

Rescued PHL eagle ‘Makilala-Hiraya’ finds its new home

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

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Philippine eagle ‘Makilala-Hiraya’

Despite the gloom brought by Covid-19 pandemic, a bright spot in wildlife biodiversity shone last June when a young Philippine eagle was rescued and released back into the wild a month later.

The majestic Philippine eagle, an apex predator, rarely settles for less when hunting for prey.

The same goes in finding a suitable territory where it will reign supreme.

Finding a home

Such was the consideration in finding a new home for the three- to four-year-old female Philippine eagle that was rescued in Barangay Kisante in Makilala, North Cotabato, near the Mount Apo Natural Park.

A suitable home was found, courtesy of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) together with the local government of Makilala. It brought renewed hope for the eagle's survival.

Named Makilala-Hiraya, the eagle's first name was given by its rescuers, after the town where it was found, while the second name, which means "the fruit of one's hopes, dreams and aspirations," was from the employees of Energy Development Corp. (EDC).

Having recovered from its injuries and ready to brave the wild once more, Makilala-Hiraya was released last month in her new home in the Mount Apo Geothermal Reservation in North Cotabato under the protection of the EDC.

The energy company accepted PEF's proposal to release Makilala-Hiraya at a site within its geothermal reservation.

Protecting 'the eagle'

Committed to protect Makilala-Hiraya, EDC, together with PEF, has trained 20 forest rangers who will monitor the eagle in her new home in Mount Apo Geothermal Reservation.

EDC will help monitor the young female eagle in the next six months, to make sure that she is able to survive.

A survivor

The young eagle was being mobbed by a flock of crows when it was found and rescued by DENR-Kidapawan personnel who took temporary custody of the injured bird of prey before turning it was over to the PEF for rehabilitation.

According to PEF, it is necessary to secure the bird's release and ensure its continued safety in the wild so that it can find a mate, nest and contribute to the continued survival of the critically endangered Philippine eagle.

“Releasing this reduced eagle is important in keeping the wild population thriving. Protecting the existing wild population is as significant as breeding the eagle in captivity to add new birds to our forests. There is also an opportunity to discover the other Philippine eagles in the area by monitoring this eagle after its release.” said Dr. Jayson Ibanez, PEF director for Research and Conservation, in statement.

A continuous commitment

EDC’s commitment to monitor Makilala-Hiraya is a continuous commitment not only to environmental conservation but also to going beyond sustainability, having been a partner of PEF for nearly two decades now, said Atty. Allan Barcena, EDC’s head of corporate social responsibility and public relations.

Sought for comment via e-mail, Barcena added that “adopting” Makilala-Hiraya, in a way, brings pride for men and women of EDC, as the Philippine eagle remains in the brink of extinction.

It is listed as a critically endangered species, as there are approximately only around 400 pairs of this monkey-eating eagle left in the wild.

For the EDC helping save a Philippine eagle is like saving the species one eagle at a time.

“This opportunity to save our national bird doesn’t only bring pride for us in EDC,” Barcena said. “It likewise brings us closer to our mission of achieving a regenerative future, a path that we and the rest of the Lopez group have chosen because it is the only way to create lasting value for our stakeholders and for our planet,” he added.

Adopt-an-eagle program

EDC has earlier adopted another Philippine eagle named “Geothermica” in 2012 through PEF’s Adopt-an-Eagle program.

Geothermica is one of two pairs sent by the government to Singapore as part of its conservation and protection efforts.

The protection of the bird remains a priority for the company’s biodiversity conservation and monitoring program (BCMP).

“EDC fully supports the protection and conservation of the Philippine eagle. We continue to work with the [PEF] and our local governments toward protecting them and their natural habitat by increasing and maintaining forest cover,” he said.

Lush forest

The 701-hectare protected geothermal reservation surrounding EDC's 108-megawatt Mount Apo Geothermal Project (MAGP) is an ideal home for the Philippine eagle.

It is well-maintained, with lush forest that is home to 39 species of mammals and 165 species of birds, enough for a pair of Philippine eagle to thrive in.

Fortunately, the territory is a geothermal reservation that is protected against destructive human activities, including mining, quarrying, logging, poaching or hunting.

High hopes

DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, in a recent BusinessMirror interview, said conservation efforts of the Philippine eagle is paying off.

He attributed this to the strong partnership between the DENR, the PEF and various private institutions.

"Lately, there are more reported sightings of the Philippine eagle. Just last month, we released [into the wild] a rescued Philippine eagle. These are good signs," Calderon said.

More importantly, Calderon said the partnership with various institutions, including the private sector, paved the way for the expansion of forest cover in the Philippines, and the strong protection of biodiversity that includes prey for apex predators like the Philippine eagle.

"We can say that because of our expanding forest, there are more areas where the Philippine eagle can thrive," he said.

Sustainable development

EDC is one of the world's largest geothermal producers and the country's leading renewable-energy company.

For over 40 years, it has been implementing comprehensive environmental management programs that help enhance the ecosystem and corporate social responsibility programs that ensure inclusive growth for its partner communities.

It is a subsidiary of First Gen Corp., the country's largest clean-energy company, with a portfolio that included natural gas, geothermal, solar, wind and hydro.

EDC's 1,499MW total installed capacity generates 42 percent of the country's total renewable energy, with its 1,204MW geothermal portfolio accounting for 62 percent of the country's total installed geothermal capacity, and putting the country on the map as the world's third-largest geothermal producer.

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