

Happy Christmas salu-salo concludes the Wildlife Wardens' Refresher Course

By Deborah Villafuerte-van den Beukel

18 December 2009, Philippines - Midyear 2009, friends of Katala Foundation Inc. (KFI) from the Netherlands gathered their old clothing and sent to the Philippines as a surprise "big gift" for the PCCP's wildlife wardens and volunteers. The Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program or PCCP engages poachers to be active partners in the conservation of the critically endangered Philippine cockatoo as wildlife wardens and volunteers. Most of them belong to three ethnic groups in Palawan namely Tagbanua, Pala'wan and Cuyunin. Their profound knowledge of the species and its habitat is a valuable contribution to the on-going study on the ecology and biology of the species.

The big day was on the 17th of December when the Wardens Refresher Course ended in Puerto Princesa City. Every other year, KFI organizes the said course to refresh and recharge wardens and volunteers with updates, review their roles and responsibilities and most particularly, to come together as one family and share experiences and challenges. This is concluded with a Christmas salu-salo that brings out the best performers amongst all local partners. In between intermissions, the "big gift" full of used clothing was a hit! The wardens did not only choose for themselves but mainly for their families. We are so grateful to the generosity of our Dutch friends Mark and Chared Verschuur; Alex and Mary Kluijver; the Gelacio's (Rowena, Maryghil, Leyna, Alexi and Jhie) and Erwin van den Beukel.



Wardens and volunteers selecting clothes for their families

The wardening scheme under the PCCP is implemented in four project sites in Palawan: Rasa Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Narra since 1998; Omoi and Manambaling Cockatoo Reserves in Dumarán; Culasian Managed Resource Protected Area in Rizal and the newest site in Pandanan, Balabac. This scheme resulted to the increase of the population of the Philippine cockatoo on Rasa Island more than tenfold, and still growing, after ten years of project implementation.



Big box of old clothes from KFI friends in the Netherlands



The KFI family in Palawan: the staff, wildlife wardens and volunteers

Note:

- Katala Foundation is a non-profit, non-stock, non-governmental organization and has been active in protecting and conserving wildlife, particularly the Philippine cockatoo and other threatened endemic wildlife in Palawan for more than a decade now. Its funds rely on private conservation organizations with small contribution from the local government. KFI always welcomes sponsors/donors to pursue its conservation activities. Donations of any kind are very much appreciated. For interested parties, please contact ldlacerna@yahoo.com or visit www.philippinecockatoo.org.