KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY

May 2022 SUMMARY

Pandanan and Bugsuk

Balabac, Palawan

19

Bilang ng nagawang patrolya

64.9

Kabuuang kilometrong naabot ng patrolya

52

Kabuuang oras ng patrolya

1

Bilang ng illegal na kailangang aksyunan

0

Bilang ng naaresto

20

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

82

Pinakamataas na bilang sa tulugan ng Katala

68

Bilang ng cavity nesters

425

Nakuhang pananim

0

Nakuhang mga silo o patibong ng mga buhay-ilang

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PHILIPPINE COCKATOO CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

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KFI PATROL AND MONITORING REPORT ON FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY PANDANAN AND BUGSUK ISLANDS, BALABAC

May 2022

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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.

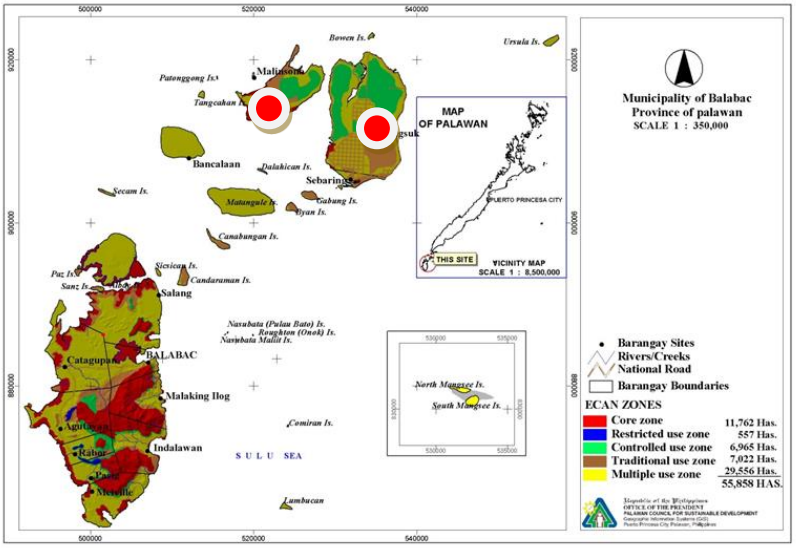

Figure 1. Location map of Pandanan and Bugsuk Island (red dots) in municipality of Balabac, Palawan (Map: PCSDS).

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,*

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

Patrolling and monitoring at Pandanan were conducted by wildlife wardens covering a total distance of 64.9km. Routine nest monitoring visit and intervention was made this month in all active and occupied Cockatoo and Hornbill nest trees within the island. While monitoring for new transient within the island settlements continued.

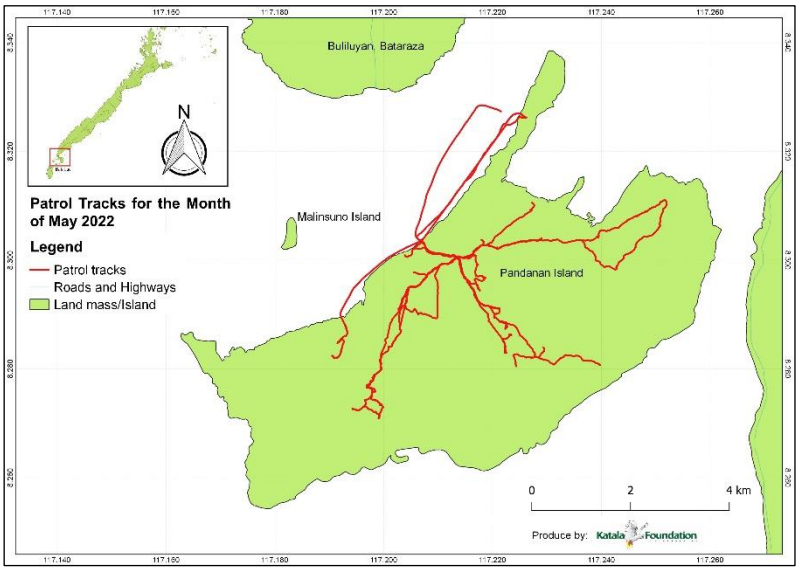

Figure 2. Patrol tracks at Pandanan island for this month of May 2022 (Map: KFI 2022).

III. PATROL OBSERVATIONS

A. Wildlife observations

Seven threatened bird species were recorded this month inside Pandanan Island: Blue-headed racquet tail, Blue-naped parrot, Hill Mynah, Mantanani scops Owl, Palawan Hornbill, Palawan scops Owl and Philippine Cockatoo. Other bird species recorded within this period were Green imperial pigeon, Spot throated woodpecker, Stork billed kingfisher and Tabon scrubfowl.

Other wildlife recorded include Monitor lizard, Long-tailed macaque and Flying squirrel while marine species like Green sea turtle and Hawksbill sea turtle continue to be found along the coastal waters of north to western Pandanan Island. Patrolling further recorded the presence Dark-eared treefrog *Polypedates macrotis* and freshwater crab species possibly *Geosesarma* sp.. Presence of these two species were found in northern Pandanan Island, trailing accidentally flush out the *P.macrotis* while freshwater crab was found in most Bayoso tree knotholes which also contain rainfed waters.

Figure 3: Dark-eared treefrog (left) and a freshwater crab (center and right). Both recorded during this month patrolling at Pandanan Island (Photos: RAntonio).

B. Philippine Cockatoo and Palawan Hornbill nest monitoring

Complete nest checking and monitoring activity was made in all active and occupied nest tree at Pandanan Island. In total 20 nest trees are active and contain cockatoo hatchlings (19 nest tree recorded active as of April reporting). Numbers of young cockatoo reach a total of 33 hatchlings this year and 31 of these were already banded with DENR 2022 monitoring leg band. Individual bird biometrics and blood samples were taken by monitoring team. No bird parasite found in all live young cockatoos; granular food is well observed in all birds' crop which signify abundance of food providing plants in the island. Low hatchling number this year is attributed to the significant loss of cockatoo eggs; where 18 eggs were either missing/lost or spoiled/rotten. Spoiled eggs are normally thrown out by parent cockatoo while other eggs were already degraded inside the nest chamber especially when nest hole's inclination is directly to catch rain. Meanwhile, seven successful fledglings were already recorded this period from three nests. Follow up monitoring on these nest trees were made and no human intrusion recorded. Continued monitoring is set in all occupied nest trees until all banded young successfully fledge out from their respective nests.

Figure 4. Leg band application and collection of blood sample of cockatoo in Pandanan Island (left and center) and destroyed cockatoo egg, shells found below the nest branch (Right, Photos: KFI 2022).

For Palawan Hornbill, only one nest was found active and occupied this month and contain one egg. Other nests were observed to exhibit nest preparation and visitation by possible hornbill occupants. Upon further observation we noticed the presence of forest trees seeds from hornbill fecal matters while hole sealant also found in some nests.

C. Philippine Cockatoo roost counts and food providing tree monitoring

Cockatoo count at the roost site is starting to increase this month, highest count taken by team is 82 during the last week of the month while lowest number recorded is 12. Low count of cockatoo is mainly affected by the weather condition in the area during the counting event. Torrential rainfall was recorded frequently in southern part of Palawan.

In terms of cockatoo and wildlife food source eighteen forest trees, two vines and a palm species were recorded on fruit bearing stage this month. These plants were represented by the following: *Alocasia macrorrhizos,* Aloyaw, Amugis, Antipulo, Bat-bat palm, Bago, Balinad, Balite *Ficus sp*., Bayoso, Buyon, Daop-daop vines, Kaliyat vines, Kamilet, Magdita-dita tree, Magnangka-nangka, Mainggit *Cananga odorata*, Marapisa, Marampuso, Rangingi vines, Se-ar and Tarungtong (Fig. 5).

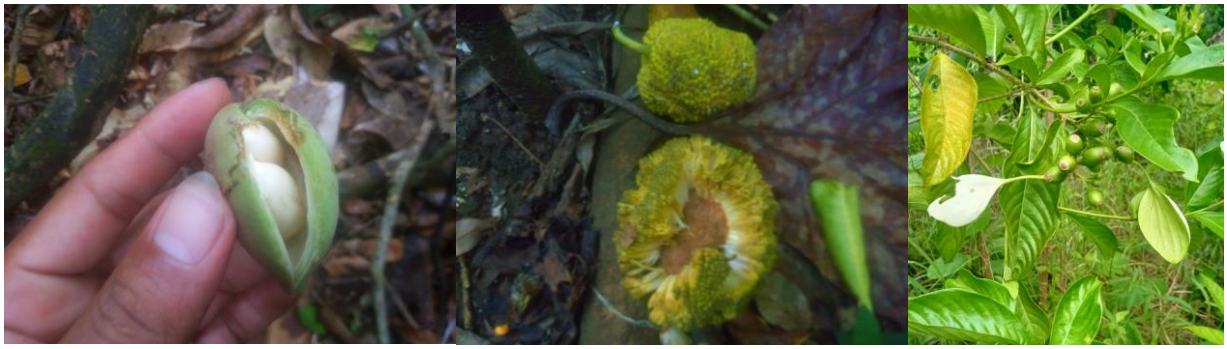

Figure 5. Recorded food source of cockatoo, hornbill and other wildlife. Pods of Balinad (left), fruit of Antipulo (center) and fruit of Buyon (Right, Photos: AOmog).

D. Community monitoring and threats observation

One new local transient was recorded at the area of Bodis, Pandanan Island as of May 26, 2022. This local came from Barangay Sumbiling, Bataraza Palawan and temporarily resides at Piping Ading house in Pandanan. The said person identified himself as Jerry Boyla, 67 years and allegedly a dentist. As recorded by our team this person is conducting a house-to-house dental extraction within sitios of Pandanan and also during market day or tabuan in the island. Proper coordination with the barangay was advised to this individual.

In terms of threats, one newly cut Antipulo tree *Artocarpus blancoi* was discovered by patroller along the Bodis Forest during May 24, 2022 forest patrolling. The tree was cut using axe to avoid being detected by patrollers. During the discovery the tree is still intact and no severing by powered saw found. No locals or individual seen on site during the discovery, regular monitoring visit is set on this particular site.

E. Nursery works and seedling collections

Collection of 425 forest tree seedlings was made on May 18, 2022, these are food and nest providing tree species. Currently our nursery area holds a total of 1285 native tree seedlings of the following species: Amugis, Bayoso, Balinad, Balangihan, Nato, Magnangka-nangka, Se-ar and Taluto seedlings respectively (Fig. 6). Tree planting is set on the following month while collection will be continued.

Figure 6. Forest tree seedlings preparation inside the nursery area of KFI at Pandanan Island (Photo: KFI 2022).

IV. **ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN**

Entry of non-island resident in Pandanan particularly those from mainland Palawan become more frequent and apparently without proper coordination from village council or on designated purok personnel. Recorded personnel and transient local were advised to log in or pay courtesy at least on nearest village appointed personnel. Records show that illicit activity in Pandanan usually is tied or linked to an outsider, transient or visiting locals who have close relative in the island. So we have to keep guard of all entries on the island especially in this season.

V. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

A monthly monitoring visit by village council or designated personnel is highly suggested within the known sitios/settlement in the island and pursued to intensely monitor to avert any problems. Possibly to regulate these visitations in certain times of the year is an option to take.

VI. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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