

Pride Campaign to Protect the Endangered Cockatoo

Country

Philippines

Region

Global, Africa, South East and East Asia, South Asia

Programme Summary

In 2003, the USA-based international conservation organisation Rare partnered with the Katala Foundation and Conservation International to develop and implement a conservation "marketing" methodology in an effort to protect the cockatoo's habitat. In this communication campaign carried out in the Philippines, a municipal protected area was created to protect the endangered cockatoo - a striking orange and white bird that has become a regular sight across the island of Palawan. By creating an endearing, larger-than-life mascot to headline various awareness-raising activities, collaborators hoped to reach out to private citizens, public figures, and community leaders - and to shift attitudes toward the importance of protecting the bird's habitat.

Communication Strategies

The campaign combines education with entertainment in order to inspire conservation efforts. As part of the initiative, a colourful 6-foot cockatoo mascot traversed the island delivering messages of conservation. Used in the campaign as a symbol for environmental protection and regional pride, the giant cockatoo mascot visited classrooms, was featured on billboards, modeled in fashion shows, starred in puppet theatres, and was publicised on posters, stickers and buttons throughout the region. "If you make conservation education engaging and entertaining," says Paul Butler, Rare's Vice President of Programs, "people both young and old begin to understand that saving the cockatoo is important, because it shares a habitat with so many other species and is highly threatened in the Philippines." Along these lines, "Share a Place to Live" is the slogan of the Palawan campaign.

Advocacy is another key communication strategy - one that seeks to empower ordinary citizens in continuing efforts to protect the cockatoo's nesting trees. Organisers used the mascot to stimulate support among Palawan governing bodies and religious leaders to enforce pre-existing but often overlooked conservation regulations. "Both local community leaders and the Environmental Legal Assistance Center have been responsive to the campaign's encouragement of more effective implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act, Fisheries Act, and Forestry Code. These community leaders have agreed to be new 'wardens' of the protected areas - putting their new sense of pride into action by protecting the katala." These wildlife wardens will help patrol the newly established protected area. The aim of this component of the initiative is to empower ordinary citizens to enforce environmental laws

within their jurisdiction, serving as "hot desks" (the absence of phone lines makes it difficult for them to operate as "hotlines") by monitoring and investigating environmental crimes under their jurisdiction.

Development Issues

Environment.

Key Points

Known locally as the "katala," the cockatoo ranks among the world's most threatened species - with an estimated 1,500 individual birds remaining in the wild. Endemic to the Philippines, 75% of the remaining cockatoo population survives in Palawan. The cockatoo's survival has been jeopardised by the exotic pet trade and the rapid deforestation of lowland forests.

"In the campaign's first month alone, we reached out to over 2,500 students through school visits featuring puppet performances and educational activities led by the life-size cockatoo mascot," explains Indira Lacerna-Widmann, Katala Foundation staff member and campaign manager. As a result of the campaign, organisers claim, a legally protected area was established to ensure protection of the Cockatoo's nesting habitat, and 6 active community members are now working as wildlife wardens. The forest area will offer protection for the island's nesting birds.

Rare, an environmental conservation organisation, works globally to equip people in the world's threatened natural areas with tools and motivation to care for their natural resources. Working from the belief that conservation is a social issue as much as it is a scientific one, Rare uses social marketing campaigns, "edutainment" radio programmes, and economic development solutions to inspire communities to protect their natural environment.

Partners

Rare, Katala Foundation, and Conservation International.

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Source

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The Communication Initiative Network

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