

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



25

Bilang ng nagawang
patrolya



86.95

Kabuuang kilometrong naabot
ng patrolya



18

Kabuuang oras ng
patrolya



2

Bilang ng illegal na
kailangang aksyunan



0

Bilang ng nai-report sa KFI



0

Bilang ng naaresto



65

Pinakamataas na bilang
sa tulugan ng Katala



68

Bilang ng cavity nesters



13

Bilang ng naitalang
namumunga at
namumulaklak na puno



0

Nakuhang mga silo o patibong



Anonymous
Donor



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Biodiversity Management Bureau



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KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY

PANDANAN AND BUGSUK ISLANDS, BALABAC

November 2021

Prepared by:

Rene A. S. Antonio, Peter Widmann and Indira D. L. Widmann

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

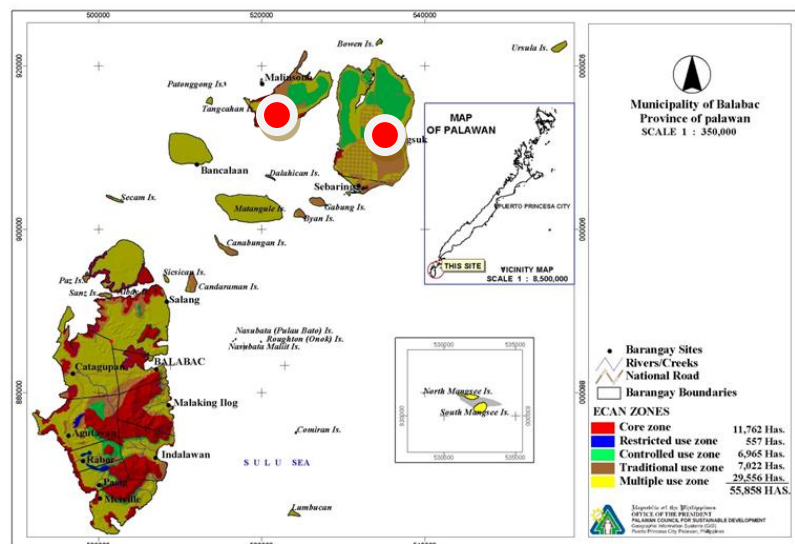


Figure 1. Location map of Pandanan and Bugsuk Island (red dots) in municipality of Balabac, Palawan (Map: PCSDS).

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 86.95km was covered during this month patrolling and monitoring at Pandanan Island. Day monitoring visit at Barangay Sebaring was made while coastal patrolling continue along the jurisdictional waters of Pandanan Island.

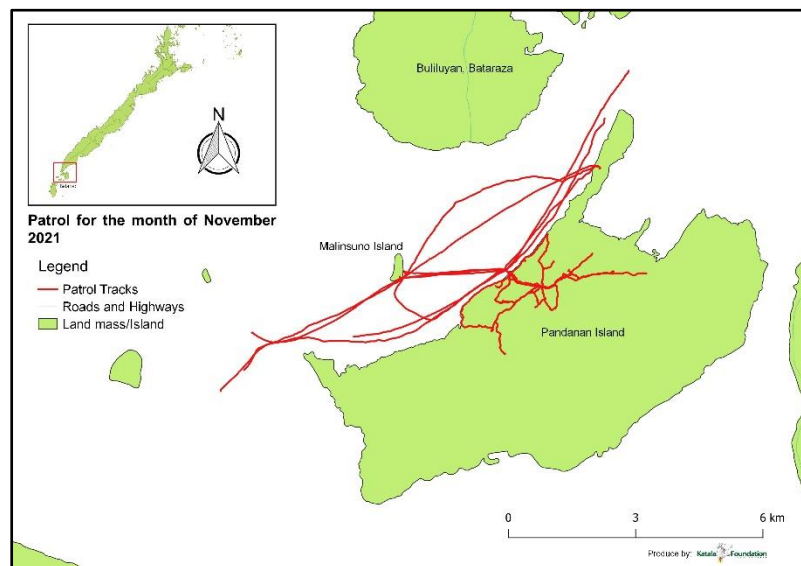


Figure 2. Patrol tracks for forest patrolling and coastal monitoring at Pandanan Island (Map: KFI 2021).

III. PATROL OBSERVATIONS

A. Wildlife observations

Six threatened bird species were recorded at Pandanan Island as of this monitoring period: Philippine Cockatoo with 65 individuals, Blue-naped Parrot (39 indi.), Palawan Hornbill (22 indi.) Blue-headed Racquet tail (5 indi.) and Hill Mynah (2 indi.) Roosting Pied Imperial Pigeon were noted at Malinsuno Island, a total of 200 individuals were recorded from mid to end of November. Pigeons migrate locally especially during the height of fruiting season of forest trees and Buri Palm at neighboring mainland Palawan and islands.

Other records include, Osprey (3 indi.), Crested Serpent Eagle (3 indi.), Great-billed Heron (3 indi.), Blue-paradise flycatcher, Great-slaty Woodpecker, Spot throated Woodpecker, White-bellied Woodpecker, Mantanani Scops-Owl. For marine species, team record the foraging Green sea turtle and Hawksbill sea turtle along the north to northwestern Pandanan Island.

B. Cockatoo roost counts and food providing tree monitoring

A total of 65 Philippine Cockatoo recorded as the highest number while 18 cockatoos as the lowest count taken for this month at the traditional roost site in Malinsuno Island. Decreasing numbers of cockatoos at the roost site may be attributed to the forthcoming cockatoo breeding season in southern part of the province. Occasional rainfall was noted in the island associated with the presence of Amihan wind or northeast monsoon.

In terms of natural food supplies, thirteen forest tree species recorded this month and these were represented by the following plants: Aga tree (*Ficus sp.*), Alalod tree, Bago tree, Badjang *Alocasia macrorhizos*, Bubog tree (*Sterculia foetida*), Bungyo tree, Buyon Tree, Magbaka-baka, Magdita-dita tree, Mangupak tree, Namot tree, Palawan Cherry tree, Pisursur tree, and Talisay tree (*Terminalia catappa*).



Figure 3. Food providing trees: Fruits of Badjang *A.macrorhizos* (left) fruits of Mangupak tree (center) and fruits of Bago tree (Right, Photos: R.Antonio).

C. Community monitoring and threats observation

Nine visiting locals from mainland Palawan were recorded at Sitio Dalahican during this month's community monitoring events. Relative visitation and these locals stayed in the island about couple of days before returning back to their home origin.

No related human induced threats found nor discovered along the forest of Pandanan Island. One unregulated fish coral (Baklad) was record along the intertidal area of Arananan-Tagbinwan

area. The fish corral was allegedly owned by Dolpino Antara and construction was extended unto the live coral reefs.

D. Cockatoo foraging and secondary roost site monitoring

Secondary roost site monitoring visit was made at Barangay Sebaring, Balabac. Counting of roosting cockatoo was regularly made by local volunteer. A total of 11 Philippine Cockatoos was noted as the highest number for this month and new roost site was discovered at Sebaring proper (3-4km from Sebaring Dos, due east). Occupation at previous roost site (Bob Mayor property) was recorded on November 1, 2021 for one occasion with a total of 10 cockatoos. While onward records show that cockatoos use the newly reported/recorded roost site. Lowest count recorded is with two individuals. No threats found within Barangay Sebaring so far during visit.

Offsite monitoring continues down to mainland Balabac. Sites with reported cockatoo sightings was visited and checked. Sighting of about 20-35 cockatoos was first reported at Poblacion 5 by credible local, sighting took place during end of October. Cockatoos were seen at the old growth trees particularly Narra around 6:30 in the morning while other site is at Barangay Malaking Ilog (about 8km from town proper), within this location two sites have been reported with cockatoos; both are within the properties of Antonio family. Cockatoo forage on Moringa plants, a leg band was seen from one of the cockatoos. Aside from Moringa, cockatoos numbering from 20-25 forage at the flower of Narra tree and Pagatpat tree at coastal area (Fig. 4). No reported roost site in mainland Balabac. Snare trapping are common in mainland Balabac and other sites, this particular activity also being driven by shortage in daily income by some locals while local pet trading are still going on within the corridor.

Note: Local trading (trapper-to-local buyer/owner) is evident in mainland Balabac especially in Poblacion. An indication of this activity is the possession of critically endangered Philippine Cockatoos and Blue-naped Parrots as home pets by some residents (some government employees included). In the recent past it was noted they have only one individual and in November we confirmed two individuals of cockatoos are in possession.



Figure 4. Foraging sites: Narra tree (left) and old growth Pagatpat tree at Barangay Malaking Ilog, Balabac (Photos: KFI 2021).

E. Cavity nests checking and monitoring activities

Nest checking and monitoring activity for Philippine Cockatoo and Palawan Hornbill are ongoing at Pandanan Island. In total, 18 cockatoo nest trees and 6 hornbills were completely checked by monitoring team. Nest preparation and cleaning are evident for all cockatoo nests while no

nest activity found in all hornbills. Lone or pair cockatoos was recorded from nest tree during monitoring visits. Checking will continue as breeding month comes in.



Figure 5. Twigs and small branches cut by Cockatoo during nest hole cleaning in preparation for incoming breeding months (Photos: KFI 2021).

F. Camera trap installation and deployment

Regular card and battery replacement were made at the installed camera traps. At Pandanan Island, acquired footages continue to record the following animals: Tabon Scrubfowl, Hooded Pitta, Forest Rats, Long-tailed Macaque and Palawan bearded Pig. Incursion by Long-tailed Macaque result to minor damage of camera trap and its belts.

J. Other related conservation activities

Seedling collection for nursery use continued this month with total of 179 germinated seeds of Balangihan and 360 germinated seeds of Nato tree collected respectively. Propagation of Moringa stem also made this month with total 20 matured stems planted within the station vicinity.

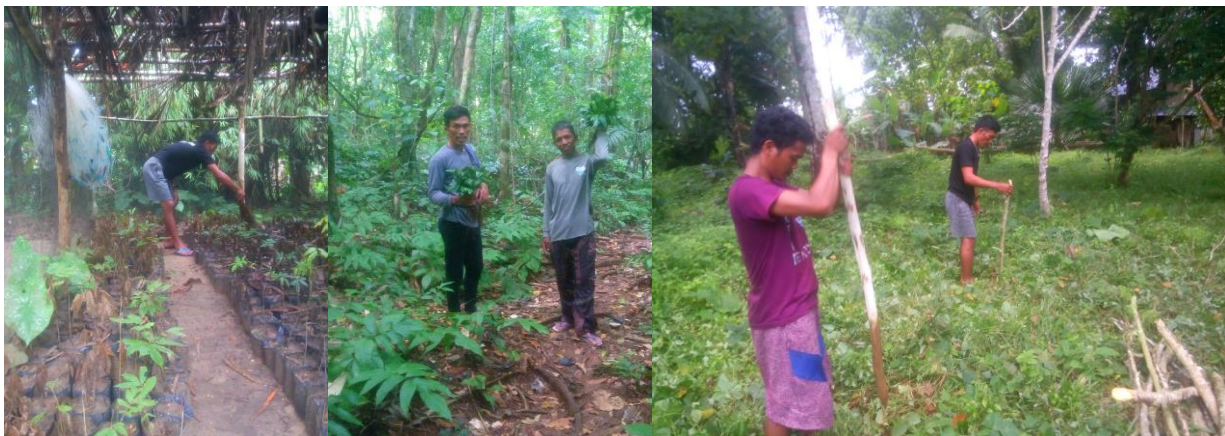


Figure 7. Nursery cleaning (left) wildling collection (center) and propagation of Moringga stem at wardens station vicinity (Photos: KFI 2021).

IV. ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

Presence of Philippine Cockatoos and Blue-naped Parrots as pets in local residences on mainland Balabac pose threats to the bird population which is at recovery stage after a decade-long poaching. This also indicate that local trading within the corridor continue despite Poblacion Balabac is in close proximity to residences/areas of most of the law enforcement

groups/agencies. An inventory of these pet animals should be done and if there are valid registration for these kept animals. Fish corral establishment should also be investigated.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Tighter law enforcement towards wildlife poaching, collection and possession is deemed necessary within Balabac. Assessment of registration requirements should be done.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are indebted to our wildlife wardens for their patience and work: Ismael S. Dela Cruz Jr., Deo E. Aplid and Ariel C. Omog. Likewise, we thank our escorts from SCAA, Philippine Army who restlessly secured us every monitoring visit. Thank you very much to the Jewelmer Corporation by providing the KFI team full assistance during every visit in Bugsuk island especially to Sir Jacques Christopher Branellec and Ms. Vianney Brossard. We also extend our appreciation to the Council members of Barangay Bugsuk, Council members of Barangay Pandanan and Local Government Unit of Balabac Municipality for making the conservation project more effective and successful.

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References:

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



23

Bilang ng nagawang patrolya



88.39

Kabuuang kilometrong naabot ng patrolya



25

Kabuuang oras ng patrolya



Bilang ng illegal na kailangang aksyunan



0

Bilang ng nai-report sa KFI



0

Bilang ng naaresto



68

Pinakamataas na bilang sa tulugan ng Katala



93

Bilang ng cavity nesters



11

Bilang ng naitalang namumunga at namumulaklak na puno



0

Nakuha ng mga silo o patibong



Anonymous Donor



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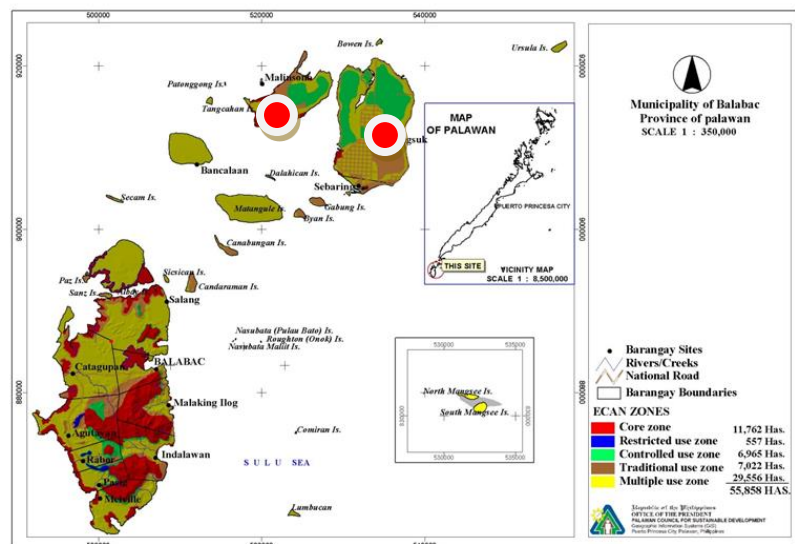


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II. PATROL TEAM AND EFFORT

A sum of 88.39km was covered and patrolled for this month at Pandanan Island and other important cockatoo sites (Sebaring). Forest patrolling was continuously made inside Pandanan Island while coastal patrolling were made once or thrice every month.

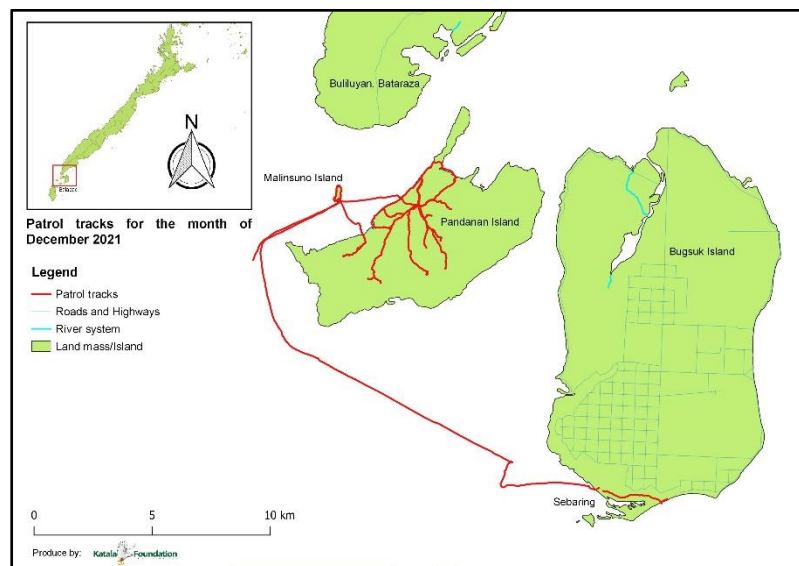


Figure 2. Patrol tracks for forest patrolling and coastal monitoring at Pandanan Island (Map: KFI 2021).

III. PATROL OBSERVATIONS

A. Wildlife observations

For this month, seven threatened bird species were recorded inside the forest of Pandanan Island represented by the following: Philippine Cockatoo with 68 individuals, Palawan Hornbill (48 indi.), Blue-naped Parrot (30 indi.), Blue-headed Racquet tail (9 indi.), Hill Mynah (6 indi.), Palawan scops Owl, Mantanani scops owl and Tabon Scrubfowl. Presence of Pied-imperial Pigeon and Great-billed Heron were recorded at Malinsuno Island throughout December.

Other wildlife records include: Blue-paradise Flycatcher, Great slaty Woodpecker, Green imperial Pigeon, Stork billed Kingfisher, White collard Kingfisher and Green sea turtle.

B. Cockatoo roost counts and food providing tree monitoring

A total of 68 roosting cockatoos was recorded as highest number at the traditional roost site while lowest count is 40 individuals. We think the persistent low counts at roost site are due to the following reasons: upcoming cockatoo breeding months and dispersal to its historical range (mainland balabac). As of this monitoring period, breeding pairs are common at their respective nest trees cleaning and preparing the nest holes.

For natural food supplies, only ten food providing plants were recorded throughout the monitoring period, these plants species are Alalod tree, Antipulo tree, Arimogdan tree, Balinad tree, Bago tree, Bubog tree, Ipil-ipil tree, Kaliyat vines, Namot tree, Magbaka-baka tree, Moringa plants, and Pagatpat tree.



Figure 3. Natural food source as of this month: Pods of Ipil-ipil tree (left), fruit of Balinad tree (center) and fruit of Pagatpat tree (Right, Photos: R.Antonio).

C. Community monitoring and threats observation

No transient local recorded within the visited community and settlement at Pandanan Island. For threats, two sites at western Pandanan was found with ongoing illegal logging activity, these are the area of Siminnop-Tagbinwan and Bodis-Tagbinwan. During our two consecutive patrolling efforts, we discovered 20 old growth forest trees were cut down using chainsaw by unknown local/operators. Of these 20 trees, nine of it situated at Siminnop-Tagbinwan and these are identified as: Bayoso tree (2 trees), Magloana tree (3 trees), Arisurang tree (1 tree) and Mangupak tree (3 trees). At Bodis-Tagbinwan, 11 old growth forest trees were found cut down by chainsaw, these trees are Ipil tree (2 trees), Impaw tree (1 tree), Bayoso tree (3 tree), Mangupak tree (2 trees) and Maglapaan tree (1 tree). All of these trees were sawed into different sizes and length. **All generated lumbers were hauled prior to our patrolling** (Fig.4).



Figure 4. Illegal logging activity recorded during patrolling at Tagbinwan-Siminnop, Pandanan Island (Photos: KFI 2021).

D. Secondary roost site monitoring

Number of roosting cockatoos at Barangay Sebaring yields from 2 to 10 individuals starting December 22. Monitoring was affected by torrential weather brought by northeast monsoon weather, moderate to strong northeast wind recorded during this period. Roost occupation of various sites were recorded from Gabinete's (Dec. 22, 2 Cockatoo), Bob Mayor (Dec. 23, 2 Cockatoo), Principe (Dec. 27, 28, 29 and Jan. 4 with 2-10 Cockatoos), other site reported is at Binasag, near the house of volunteer with 2 cockatoos on December 29. Food source from the sites are Pagatpat tree, Moringga pods, Ipil-ipil pods and Balinad fruits. No threats found nor discovered in the area by monitoring personnel.

E. Cavity nests checking and monitoring activities

Nest checking continued thru this period; additional 14 cockatoo nest trees were completely checked and visited. As breeding months is nearing more cockatoo breeding pairs are regularly recorded at the nest tree or within the vicinities. Nest hole cleaning and preparation is evident in all nest, dry with cockatoo soft feathers were seen inside each nest hole. No total occupation recorded so far as of this period. For Palawan Hornbill, 10 nest trees were checked yet no nest preparation observed as of yet. Hornbill pairs are recorded along the nest tree vicinities. Human activity was found from one of the cockatoo nest trees at Lapisan Forest, one Antipulo tree was nearly cut down just 10m distance from the nest tree. Chainsaw mark was found at the tree trunk near its base. Tree is still standing as of December monitoring. Identity of allegedly local cutter is being investigated.



Figure 5. Remnants of Cockatoo nest preparation from one of the nest tree (left) and chainsaw mark on Antipulo tree about 10m distance from cockatoo nest tree, Lapisan Forest (Photos: KFI 2021).

F. Other related conservation activities

Tree planting was made this month with a total of 654 forest tree seedlings (Fig. 6). These forest trees are Marapisa tree (91), Balangihan tree (170), Sear tree (189), Balinad tree (21), Sigurap tree (3), Bayoso tree (85), Amugis tree (95) and Baro tree. A total of 0.9ha was covered by the tree planting with maximum interval of 1.5m each plant. Other collected wildlings continue to undergo conditioning and will be planted by end of January.



Figure 6. Tree planting along Dalahican forest, Pandanan Island as of December (Photos: KFI 2021).

IV. ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

Illegal logging continued on Pandanan Island particular at the area of Tagbinwan-Siminnop and Bodis-Tagbinwan.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A tighter law enforcement towards environmental protection is deemed necessary within Balabac. Joint monitoring activities with Jewelmer company security and DENR must be pursued starting this January 2022 in order to avert further cuttings of both nest providing and high-valued trees in the area.

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