

Philippine eagle freed in Sarangani's 'last frontier'

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Philippine Eagle / Credit: PEC

A rehabilitated juvenile Philippine eagle was recently released to its habitat less than a month after being found in Mt. Busa, a key biodiversity area in Maitum town in Sarangani.

The eaglet, named Sarangani Pride by Senator Manny Pacquiao, was found dehydrated and malnourished in the upland village of Batian on Jan. 2 and was brought by the municipal government staff to the Philippine Eagle Center (PEC) in Davao City.

The release team is composed of Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) director for conservation Dr. Jayson Ibanez, PEC executive director Dennis Salvador, Maitum OIC Menro Nanette Nacional, CENRO Kiamba Jhing Guilao, DENR Region 12 representatives, and Sarangani Information Office.

Salvador said the eagle was released on the basis of its health and physical conditions. During its rehabilitation, an X-ray result showed an embedded pellet in its left groin and had to be nurtured into prime condition.

A team of biologists will be monitoring the bird's condition for 10 days.

"Our staff will be monitoring this eagle post-release via satellite and radio transmitter. We want to make sure that this eaglet will be accepted back by its parents and fed until it fully fledges," Salvador said.

According to Sarangani Environmental Conservation and Protection Center (ECPC) executive director Emma Nebran, the forest where the eaglet was released is considered the last frontier of the province.

“Mt. Busa is the remaining forest we have here in Sarangani, and we must protect, conserve and preserve the biodiversity that we have here,” she revealed.

She added that the Provincial Government, headed by Governor Steve Solon, supports efforts in protecting Mt. Busa and has committed funds to support conservation initiatives in the area.

The 114,000-hectare Mt. Busa, which covers the towns of Maasim, Kiamba, and Maitum, is threatened by land conversion (to farmland), kaingin (slash-and-burn), wildlife hunting, illegal logging and mining.

In a related development, Maitum Mayor Alexander Bryan Reganit said the municipal government will declare the barangays of Batian and Tuanadatu as protected areas.

He pointed out that the presence of the Philippine Eagle in the forest of Maitum shows that it is still pristine, healthy and is worth conserving.

He said local communities can help in the conservation by informing local authorities in case of sightings of birds in distress.

The PEC estimates that there are only about 400 pairs of eagles left in the wild, and can be found in Mindanao, Samar, Leyte, and Luzon.

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