



Contact: Indira Dayang Lacerna-Widmann
Chief Operations Officer
Katala Foundation
Telephone No: 048-4347693
Email: ldlacerna@yahoo.com

PRESS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**

Seven Philippine Cockatoos freed in Dumarán Island Critical Habitat

January 27, 2017, Dumarán Island, Palawan. Seven Philippine Cockatoos or Katala as locally called were released back in the wild in Dumarán Island, Palawan. Five of these birds were rescued from starvation during the El Nino 2016 breeding season on Dumarán Island itself and two were from Puerto Princesa City. The release was witnessed by LGU officials, PCSDS and DENR representatives, PNP-Dumarán, media, and other members of the interim management board of the newly established Critical Habitat on Dumarán Island, Palawan.

“What we do in Dumarán is supplementation of Philippine Cockatoos. We noticed that recruitment of the species is slow in Dumarán probably due to inbreeding or low reproductive abilities of remnant population”, says Peter Widmann, Science Director of the Katala Foundation Inc. He further added that Dumarán is a very special and unique place despite the forests being so fragmented. The newly created Critical Habitat that encompasses the last remaining forest patches in Dumarán Island is home to both critically endangered Philippine Cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) and the Palawan Forest Turtle (*Siebenrockiella leytensis*). Not only that it is also home to equally threatened Palawan Pangolin and the Palawan Hornbill among others. The global population of the Katala is between 640-1,120 and 70-90% of this could be found in Palawan.

According to Indira Lacerna-Widmann, Program Director of the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program, the hatchlings were taken cared of at the Katala Institute in Narra, Palawan where they gained stable health after rescue. Meanwhile, a pre-release aviary was built on site for the birds’ flight practice and acclimatization before its eventual release. At the pre-release aviary for six months, birds were practicing flight muscles, were introduced to local natural foods and had an anti-predator training. Each bird was tested negative of PBFV virus and sex were determined before its release. Wildlife wardens took turns to monitor the birds inside and outside the aviary with emphasis of not imprinting on humans.

“The LGU has been grateful and supportive of its joint efforts with the Katala Foundation Inc. in bringing back the Katala to Dumarán but more importantly in protecting and restoring the lost lowland forests therein”, says Mr. Arnel Caabay, Administrative Officer of Dumarán. Mr. Caabay

added that the recent adoption of the Municipal Council of the PCSD Resolution No. 14-513 declaring 1,628 hectares as Critical Habitat is their commitment to restore forest cover in Dumarán not only for the wildlife in need but also to ensure its water supply in the island which is now dwindling.

For more information, please contact Indira Widmann, Katala Foundation, P.O. Box 390, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan or at idlacerna@yahoo.com and visit our homepage at www.philippinecockatoo.org.

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Editor's Note:

- PSDS Res. 14-513 declared 1,628 hectares was approved on October 28, 2014. The same resolution was adopted by the Municipal Council of Dumarán through SB Resolution NO. 74 on December 13, 2016. The said Critical Habitat aims to connect through a corridor the two cockatoo reserves and remaining forest patches earlier declared by the municipality.
- Jointly, the LGU Dumarán and KFI are working on an Ordinance to further strengthen the management and conservation of the newly declared Critical Habitat.
- Katala Foundation, Inc. (KFI) uses the endemic Philippine Cockatoo as its flagship species to achieve its vision of conserving biodiversity with the active community involvement.
- Dumarán is one of the project sites of the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program implemented by the Katala Foundation Inc.
- Pictures attached: CREDIT TO KATALA FOUNDATION INC.



The birds at our Katala Institute in Narra, Palawan recovering after rescue from starvation (left). The seven birds enjoying natural foods inside the pre-release aviary in Dumarán Island Critical Habitat (right).



The newly released Katala shown with its wing marks and leg bands investigates after going out of the pre-release aviary in Dumaran Island Critical Habitat, Palawan.



When the pre-release aviary was opened, the birds continue to eat their meals before flying free in the forest within the recently declared Critical Habitat on Dumaran Island.



The freed Katala looks back at the campsite while perching on a nearby tree within the Critical Habitat in Dumarán Island, Palawan.



Katala team with witnesses from members of the interim Critical Habitat Management Committee and media.



A glimpse of the Dumarán Island Critical Habitat at So. Omoi, Sto. Tomas, Dumarán Island.