



History of the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Programme

Until c. 1980 the Philippine cockatoo was a common species found throughout the Philippine archipelago (Delacour & Mayr, 1946; DuPont, 1971). Since then 60-90% decline in the population has occurred as a result of human activities (Lambert, 1994; Collar et al., 1998). In 1994, approximately 1000-4000 birds are estimated to survive in the wild (Tabaranza, unpubl.; Lambert, 1994), with c. 70-75% of these in the Province of Palawan, now the major stronghold of the species (Lambert, 1994; Juniper & Parr, 1998). Recent estimates by Widmann (2001) suggest less than 1000 individuals in the wild are left.

A field survey conducted in 1991 by Dr F. Lambert on behalf of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, confirmed the degree of threat to *C. haematuropygia* and in June 1992 the species was transferred to Appendix 1 of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) (IUCN, 1992) and until now classified as Critically Endangered by IUCN (1998). In 1992 St-Martin-La-Plaine Zoo was invited by the European Endangered Species Program (EEP) Executive Office to coordinate a captive-breeding program. Marc Boussekey, as the scientific advisor of St-Martin-La-Plaine Zoo, France, initiated an in-situ conservation project on Cabayugan, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan project in 1992 and facilitated the European-coordinated captive breeding program called EEP (European Endangered species Program) under the EAZA umbrella (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, Amsredam, Netherlands). Boussekey is still officially the European co-ordinator of the Red-Vented Cockatoo EEP publishing every year the European Studbook for this species.

In 1997, Marc visited Rasa Island after receiving reports of resident Katala on the island. He realized the potential for cockatoo conservation on the island. Armed with enthusiasm and with firm determination, he convinced Peter Widmann, a German biologist and ornithologist, to initiate a conservation program that same year. Peter invited Indira Lacerna in 1998 to conduct the stakeholders analysis and together with Siegfred Diaz and the Tagbanua community, the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program was born.

In mid 1998, the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program was launched in the municipality of Narra with 23-25 Katala on Rasa Island. Among the first activity was to organize a consultative meeting and planning workshop with stakeholders like poachers, claimants of lots on Rasa, residents of the nearby fishing villages, representatives of the Local Government Units and relevant agencies. This forum set the goals to be achieved in the coming two years. The most important were: the conservation of the endangered cockatoo and its habitat, Rasa, through the implementation of a wardens scheme, livelihood projects for key stakeholders and intensive public relations and information campaigns.

From start of 1999, the cockatoo population showed clear signs of recovery. In 2008 the cockatoo population hit the 200 individual mark since the inception of the project. The area has become the core habitat not only of the Philippine Cockatoo but also of other globally threatened or near-threatened bird species. At present, similar strategies are applied in two other municipalities in Palawan (Dumaran in the north where remnant populations occur and in Rizal in the south where many cavity-nest dwellings birds exist in an equally threatened lowland forest area. ***

Katala Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 390
Puerto Princesa City 5300
Palawan, Philippines
www.philippinecockatoo.org