

Kids rescue juvenile owl, victim of habitat loss

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The rescued juvenile owl.

A JUVENILE Philippine scops owl, rescued by a group of children, was recently turned over by concerned residents to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The turnover was facilitated by officials of Barangay Tagpos, Binangonan, Rizal, led by Kagawad Donardo Funilas.

The owl was received by DENR officials led by Environmental Protection and Enforcement Task Force chief, Executive Director Nilo Tamoria, Penro-Rizal Technical Assistant Leonardo Punzal and Penro-Cavite Forester Ma. Angela Tamoria.

The endangered scops owl, scientifically known as *Otus Megalotis* is endemic to the Philippines. It could have been abandoned by its parents after the destruction of their local habitat, surmised Tamoria.

“The scops owl was found perched at an alatiros tree by children playing at the foot of a hill that was once a forested area,” he said. He added that the area was recently developed into a human settlement area.

“Actually, the owl could have been abandoned. It’s a victim of habitat loss,” he said.

The children tried to set the bird free but it couldn’t fly. A certain Irma Diaz, a parent of one child and a resident of St. Anthony Subdivision, Barangay Tagpos, Binangonan, then took custody of the owl and reported it to the barangay.

Tamoria lauded residents for heeding the call of Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu not to harm wild animals, as more sightings of wild animals were observed in many parts of the country since Covid-19 forced many parts of the country on lockdown.

Cimatu had appealed last week to the public not to harm wild animals if they show up in urban areas amid increasing reports of sightings, particularly in Region 4A or the Calabarzon region.

“With the increased sightings of wild animals occurring in the Calabarzon region, it is important that we remind the public to leave them alone, unless they are sick, orphaned or injured as we have wildlife experts who can take care of them,” Cimatu said in a statement.

Early this month, two juvenile species of Brahminy kite (*Haliastur indus*) were spotted and rescued in Barangay Santo Tomas, Mabini, Batangas.

The DENR chief said it appears that the restrained human activities resulting from the ECQ was helping nature and biodiversity rediscover their natural spaces.

“According to our wildlife experts, animals feel much more comfortable going around because there are fewer people in the streets and public spaces because of the continuing ECQ,” Cimatu pointed out.

Cimatu warned that human interference with wildlife could result in disease or injury, and taking the animal out of the wild limits its chances of surviving.

Where an animal is in need of help, Cimatu said it requires specialized care to recover and return to the wild, that is why it is important to report cases of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife to the BMB.

Possession, transportation and importation of wild animals are regulated under Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.

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