

**Update Report on Monitoring Tagged Philippine Eagle “Kalabugao” in Mt Tago, Guihean,
Impasugong, Bukidnon from April 1 to 7, 2015**

by

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INTRODUCTION

Philippine Eagle “Kalabugao” is a rehabilitated eagle which has been living independently in the wild since she was released in Mt Kitanglad Range Natural Park (MKRNP) on October 2009. After a year, she dispersed towards the adjacent mountain of Mt Tago using riparian forests along Kulaman and Manigma Rivers as dispersal route. *Kalabugao* was rescued at the eastern slopes of Mount Tago in Barangay Kalabugao (her namesake) in 2008 when she was suspected to be still less than a year old.

On December 21, 2014, a farmer trapped her after she allegedly hunted a domestic pig. The farmer reportedly used half of the pig’s carcass as trap bait which the eagle left behind after feeding. The bird was rescued by DENR and LGU Manolo Fortich, and was later turned over to PEF for examination, and rehabilitation, if needed. Fortunately, the bird had no major injuries save for a minor bruise at the webbing of its left wing. Inspection also showed that *Kalabugao* had a small region in her belly that is without feathers. This “naked” region appears to be a “brood patch”, which suggests that the female bird could have started breeding already. After further tests and medication, she was cleared for release.

This report highlights the result of pre-release, release and post-release monitoring activities for Philippine Eagle “Kalabugao” from March 31-April 7, 2015.

PARTICULARS

Pre-release activities

PEF biologists Jayson Ibanez and Giovane Tampos did a recon to coordinate eagle release with the DENR, LGU and community partners. On March 20, the duo visited the DENR-CENRO Manolo Fortich Office and relayed the plans for release. Similarly, they also conferred the release plan with the MENRO of Manolo Fortich. Everyone agreed to a release on March 31, 2015. They then drove straight to Cagayan de Oro City and met with DENR Regional Eagle Watch Team (REWT) Leader to again relay the release plans. After adequate briefing, the date of the release became firm.

The following day the duo drove to the mountains where *Kalabugao* was trapped in 2014 and searched a possible release site. A suitable site along the western slopes of Mt Tago in Barangay was selected which overlooks Guihian River. The eagle release was also coordinated with the Barangay Captain of Guihian and assisting personnel from the community were indentified. On the way home, Ibanez and Tampos dropped by the local government of Impasugong and cleared the release with its MENRO.

Transport and Release



Biologists Giovane Tamos and Ron Taraya secure the kennel holding the Philippine Eagle close to the camp.

On board an air-conditioned pick-up, eagle *Kalabugao* was transported from the Philippine Eagle Center (PEC) to Mt Tago on March 30, 2015. Accompanied by Veterinarian Ana Lascano and several PEF staff, the team reached the release site at dusk. PEF Biologists camped out in the mountain with the eagle nestled inside a cage (dog kennel) in a secured area close to the camp. To avoid over-crowding at the camp site, the rest of the support team spent the night at the nearest resort. They then re-joined the PEF Biologists early the following day for the release.

The release happened after 8:00 AM. Under a clear, summer sky *Kalabugao* was freed. Immediately after the wire door was opened, *Kalabugao* hopped out and jumped to her freedom. As expected from a fit bird, the eagle and flapped and flew out of view towards the forests in a matter of seconds. Representatives from the LGU of Manolo Fortich and Barangay Guihian as well as CENRO personnel assisted during the release. The whole release event was documented by a film crew from Cornell University and Neil Rettig Productions. Before the team descended the mountain, *Kalabugao* flew and soared in circles before gliding towards the thick forests above Guihian River.

Post-release monitoring



PEF Biologist Ron Taraya tracks and search for *Kalabugao* using a Telonics TR4 receiver

After her release from the cage, the eagle was tracked and monitored. Accompanied by two Indigenous trail masters, PEF Biologist Ron Taraya followed her movements from April 1 to 7, 2015. A total of 50 hours was spent detecting signals from the eagle's radio transmitter. A pre-selected observation post (N8.42105° E125.02158°) was occupied for 8 hours each day, starting from 0800 to 1600 hrs. Daily weather was predominantly sunny. There were no rains during the one-week monitoring. *Kalabugao* was spotted twice only. The first was in the afternoon after the release. She spent more than three hours sitting on a tree not far from the release site. During the whole time, she was doing nothing except occasional grooming. The second visual was on April 3 at around 1400 hr on a *Falcatta* tree one kilometer below the release site. Thereafter, she was never seen.

The tracking team relied on the strength of the radio signals for clues about the direction of her movement. Within the first few days, her signals were moving away from the release site towards the thick and highly inaccessible peak of Mt Tago. On April 5 at around 1000 hrs, faint signals totally disappeared. None were also detected in the next two days of tracking. Satellite readings affirmed the results of ground monitoring. *Kalabugao* moved towards the peak and slowly behind the mountain, well out of the receivers range.

Next steps

We will continue to monitor *Kalabugao* remotely through her satellite GPS transmitter. As needed, ground tracking will be administered too. The GPS unit is expected to last for a maximum of three years. Hopefully, the transmitters will lead us to her nesting site should she pair up and begin nesting.

Acknowledgement

We thank the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund and the San Diego Zoo for support to public education and the satellite telemetry project, respectively. The Peregrine Fund sponsors and assists with GPS data collection and analyses. We also thank the local governments of Manolo Fortich, Impasug-ong, and Guihian for the assistance and support to the release. DENR-Region X and CENRO Manolo Fortich also assisted with the release. The eagle release and monitoring is possible through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the DENR through the Biodiversity Management Bureau.