

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



21

Bilang ng nagawang patrolya



106.6

Kabuuang kilometrong naabot ng patrolya



19.9

Kabuuang oras ng patrolya



2

Bilang ng illegal na kailangang aksyunan



0

Bilang ng nai-report sa KFI



0

Bilang ng naaresto



67

Pinakamataas na bilang sa tulugan ng Katala



196

Bilang ng cavity nesters



15

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

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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

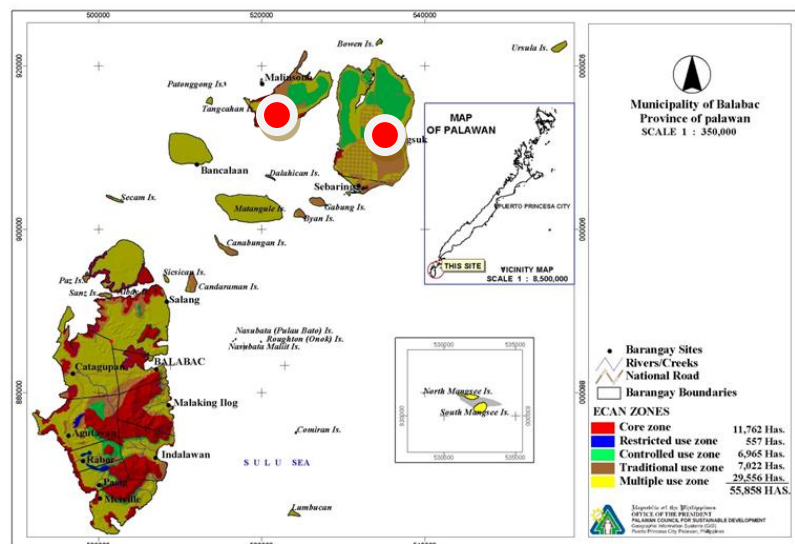


Figure 1. Location map of Pandanan and Bugsuk Island (red dots) in municipality of Balabac, Palawan (Map: PCSDS).

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 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. Increased number of Philippine Cockatoo breeding pairs on Pandanan/Bugsuk by at least 5% by 2024 (Baseline: average breeding pairs 2019 to 2021: 34.7).
2. Increased 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. Reduced threats in the area by 50% from 2022-2024.

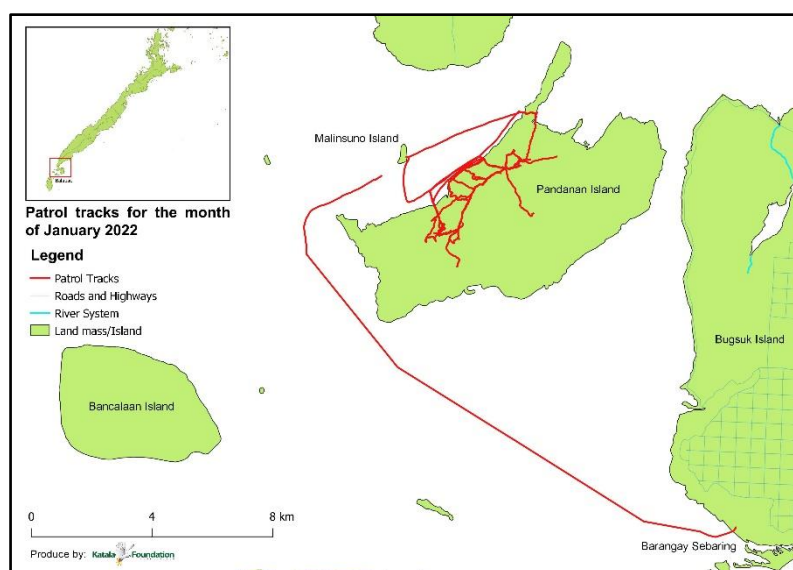
Methods

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, 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 106.6km was covered in Pandanan Island for this monitoring period. Frequent monitoring visit and forest patrolling were made at Tagbinwan forest where lot of illegal logging activity recorded.

Figure 2. Patrol tracks for forest patrolling and coastal monitoring at Pandanan Island (Map: KFI 2022).



III. PATROL OBSERVATIONS

A. Wildlife observations

Four threatened bird species continuously recorded in high numbers in Pandanan as of this period: Blue-naped Parrot, Palawan Hornbill, Hill mynah and Philippine Cockatoo. Other bird species noted during the monitoring event are Green imperial Pigeon, Crested serpent Eagle, White-bellied Sea eagle, Tabon Scrubfowl, Great slaty Woodpecker, Spot throated woodpecker and Pied imperial Pigeon. We did rapid count on January 26th of the latter which was about 2000 individuals roosting at Malinsuno Island.

Terrestrial mammals recorded were Long-tailed Macaque, Flying Squirrel, Southern Palawan tree Squirrel and Civet cat in Pandanan Island. Coastal monitoring recorded the Green sea turtle and Hawksbill sea turtle along the Pandanan Island waters.

B. Philippine Cockatoo and Palawan Hornbill nest monitoring

Complete nest checking and monitoring were made for 17 and 7 Philippine Cockatoo and Palawan Hornbill nests on Pandanan Island respectively. For the former, remnants of nest preparation made by breeding pairs were found in most nests like cut twigs and small branches (Fig. 3) and bite marks at nest entrance. Inside nest holes, soft/fine feather and some wing primaries were recorded by checker. Likewise for Palawan Hornbill, only one nest indicates preparation while the rest have no signs yet of visitation.



Figure 3. Nest tree preparation activities of the Philippine Cockatoo were documented on site (Photos: KFI 2022).

C. Philippine Cockatoo roost counts and food providing tree monitoring

Highest count taken this month is 67 roosting cockatoos while lowest count recorded is 13 individuals. Roosting cockatoos continue to drop on its low count as the breeding season takes in, more birds are expected to stay at their respective nest trees together with the 2021 new recruits which also turn as helpers during the breeding months. Weather conditions on site also affect the cockatoo counting. This month we observed visibility is reduced by fog especially during later afternoon until roosting time.

In terms of food source inside Pandanan Island, we recorded 15 plant species that are fruit-bearing this month. These are: Alalod, Badjang *Alocasia macrorrhizos*, Bago, Balinad, Balite *Ficus sp.*, Bubog *Sterculia foetida*, Daop vines, Dita vines, Kaliyat vines, Kapuk-gubat *Bombax ceiba*, Pagatpat *Sonneratia alba* Rangingi vines, Samburagat, Taluto *Pterocymbium tinctorium* and Tarungtung (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Recorded food plants at Pandanan Island: Dita vines (left) and Rangingi Vines (Right, Photos: RAntonio).

D. Community monitoring and threats observation

No transient local found nor recorded at the visited settlement of Dalahican, Magsakayan and Gabong at Pandanan Island. As of this month, we discovered 15 old growth trees that were intentionally cut off by allegedly local cutters. These trees are locally identified as: Antipulo (1), Bayoso *P.ponnetia* (4), Bubog *Sterculia foetida* (1), Dongkoling (2), Impaw (1), Ipil *Intsia bijuga* (3), Magloana (2) and Mararango (1). Most of these trees were sliced into lumber of different sizes and we saw traces of lumber hauling at the Tagbinwan docking area and possibly was done by boat during night time. As documented parts of some cut trees were left in the area (Fig. 5). We suspect these remnants would still be utilized given the chance. During the weeklong monitoring effort in the area, no chainsaw operation was heard or recorded during day time. It is likely that chainsaw operation is made during late afternoon unto evening hours.



Figure 5. A partially cut Magloana tree (left) and cut Ipil tree *Intsia bijuga* inside Tagbinwan forest (Photos: KFI 2022).

Furthermore, kaingin clearing was recorded at Ganob area (central Pandanan Island) as of January (Fig. 6). This clearing is allegedly owned by Naw Endang, resident of Sitio Dalahican, Pandanan Island and clearing is situated near an active cockatoo nest tree. We informed the person regarding the presence of the nest tree in the vicinity and further monitoring will be made.



Figure 6. A regenerated area being cleared for kaingin at Ganob forest, central Pandanan Island. The area is within the vicinity of active nest tree of Philippine Cockatoo (Photos: KFI 2022).

E. Secondary roost site monitoring

Highest count recorded at Sebaring was 14 cockatoos while the lowest count was 4 individuals. Cockatoos roost in two private properties. No disturbances noted as of this monitoring period. Food providing plants in the area are as follows: Balinad, Ipil-ipil and Pagatpat *Sonneratia alba*. Foraging on Pagatpat fruits was seen daily, especially during early morning, afternoon and before roost time. Cockatoos also reach Caradangao Island for foraging activity while no record of cockatoos on Bahayan Island this month.

F. Other related conservation activities

A total of 1,793 seedlings were collected this month and nurtured in our nursery. Collected forest tree seedlings are locally identified as food and nest providing, these are: Amugis, Balangihan tree, Balinad, Bayoso, *Bombax ceiba* or Kapok Gubat, Nato, Magnangka-nangka, Mangkupa gubat and Se-ar.



Figure 7. Maintenance of native tree nursery (Photos: KFI 2022).

IV. ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

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

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A tighter law enforcement and monthly joint monitoring activities by concerned parties/agencies are deemed necessary to avert further destruction. Visibility of law enforcement agencies would greatly help.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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