

KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY SEPTEMBER 2021 SUMMARY Pandanan and Bugsuk Balabac, Palawan



17

Bilang ng nagawang
patrolya



103.6

Kabuuang kilometrong naabot
ng patrolya



25.36

Kabuuang oras ng
patrolya



2

Bilang ng illegal na
kailangang aksyunan



1

Bilang ng nai-report sa KFI



0

Bilang ng naaresto



120

Pinakamataas na bilang
sa tulugan ng Katala



49

Bilang ng cavity nesters



16

Bilang ng naitalang
namumunga at
namumulaklak na puno



2

Nakuhaang mga silo o patibong



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Donor



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KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY

PANDANAN AND BUGSUK ISLANDS, BALABAC

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

Pandanan and Bugsuk Islands belong 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 project. On the other

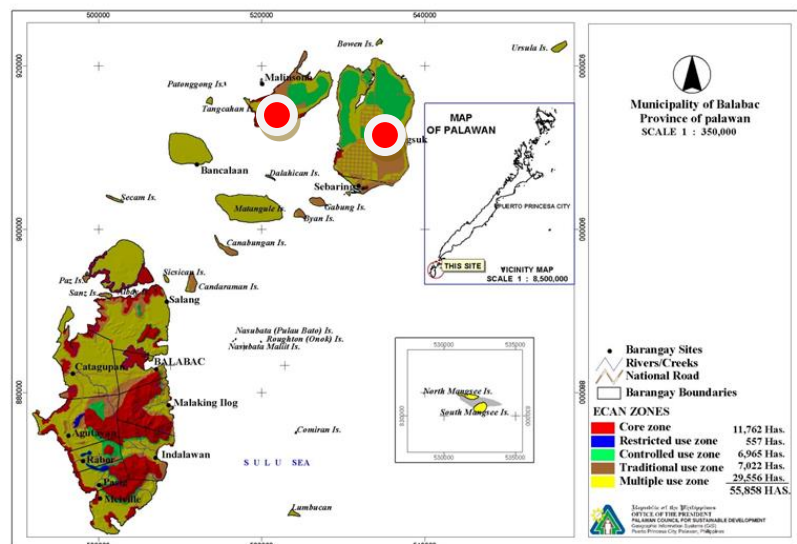


Figure 1. Location map of Pandanan and Bugsuk Island (red dots) in municipality of Balabac, Palawan (Map: PCSDS).

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 harbor 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

A total of 103.6km was covered during patrolling and monitoring at Pandanan Island and known foraging site of Philippine Cockatoo in Buliluyan, Bataraza and Sebaring, Balabac Palawan. Monitoring in Bataraza was made on September 15 while on the 20th was the visit to Barangay Sebaring, Balabac.

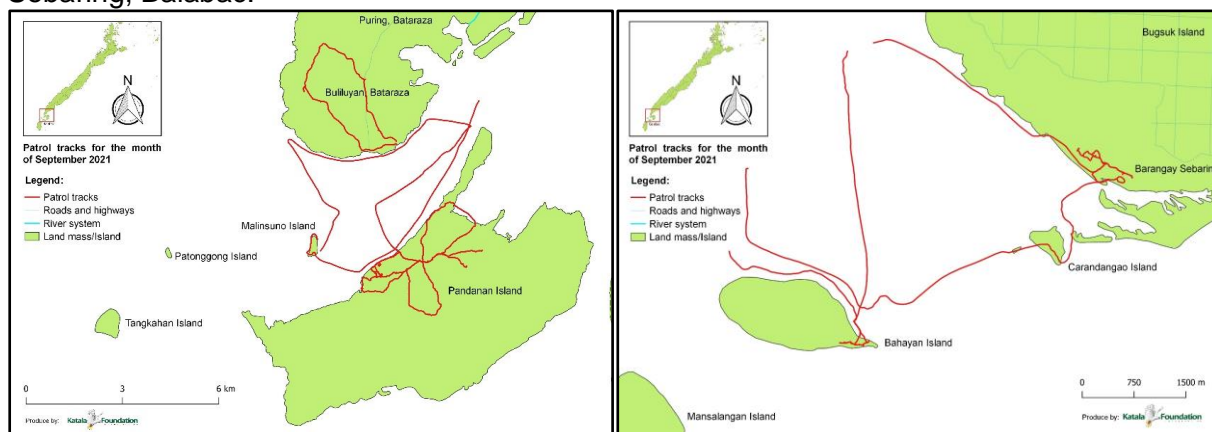


Figure 2. Covered patrol tracks inside Pandanan Island and foraging sites of Philippine Cockatoo in Barangay Buliluyan, Bataraza and Barangay Sebaring, Balabac (Maps: KFI 2021).

III. PATROL OBSERVATIONS

A. Wildlife observations

Five bird species with conservation importance were recorded this month inside Pandanan Island, these are: Philippine Cockatoo, Palawan Hornbill (15 indi.), Blue-naped Parrot (14 indi.), Blue-headed Racquet tail (12 indi.) and Hill Mynah (8 indi.). Other bird species noted: Spot-throated Woodpecker (5 indi.), Oriental dwarf Kingfisher (3 indi.), Crested serpent Eagle (3 indi.), Great-billed Heron and Little Heron, feeding on intertidal area of Malinsuno Island.

Other wildlife recorded were Long-tailed Macaque, Southern Palawan red Squirrel and Flying Squirrel. Green Sea turtles and Hawksbill Sea turtles were well observed along Pandanan coastal waters during patrol by boat. Aside from Pandanan Island, an important observation of flocks of Palawan Hornbill and Blue-headed Racquet tail was taken at Bahayan Island last September 20th. The island coastal forest serves as habitat (also breeding site) for Palawan Hornbill and Philippine Cockatoos. Rapid survey conducted by KFI team in 2012 recorded the presence of active nest trees of Cockatoo and Hornbills. However, illegal logging and human settlement affected and reduced most of the old growth trees in this small island.

B. Cockatoo roost counts and food providing tree monitoring

Stable count at the traditional roost site continues with 120 cockatoos as the highest count this month while 62 as the lowest number recorded. There is decrease of cockatoo count at Malinsuno Island as a secondary roost site at Barangay Sebaring, Balabac is monitored. On September 23rd, four personnel from DENR-CENRO Brookes point conducted monitoring visit and counting of cockatoo at traditional roost site in Malinsuno Island. A joint counting activity was made on September 23rd 6pm and record a total number of 91 cockatoos at the roost site (Fig. 3). Some of the birds were seen coming from Buliluyan, Bataraza that afternoon. Same flight route was taken by 46 birds on September 24th during morning counts at about 5:40am made by KFI wardens and DENR CENRO personnel.



Figure 3. Cockatoo counting activity at the Malinsuno roost site on September 23, 2021 by visiting DENR CENRO personnel accompanied by KFI wildlife wardens (Photos: RAntonio and KFI 2021).

Sixteen forest trees and one salt tolerant tree species recorded at fruiting stage to wit: Aga tree (*Ficus sp.*), Aluyaw tree, Baba tiyong, Balinad tree, Bongyo tree, Bubog tree (*Sterculia foetida*), Dao tree (*Dracontomelon dao*), Ipil-ipil tree, Kapok tree, Kasay tree, Maglabuyo tree, Mangupak tree, Moringa plants, Pagatpat tree (*Sonneratia alba*) Pisursur tree, Talokon tree and Talisay tree (*Terminalia catappa*).

C. Cockatoo foraging site and secondary roost site monitoring

Follow up monitoring at Barangay Buliluyan, Bataraza Palawan was made last September 15, 2021. A total of 10km covering four known Sitios: Buliluyan proper, Kamanga, Dorunguan and Talaptap was reached by monitoring team (Fig. 4). Cockatoo food providing plants were recorded and random interviews on cockatoo sightings were conducted. As of result, about 30

Philippine Cockatoos was reportedly present at Sitio Kamanga foraging on flower of Narra Tree *Pterocarpus indicus* while 3-20 Cockatoos reported by secondary students at Sitio Doruguan. As of observation dates, flocks of 30 cockatoos were noted by Kamanga locals during last week of June and mid-July this year. Recent observation was made by students last September 13, 2021 at Doruguan with all birds heading northward. In terms of food plants, a total of nine tree species were noted: Narra *P. indicus*, Ipil *Intsia bijuga*, Ipil-ipil *Leucaena leucocephala*, Palawan cherry, Bongyo, Akle *Albizia acle*, Moringa plants, Manglas tree and two mangrove species Pagatpat *Sonneratia alba* and Dandolit *Avicennia sp* (Fig. 5). No threats found nor discovered within the visited areas in Barangay Buliluyan.

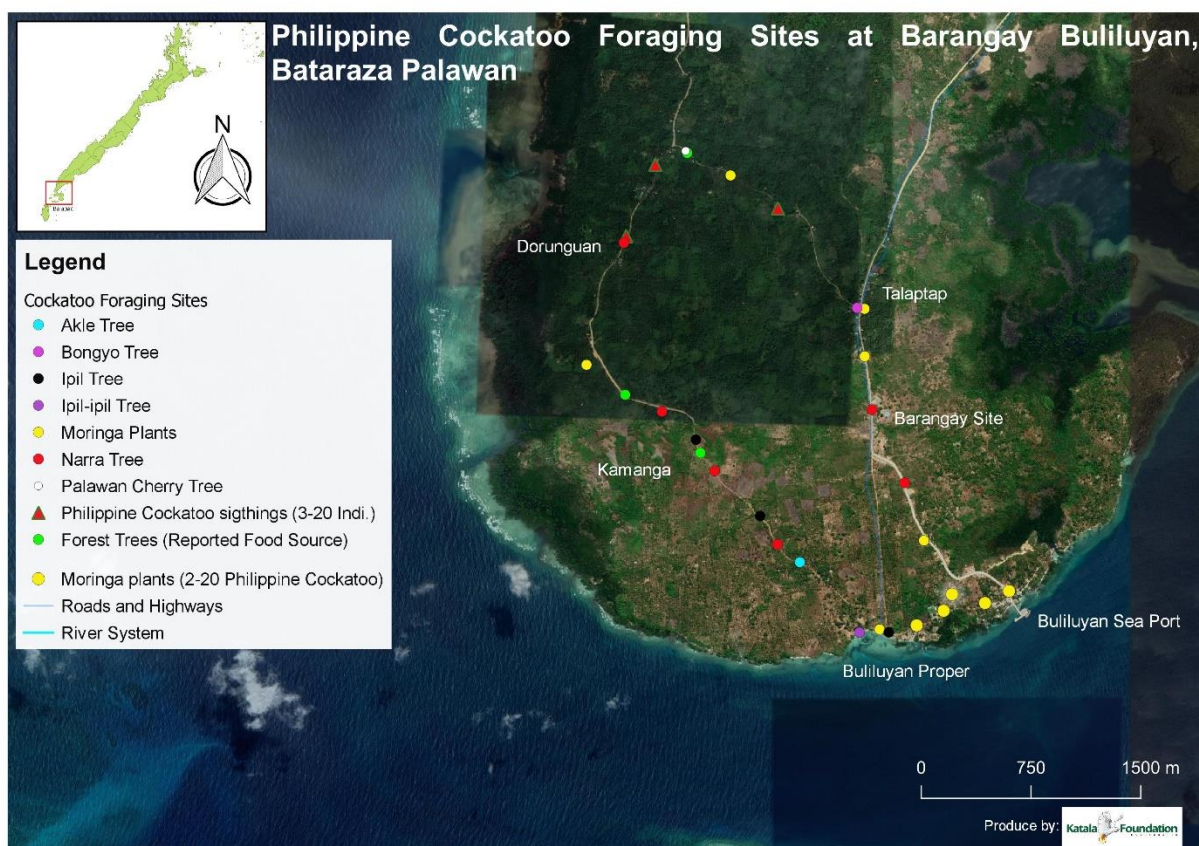


Figure 4. Foraging sites of Philippine Cockatoo at Barangay Buliluyan, Bataraza with recent sighting of flocks heading northward (Map: KFI 2021).



Figure 5. Food providing plants: Narra Tree at Sitio Kamanga (background tree, left photo) mixed coastal forest trees at Buliluyan proper (center) and Bongyo tree with matured pods at Talaptap, Buliluyan Bataraza (Right, Photos: KFI and RAntonio).

Furthermore, monitoring of secondary roost sites and foraging site was done at Barangay Sebaring on September 20, 2021. Three cockatoo roost sites were reported by locals, these are within the area of Lawrensana property (LW), Bob Mayor property (BM) and within the vicinity of local house, Condesa family (CN). Roost trees differ from each site: at Lawrensana area roost tree are Coconut and *Sonneratia* sp. while *Casuarina* sp. and *Sonneratia* sp. are used in Bob Mayor area and Coconut tree in Condesa vicinity. The first two locations are known roost sites while the Condesa property is recent and about 10 Cockatoos are reported to roost on a Coconut tree. Locals reported to the visiting team that cockatoos are daily roosting in two sites. During our visit actual cockatoo count reached 33 individuals at 10am foraging in a mangrove forest (Fig. 7). We also observed cockatoo feeding on the opposite side of the cove which is allegedly privately-owned by some government officials.



Figure 6. Philippine Cockatoos in flight at Sebaring Dos, Barangay Sebaring (left, red circle) and old growth *Sonneratia* trees are foraging grounds of the wild Philippines Cockatoos (Right, Photos: KFI 2021).

Forty moringa plants were counted at Sebaring Dos and majority of these are pod bearing during our visit; meanwhile old moringa plants that were regularly visited by cockatoo was documented at Binasag area where about 20-25 individuals are reportedly foraging at matured pods (Fig. 7). Meanwhile at Bahayan Island, 25 pod bearing moringa plants were recorded, foraging cockatoos was also reported by locals from this island. Two snares intended for cockatoo were documented inside the backyard of Mr. Jurahim Bayani. The latter dismantled the snares together with the KFI team (Fig. 7). No birds caught at the trap based on interview. All moringa plant owners were told of RA 9147 and was alerted on any deliberate action to disturb/disrupt or harm any cockatoo whenever they are foraging. We toured around houses to verify if a Katala is in possession by any local; thankfully there was none so far during the visit. Recorded food providing plants at Sebaring are as follows: Moringa plants, *Sonneratia* sp., Kasay and Balinad.



Figure 7. Moringa plants at Binasag Area, Sebaring (left) and snare traps for Katala found at Bahayan Island (Right red arrow, Photos: KFI 2021).

Interesting note: we have anecdotal reports of cockatoo presence at Barangay Canipaan, Rizal and Barangay Sapa, Bataraza Palawan from locals we interviewed in Sebaring.

D. Community monitoring and threats observation

Twelve visiting locals were recorded this month inside Pandanan Island particular at Sitio Dalahican. These locals originated from Municipality of Rizal (3 locals) and Municipality of Bataraza (9 locals). A day to week-long visit by these locals was noted by monitoring team.

In terms of threats, one illegal logging activity was recorded at Arananan coastal forest last September 19, 2021. 13 pieces of good lumber from Bayoso tree was discovered in the area and sliced into 2X3X30 10 pcs and 2X5X10 3pcs. These lumber had total board feet of 175. Later that afternoon confiscation was made the security personnel and member of Philippine Army base at Bugsuk Island (Fig. 8). Confiscated lumbers were then transferred to their base and currently at their custody.

Meanwhile the actual intent of capturing cockatoos through snares that were documented and dismantled in the island of Bahayan should be regularly monitored; otherwise, legal action could be pursued the next time the same person is caught with the snare. This incident is also reported to the barangay.

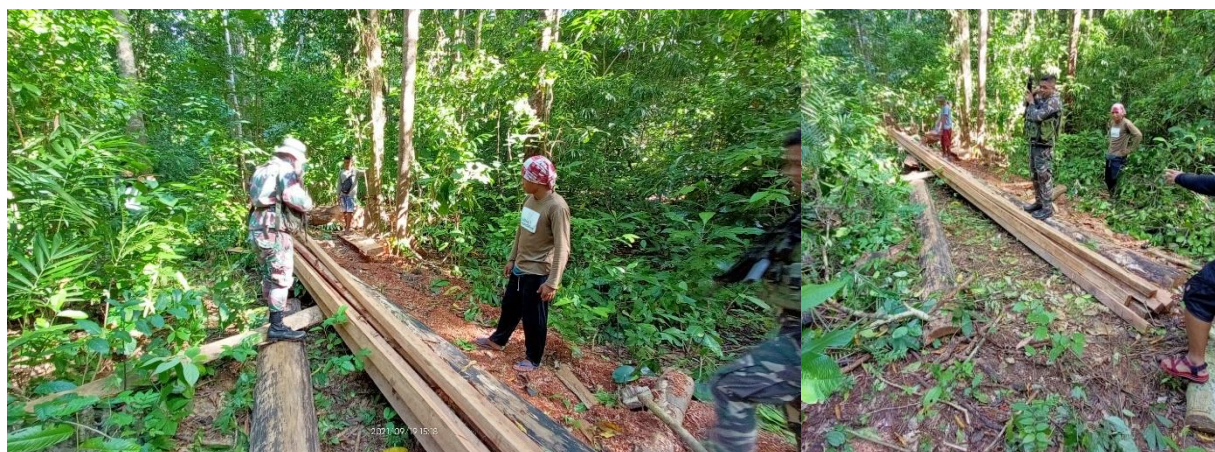


Figure 8. Confiscation of lumbers from illegally cut forest trees along Arananan coastal forest, Pandanan (Photos: KFI 2021).

E. Other related conservation activities

Tree planting was continuously made KFI wildlife wardens. As of this month a total of 1,690 native trees from nursery were planted along the Dalahican-Magsakayan, Barangay Pandanan Balabac. Planted trees are identified as nest and food providing plants for Katala, Kalaw, Pikoy and other bird species inhabiting the island. The following were planted: Balangihan tree (404 trees), Arimogdan tree (550 trees), Kaliyat vines (46 seedlings), Marapisa tree (508 trees), Amugis tree (43 trees), Aluyaw tree (34 trees), Bayoso tree (35 trees), Magnangka-nangka tree (31 trees) Se-ar tree (27 trees) Kapok Gubat (8 trees) Sahing tree (3 trees) and Magsumbiling tree. Propagated Moringa stems were planted along the vicinity of warden station, Pandanan.

IV. ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

Presence of illegal logging activity continued at Pandanan Island and setting of snares by locals in Bahayan Island is a direct threat to foraging cockatoos. We reported to barangay and we hope for an increased IEC and help from DENR would be great in these areas so that collaborative work on information dissemination particularly on RA 9147 could be done the soonest possible time. We hope to tap local volunteers in the area.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued site visitation by DENR-CENROs and other agencies is highly recommended at Malinsuno and at Barangay Pandanan in particular. Regular visit by monitoring team at Bahayan Island must be considered since bird traps were discovered in one of the local's backyard. Also monitoring visit at southern barangays of Bataraza must be made in future to locate and trace cockatoos visiting each barangays and assess local community behavior toward the birds.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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