CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES, CONSERVATION TARGETS AND METHODS

Pandanan and Bugsuk Island belongs to the north easternmost municipality of Balabac in Palawan (Fig. 1). Coastal forests are dense and stock on flat limestone originating from elevated coral reefs. Large trees in the coastal forest are mostly deciduous and widely spaced due to water stress during the dry season. The understorey is very dense with abundant vines. Emergent trees *Pometia pinnata*, *Dracontomelon dao*, *Koordersiodendron pinnatum*, *Intsia bijuga*, and *Ficus* spp. A narrow rim of beach forest with *Erythrina*, *Calophyllum* and *Barringtonia* is present. The dense coastal forest cover is as well protected because the large portion of the island is privately-owned and entries are monitored by security company guards. Extensive mangroves are thriving which mostly dominated by genus *Sonneratia* and *Rhizophora*. Mangrove forest play important role not only to its wildlife inhabitant but act as one of the main food sources for the critically endangered Philippine Cockatoo. Both islands have old growth *Sonneratia* that can sustain food to significant numbers of wild cockatoo population during its fruiting season.

Currently, 101 bird species have been recorded in Pandanan, Bugsuk and adjacent Malinsuno Island. Among these are six globally threatened and six near-threatened species (IUCN 2019). Of outstanding conservation concern are particularly the larger tree cavity nesters, like Palawan Hornbill, all three parrot species of Palawan, Philippine Cockatoo *Cacatua haematuropygia*, Blue-naped Parrot *Tanygnathus lucionensis* and Blue-headed Racquet-tail *Prioniturus platenae*, and other

conservation relevant species like Grey Imperial-pigeons *Ducula pickeringii* and Mantanani Scops-owl *Otus mantananensis* (Widmann et al. 2008). The first and only record for the Philippines of a Fairy Pitta *Pitta nympha* comes from Malinsuno as a result of the conservation

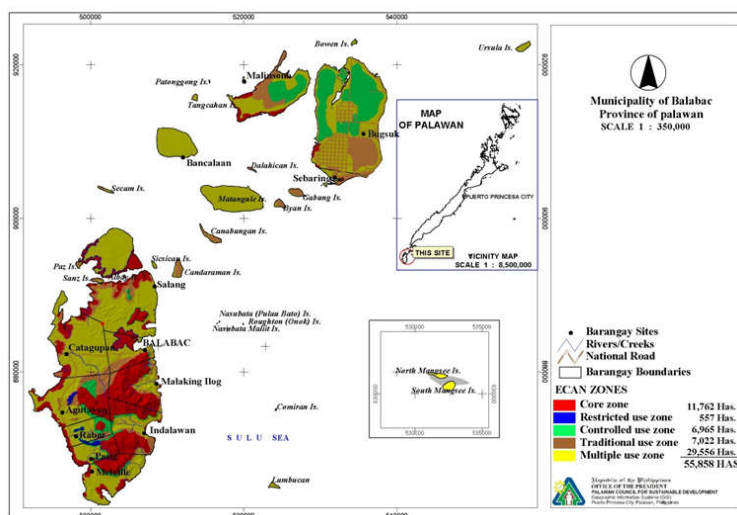


Figure 1. Location map of Pandanan and Bugsuk Island (red dots) in municipality of Balabac, Palawan (Map: PCSDS).

project. On the other hand Bugsuk Island also serves as one of the important habitat for the endemic Balabac Mousedeer *Tragulus nigricans*, due to restricted access of locals and less presence of hunting, deer population thriving in significant numbers. Bugsuk Island is apparently the only place in the world where the highly threatened Balabac Mousedeer, Palawan Porcupine, Philippine Cockatoo and Palawan Hornbill co-exist in the same forest habitat in viable populations.

Both island marine ecosystem harbour several threatened marine turtles species and locally declared as marine protected area that remain as the important breeding sites for grouper, wrasses and other high valued marine products.

Conservation Objectives

1. Maintain the species diversity and function of ecosystems and species at Pandanan and Bugsuk Island.
2. Identify and preserve priority sites for conservation and maintain their ecological functions.
3. Prevent or report to enforcing agencies illegal activities that compromise the integrity of the conservation area.

Conservation Targets

1. To increase Philippine Cockatoo population on Pandanan/Bugsuk by at least 5% from 2018 to 2021.
2. Increase viable population of endangered and endemic target cavity-nesters e.g. Palawan Hornbill, Blue-naped Parrot, Blue-headed Racquet-Tail, among others in Pandanan and Bugsuk Island from 2018-2021.
3. Reduce threats in the area by 50% from 2018-2021.

Methods

Deputized wardens patrol by foot, by boat and by truck monthly within sites. Patrol members use a technology-based system to register all observations (threats, status and wildlife data) in the android and transferred to a smart application to generate report (Critchlow et al., 2017; Teacher et al., 2013). Species to be monitored are based on their red-list status and their value as bioindicators (IUCN, 2019). Ease of identification in the field was considered as well. The maps are generated and analysed through QGIS. Patrols are coordinated with the concerned barangay, private land owner/company and protected area office wherever it applies.

II. PATROL TEAM AND EFFORT

As of this month patrolling and monitoring events at Pandanan Island was made by deputised wildlife wardens covering the total area of 43.9km (Fig. 2) while in Bugsuk weeklong monitoring visit took place on June 1

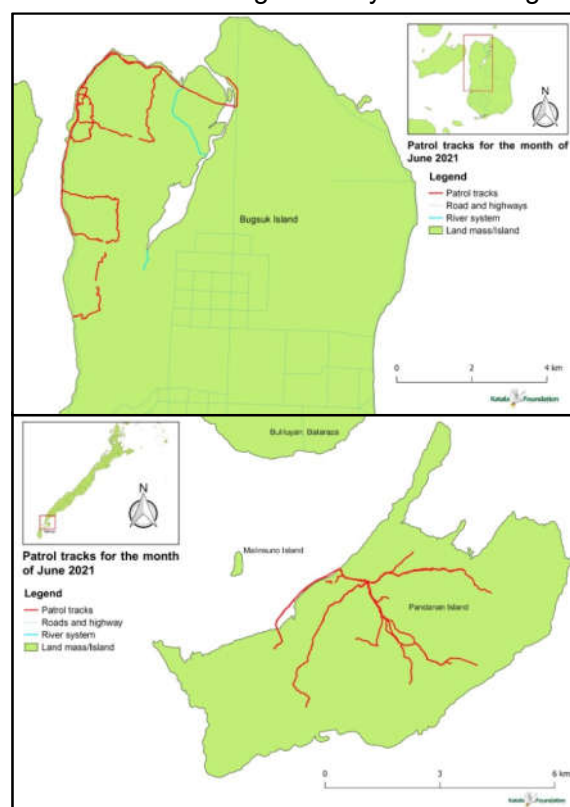


Figure 2. Patrol tracks at Pandanan Island for the month of May 2021 (left) and patrol-surveyed area at Bugsuk Island during June 1-8, 2021 monitoring visit (Map: KFI 2021).

to 8, 2021 covering the area of 34.6km, monitoring visit is mostly made on north and western portion of the island (Fig. 2).

III. PATROL OBSERVATIONS

A. Wildlife observations

Presence of the four target cavity-nesting bird species was recorded continuously at Pandanan and Bugsuk Island: Philippine Cockatoo, Palawan Hornbill, Blue-naped Parrot and Hill Mynah.

At Pandanan Island wildlife species recorded were as follows; a total of 226 individuals (ind) of Philippine Cockatoo, Green imperial Pigeon (70ind), Blue-naped Parrot (50ind), Palawan Hornbill (32ind), Hill Mynah (12ind), Crested serpent Eagle (3ind), Red-bellied Pitta (2ind), Spot-throated Flameback and Tabon Scrubfowl. Terrestrial mammals recorded were Flying squirrel, Southern Palawan tree squirrel and Long-tailed Macaque.

In Bugsuk Island, team recorded the following wildlife species during the monitoring visit: Blue-naped Parrot (26ind), Palawan Hornbill (20ind), Green imperial Pigeon (20ind), Pied imperial Pigeon (18 indi), Hooded Pitta (9 indi), Tabon Scrubfowl (8 indi), Hill Mynah (4 indi), Greater Coucal, Spot-throated Flameback, Philippine Cockatoo, Balabac Mousedeer and Long-tailed Macaque. Presence of Green sea turtles and Hawksbill sea turtles were recorded along the coastal waters of Pandanan Island and western Bugsuk Island.



Figure 3. Bird species recorded at Pandanan and Bugsuk Island: Spot-throated Flameback (left, Photo: RAntonio) and Palawan Hornbill (Right, Photo: KFI 2021).

B. Philippine Cockatoo and Palawan Hornbill nest monitoring

Nest monitoring was completed for the 23 active cockatoo nest trees in Pandanan Island. As of June 30th, additional two young cockatoos were recorded from late occupied nest trees, thus bringing the overall count to 47 young cockatoos (45 young reported as of May 2021). Leg band application was made for the six remaining young cockatoos; in total 46 were banded successfully by our team (40 young banded as of May reporting period). Monitoring of two newly discovered nest trees continued. Successful fledglings was already recorded from most nest trees, in total 39 banded young safely left their respective nests hole.

Meanwhile, one death of a young cockatoo was observed from the newly discovered nest tree (thus bringing to seven dead young cockatoos this year). Our assessment and field data showed that cause of death is possibly overcrowding in nest chamber and death occurred overnight as there was no foul smell when discovered. We noticed no injury and its crop contain minimum amount of granular food (Fig. 4). Nest chamber bottom is only 20.5cm in diameter and with two young cockatoos plus the parents, this might be small. In addition, we suspect another cockatoo went inside the chamber during torrential rains in the evening.

Moreover, predation of two eggs was recorded from the newly discovered nest tree where we removed two Geckos from the chamber and its substrate was mostly mixed up.

At Bugsuk Island, four cockatoo nest trees were visited from June 1-8 monitoring visit. Successful fledglings without legbands/tag were recorded from four nest trees with 11 young cockatoos. Banding of one young was made from a new nest tree at northern Bugsuk Island (Fig. 4). No sign of human or poaching incident noted from these nest trees. Other known active cockatoo nest trees at southeast portion was not visited due to restrictions; we assume that all 18 young cockatoos recorded from six active nest trees fledged successfully.



Figure 4. Dead young cockatoos from PCPNT002, Pandanan (left) and banded young cockatoo from new nest tree at Bugsuk Island (Photos: RAntonio).

For Palawan Hornbill, in Pandanan a total of 10 nest trees are occupied and active with overall 20 young hornbills. As of June, 17 young hornbills successfully fledged (Fig. 5) while three remain inside their respective nests. No sign of predation. In Bugsuk Island, five new nest trees were discovered by the monitoring team during June 1-8 visit (Fig. 5). These five nests are all active and contain a total of eight young hornbills. All young hornbills are in good condition and well-fed, and soon to leave their nests in early July.



Figure 5. Successfully fledgling from a known nest at Pandanan Island (left) and two of the newly discovered nest trees in Bugsuk Island (Center and Right, Photos: KFI, RAntonio)

C. Cockatoo roost counts and food providing tree monitoring

Increase on cockatoo count at the traditional roost site in Malinsuno island was notable this month, count reach up to 226 individuals during the last week of June that corresponds to the near-end of the breeding season in Pandanan and Bugsuk Islands. At traditional roost site 11 new recruits were recorded on June 26th morning, these new recruits stayed in the island whole day and waited to be fed by adult cockatoos that forage in Pandanan Island.

Twenty forest tree species and two vine species were recorded at fruiting stage: Amugis (*Koordersiodendron pinnatum*), Andalugo, Badjang (*Alocasia macrorrhizos*), Bago (*Gnetum gnemon*), Balangihan, Balite (*Ficus sp.*), Baro tree, Bubog (*Sterculia foetida*), Dao tree (*Dracontomelon dao*), Duguan, Ipil (*Intsia bijuga*), Kaliyat vines, Magdita-dita tree, Magnangka-nangka tree, Marapisa, Mararango, Nato, Palawan Cherry, Pagatpat (*Sonneratia sp.*), Rangingi vines, Santol, Se-ar tree and Salogon (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Food sources recorded at Pandanan and Bugsuk islands as of month of June; fruits of Nato tree (left) and fruit of Rangingi vines (Right, Photos: R.Antonio).

D. Community monitoring and threats observation

Nine visiting locals were recorded at Sitio Dalahican, Barangay Pandanan as of June. These locals originated from Bataraza Palawan; three from Barangay Tagnato, one from Barangay Buliluyan and five from Barangay Rio Tuba Palawan. Fishing activity and copra production are their main purpose for visiting Pandanan Island.

Illegal logging activity at Tagbiwan coastal forest continued (Fig. 7); previously unfinished cut trees were being sawed by allegedly local logger, this activity was documented near the active cockatoo nest tree which has a young cockatoo. The loud noise of the chainsaw which was used to cut and slice the tree disturbed the breeding pair which resulted to hesitation to enter the nest hole. Consequently, the young cockatoo was left unfed and later succumbed to death. Less food source in the area is noted due to alarming rate of persistent illegal cutting not acted upon by authorities.



Figure 7. Illegally cut forest trees along Kamilet to Tagbinwan forest (Photos: KFI2021).

F. Camera trap installation and deployment

Camera traps capture the presence of the following wildlife species in Pandanan Island: Tabon Scrubfowl, Rufous Night-Heron, Long-tailed Macaque, Civet Cat, Flying Squirrel and Forest Rats. Monitor lizards was occasionally seen passing the camera trap at ground level. Footages from camera trap deployed at nest trees, feeding activity of young hornbill was well documented including the presence of other animals like cockatoos at the hornbill nest tree (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Bird species documented by camera traps: Rufous Night-Heron (upper left) Philippine Cockatoo visiting second cavity at the active Palawan Hornbill nest (upper right) and feeding activity of newly fledged Palawan Hornbill (Below; Photos: KFI 2021).

IV. ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

Illegal cutting of forest trees in southwestern part of Pandanan particularly at Kamilet to Tagbinwan continued. This activity affected most of the fauna species in particular the cockatoos where two active nest trees are situated and are heavily disturbed by noise of chainsaw and further limited food sources in the area.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Proper land and forest management must be considered in Pandanan since it holds significant population of Philippine Cockatoos and other threatened species of birds like the endemic Palawan Hornbill.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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