

Rescued birds of prey placed under quarantine, to undergo rehab at DENR facility in QC

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The two juvenile birds of prey rescued by wildlife law enforcers last week in Barangay Sto. Tomas, Mabini, Batangas, will undergo rehabilitation at the Wildlife Rescue Center of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Quezon City.

“Right now, they are under quarantine and being observed. In two to three weeks, we will start deworming them,” says Glenn S. Maguad, officer in charge of the rescue center.

Maguad said the pair of Brahminy kites, not Philippine hawk-eagles as earlier reported, are about 6 to 7 months old. Brahminy kite, like the hawk-eagle, is an endangered species, but are comparatively smaller and sturdier.

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They weigh only up to 700 grams upon maturity, while hawk-eagles can weigh up to 1.2 kilos.

“They are what we call *lawin* while hawk-eagles are what we call *agila*,” Maguad clarified.

The two rescued Brahminy kites were earlier thought to be hawk-eagles by their captors, but upon careful examination by DENR wildlife experts, confirmed they are Brahminy kites, or the common *lawin*. Nevertheless, Maguad said Brahminy kite are also on the endangered species list.

But there’s a catch in rehabilitating these rescued birds of prey. Because they were rescued while they were still a chick and unable to fly, they are already imprinted with their rescuers and have become domesticated, highly dependent on humans for their food, says Rogelio Demelletes, a wildlife law enforcer who facilitated their safe transfer to the DENR Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon City.

The two were being fed with fresh chicken by their rescuers, including 22-year-old Christian Atienza who decided to turn them over to authorities.

“We learned that one time when they were ready to fly, the rescuer tried to set them free. But the two went back and never left the area,” he said.

But Maguad said he is confident that they can rehabilitate the two juvenile birds and train them to become hunters during rehabilitation.

“These are hardy species and they are survivors,” said Maguad. Unlike eagles that hunt live prey, Brahminy kites are opportunistic hunters and are sometimes scavenging, feeding on dead animals, or carcasses.

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“In two to three weeks, we will start cleansing them. They will be dewormed and we will make sure they are free of parasites,” Maguad said.

He said the two juvenile birds are undernourished and need to be properly fed first and treated before joining other birds of prey at the park.

Maguad is confident that the two Brahminy kites will eventually learn to fend for themselves and be ready to be released back into the wild.

“Unlike other birds of prey, Brahminy kites easily adapt to their environment,” he said. The challenge, he said, is to make them wild, teaching them to avoid humans.

He said for them to learn to hunt on their own, the two will be put in a cage with other adult Brahminy kites.

“During rehabilitation, there will be less human interaction so that they will learn to fear humans and become wild,” he said.

According to Maguad, it will take the two birds more than a year before they are fully rehabilitated and ready to be released back into the wild.

“Once they are ready, we will release them back to where they were found because for sure, their nest is still there and the parents if they are still alive, will call for them,” he said.

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