

Philippine Eagle Retrieval Operation
Kalabugao, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon
March 24, 2008



Submitted by:

Barbette Rustia
IEC Officer



Philippine Eagle Foundation, VAL Learning Village, Ruby St., Marfori Heights, Davao City, 8000

Tel. No. 082 224-3021 Fax No. 082 224-3022

Email: info@philippineagle.org Website: www.philippineagle.org

Introduction

In previous retrieval operations, rescued Philippine eagles were either shot or hit by their captors. This shows that hunting continues to be a threat to Philippine Eagles in the wild. In the forest, they still seem to be vulnerable to human persecution.

The Philippine Eagle Center (PEC) has rescued 61 eagles that were either shot or trapped. To date, only 19 of these birds are at the PEC. Some of them were released back to their forest homes after successful rehabilitation while others died because they were either too injured to be saved or too sick to be cured.

Eagle rescues happen almost each year and the PEF and the DENR has been working together to care, aide and rehabilitate birds in distress. On March 24, 2008 a young Philippine Eagle was again rescued from the forests of Calabugao in Impasug-ong town of Bukidnon. The details of the rescue operation are described below.

Retrieval Operation

On March 24, 2008, the PEF team temporarily withdrew from tracking and monitoring a recently released Philippine Eagle (Kagsabua) in Sumilao, Bukidnon to rescue a captive juvenile Philippine Eagle in San Isidro, a small community in Kalabugao, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon. This community is about three hours drive from Malaybalay City, the province's capital.

The PEF retrieval team, composed of Animal Keeper 1 Edison Dayos, Field Biologist Giovanne Tampos, IEC Officer Barbette Rustia and Field Technician Adriano Oxales, coordinated with DENR-CENRO in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. The PEF team headed for San Isidro and was accompanied by Forester 1 Carlos Bagonoc. At 5:00 in the afternoon, the team arrived in San Isidro and checked the 20 sq. meter abandoned sari-sari store where the eagle was housed.

The eagle was disheveled and was on a concreted floor where eagle feces is scattered. Its right leg was tied to a banana trunk with a plastic straw.

Toto Demana, the eagle captor, said that he captured the bird on March 20, 2008 while he was on his way home from gathering abaca fibers (lanot) in the forests that he needed for making broomsticks. He narrated that moments after he heard a loud wing slap above him, he saw the eagle flying towards him which he interpreted as an attack from the bird. On instinct, he slapped the bird on its head with his slippers which allegedly made the bird powerless. "Pila ra man gud nang kusog sa langgam, mao tong nakuyapan dayon" (the bird is not as strong so I over-powered it), Demano explained.

He placed the bird on an empty sack and took it with him. He then gave the eagle to Loloy Damang, the community's purok leader, who took care of the bird until the team arrived. They reported fed the eagle initially with pork, and live chicks given twice each day thereafter.

Philippine Eagle Foundation, VAL Learning Village, Ruby St., Marfori Heights, Davao City, 8000

Tel. No. 082 224-3021 Fax No. 082 224-3022

Email: info@philippineagle.org Website: www.philippineagle.org

Field Accomplishment Report: Philippine Eagle Retrieval Operation

The team left by 6 PM and reached the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City by 1:30 AM of March 25, 2008. Named "Kalabugao", the rescued juvenile Philippine Eagle is currently at the PEC's quarantine area, at cage QAHC #2, where it will be medicated and consistently monitored.

Discussion

It has been noted that for the past retrieval operations, eagle captors usually expect and ask for a reward, thinking that they deserve it. Toto Demana had the same motivation for keeping the bird alive. After the rescue, he expected a reward from the PEF.

This is a classic problem that DENR and PEF encounter. Apparently, a lot of people are still unaware of our wildlife law (RA 9147 or the Wildlife Protection and Conservation Act) which prohibits capturing, shooting, trapping, harming or even possessing Philippine Eagles and wildlife in general. Because of such ignorance of the law and the misinformation about rewards, people tend to get interested in taking eagles from the wild and turning it over to the authorities in exchange for money.

Some high ranking government officials unknowingly contribute to this misconception when they give money to captors as a gesture of appreciation of their initiatives to help out and facilitate a rescue. Although well meaning, these gestures can send the wrong message to the community. In the uplands where people are mostly poor, news about these rewards can easily be misinterpreted.

Meanwhile, the law protecting the Philippine Eagle and its habitat needs to be enforced faithfully and vigilantly, and the civil society needs to get involved. Since the Philippine Wildlife Act was enacted in 1996, only a single eagle hunter in Bukidnon was tried and convicted in a Philippine court. Prosecution of violators certainly needs to be enforced if the Philippine government would want to know that they are serious in enforcing the law.

More people must become aware of the law, particularly those in the uplands and living near forests where the eagles live. They must also be encouraged to appreciate and take part in appreciating the Philippine Eagle as a natural heritage which they should protect through their own little, but important, ways.

Recommendations

We recommend the following as follow-up activities:

1. Conduct of a joint DENR-PEF information-education campaign in the area where the eagle was found, so that:

- the people may fully understand the status and importance of these Philippine Eagles and the environment

Philippine Eagle Foundation, VAL Learning Village, Ruby St., Marfori Heights, Davao City, 8000

Tel. No. 082 224-3021 Fax No. 082 224-3022

Email: info@philippineeagle.org Website: www.philippineeagle.org

Field Accomplishment Report: Philippine Eagle Retrieval Operation

- the people's knowledge about this magnificent bird is reinforced and updated
- any misconceptions about the rewards are clarified and corrected

2. A joint DENR-PEF survey to locate the nesting pair and their nests at Kalabugao and have the nesting territory declared and managed as a protected area under RA 9147 through community-based conservation.

3. If found fit, release of the rescued juvenile Philippine Eagle to a suitable and safe hack site (soft-release site) so it can have the chance to be a part of the breeding wild population and contribute offspring to the dwindling eagle population. We also recommend that the juvenile bird undergo standard screening and training, including agility tests, medical screening and electric pole aversion training to prepare it for an eventual release.

Acknowledgements

The PEF retrieval team extends its gratitude to Kalabugao Brgy. Captain Miguel Jitgano for making the retrieval possible; he is responsible in informing and enlightening his constituents about the status and importance of the Philippine Eagle even before the actual retrieval operation. The team would also like to thank Toto Demano, Loloy Damang and his wife Dely, for the eagle custody prior to its retrieval; to DENR-CENRO and Forrester Carlos Bagonoc for their assistance during the retrieval operation.

Philippine Eagle Foundation, VAL Learning Village, Ruby St., Marfori Heights, Davao City, 8000

Tel. No. 082 224-3021 Fax No. 082 224-3022

Email: info@philippineeagle.org Website: www.philippineeagle.org

ADMISSION HEALTH REPORT

Species: Avian

Common Name: Philippine Eagle

Adopted Name: Kalabugao

Age: juvenile, approximately 1 year old or less

Sex: Female

Weight: 4.4 kg

Date of Capture: March 20, 2008

Captor: Toto Demano

Origin: Mt. Kaatuan, Purok San Isidro, Brgy. Kalabugao, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon

Date Reported to PEF: March 23, 2008

Date of Retrieval: 5:30 pm/ March 24, 2008

Date of Admission: 1:30 am/March 25, 2008

INITIAL PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Weight: 4.4 kg
Hydration: OK
Cloaca: Clean
Eyes: Clear
Ears: Clean
Feathers: Soiled with dirt
Wings: Frayed
Prognosis: Good

XRAY Results:

- Foreign object (gun pellet) noted on the right leg
- Fracture on the left collar bone
- Inflamed left breast muscle