

KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY SEPTEMBER 2022 SUMMARY Pandanan and Bugsuk Balabac, Palawan



16

Bilang ng nagawang patrolya



55.6

Kabuuang kilometrong naabot ng patrolya



40

Kabuuang oras ng patrolya



0

Bilang ng illegal na kailangang aksyunan



0

Bilang ng naaresto



10

Bilang ng naitalang supply ng Pagkain ng Katala at ibang buhay-ilang



186

Pinakamataas na bilang sa tulugan ng Katala



19

Bilang ng mga naitalang Kalaw/Palawan hornbill



646

Bilang ng nabuhay na tanim sa planting site



19

Bilang ng mga naitalang Blue-naped parrot



1,500

Bilang ng naitalang migratory raptors



0

Nakuhang mga silo o patibong ng mga buhay-ilang



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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 hand Bugsuk Island also serves as one of the important habitat for the endemic Balabac Mousedeer *Tragulus nigricans*,

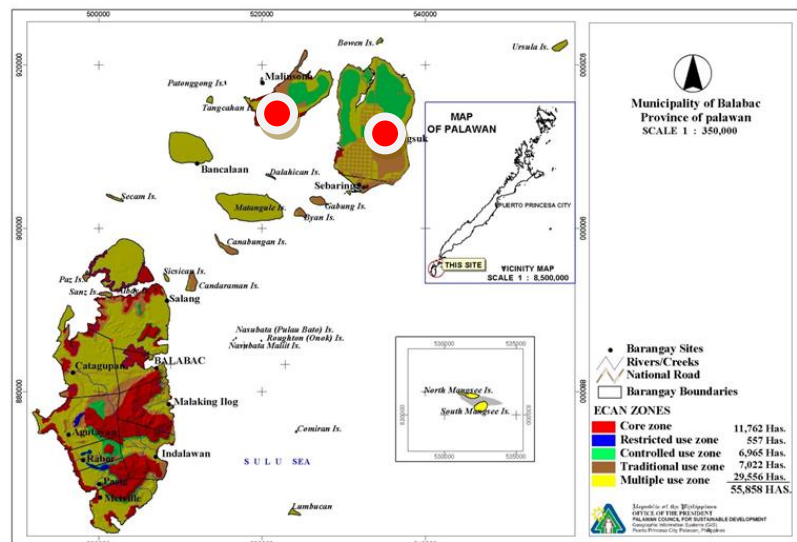


Figure 1. Location map of Pandanan and Bugsuk Island (red dots) in municipality of Balabac, Palawan (Map: PCSDS).

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 islands' marine ecosystem harbors several threatened marine turtle species. Portions locally declared as marine protected area remain as 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 number of Philippine Cockatoo breeding pairs on Pandanan/Bugsuk by at least 5% by 2024 (up from 23 and 10 from Pandanan and Bugsuk respectively in 2021).
2. Increase viable population of endangered and endemic target cavity-nesters by at least 3% by 2024 e.g. Palawan Hornbill (up from 15 breeding pairs in 2021), Blue-naped Parrot (up from 6 breeding pairs in 2021), in Pandanan and Bugsuk Islands from 2022-2024.
3. Reduce threats in the area by 50% from 2022-2024.

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 2022). 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 55.6km was covered by patrollers in 16 patrolling events for this period. Routine habitat patrol and monitoring was conducted by our wildlife wardens and staff in Pandanan Island: Rene Antonio, Ismael S. Dela Cruz Jr., Deo E. Aplid, Celso Badilla and Ariel C. Omog. Coastal area patrolling was also made on two occasions while settlement visitation on other hand was made along Dalahican, Magsakayan and Barangay Sebaring. Other target activities and settlement visitation were not reached due to bad weather condition.

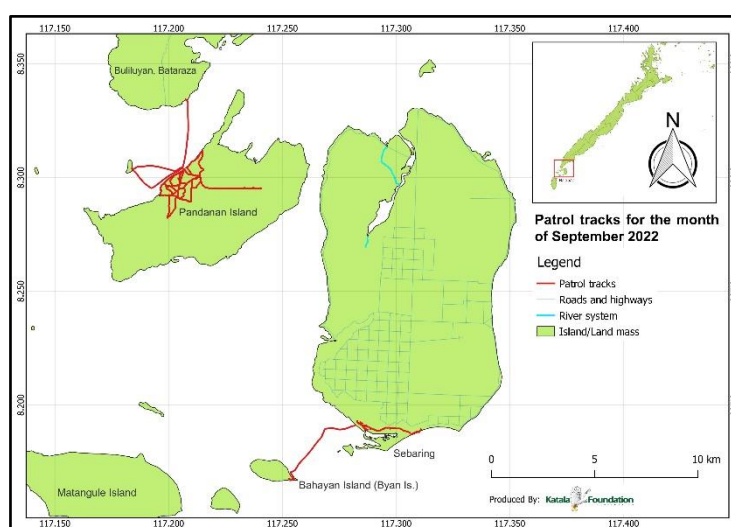


Figure 2. Patrol tracks along Pandanan Island and coastal areas as of September 2022 (Map: KFI 2022).

III. PATROL OBSERVATIONS

A. Wildlife observations

Eleven bird species of conservation importance were recorded by patroller as of this period: Blue-headed racquet-tail I (Vulnerable), Blue-naped parrot (Near threatened), Crested serpent eagle (Least concern), Green imperial pigeon (Near threatened), Hill mynah (Least concern), Hooded pitta (Least concern), Grey-cheeked bulbul (Vulnerable), Palawan hornbill (Vulnerable), Philippine cockatoo (Critically endangered), Philippine scrubfowl (Least concern). Presence of migratory raptor species was also recorded during 29th of the month, an estimated numbers of 1500 Grey-faced buzzard were seen in flight around 12noon above Pandanan Island and heading southeast (Borneo Island). Significant numbers in flight as observed on one occasion was recorded for the first time at least in Pandanan for this species.

On other hand, presence of other wildlife species like Palawan flying squirrel (Near threatened), Long-tailed macaque, Southern Palawan red squirrel, Palawan black spitting cobra and Monitor lizards was also recorded during the patrolling events.

B. Philippine Cockatoo roost counts and food providing tree monitoring

For this month, a total of 186 cockatoos were recorded as the highest count while 21 individuals as the lowest. The latter was greatly affected by Typhoon Karding (Noru) on September 25th, which brought torrential rains and intense southwest wind in southern part of Palawan. We assume that some of the cockatoos are in Bugsuk during these times since secondary roost site Sebaring continue to hold lower numbers as September ends.

Food source monitoring for cockatoos recorded the following plant species: Alalod tree, Aloyaw, Balinad, Balite kulban, Girangan, Ipil-ipil, Mangupak, Palawan cherry, *Sonneratia alba* or Pagatpat and Tarungtung (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Cockatoo food source recorded this month inside Pandanan and at secondary roost site in Sebaring, Balabac. Mature pods of Tarungtung (left) and young fruit of Alalod (Right, Photos: AOmog).

C. Community monitoring and threats observation

Three transient locals recorded along Magsakayan settlement. These three people originate from Barangay Puring, Bataraza and stayed overnight for gill net fishing along the western waters of Pandanan Island. Respondents left the island on the following day.

D. Nursery works and tree planting site monitoring

A total of 1,826 seeds bags were prepared at KFI nursery on Pandanan Island. Monitoring of forest rehabilitation site was done by our team as of September 09th, out of 973 planted native trees, 646 (or 66%) of these were observed alive and well. While 327 (33%) plants were dead. Mortality reasons include uprooting caused by wild animals especially by Long-tailed macaque and some trampling by passers-by.

E. Site visits and cockatoo monitoring

Monitoring visit was conducted at Barangay Sebaring, Balabac on September 12-14, 2022. On the 12th, we counted six cockatoos at the roost site; then at dusk on the 13th and dawn on the

14th there are eight cockatoos counted. Informal interviews were conducted in Sebaring proper and at Bahayan Island where 100-150 individuals were observed in August 2022 while few Katala was seen this September. No other roost site found by our team in Sebaring. This observation of high numbers of cockatoos in August also coincide with the fruiting period of Malungay and Pagatpat in the area.

Our house-to-house poster distribution totalled to 76 and 24 posters in Sebaring proper while 24 in Bahayan Island. This was also focus group discussion done in these areas with focus on the efforts to save the cockatoos, its habitat and its presence in said areas. These locals are mostly coconut and seaweed farmers and fisherfolks. Two former cockatoo poachers were also visited by our team and currently they are engaged in seaweeds production and fishing. No direct threats to Katala were observed in Sebaring during this visit since regular monitoring is conducted by our volunteer from the area.



Figure 4. Secondary roost site (left) and foraging areas at Barangay Sebaring, Balabac (Photos: KFI 2022).



Figure 5. House to house poster distribution at Sebaring proper (top left and top right) and at Bahayan Island (Lower left and right, Photos: KFI 2022)

IV. ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

Regular forest patrolling and monitoring will be continued. While sightings of cockatoos are spread out even on main island of Balabac, IEC must be pursued to ensure that foraging areas must be secured from any forms of threats.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishment of critical habitat for wildlife in Pandanan Island is deemed necessary. Site visitation, IEC and FGDs must be continued. Local protection of cockatoo foraging areas must be considered in Barangays of Balabac with regular sightings and roost sites.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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