

# TALARAK FOUNDATION, INC.

*Newsletter, a summary of 2019*



## *This issue's MUST READS*

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Nine Years in the  
Making

Bringing Worlds  
Together for  
Conservation

Biggest Win for  
2019!

## Letter from our President

Dear Friends of Talarak,

2019 has been one of the most fulfilling and exciting years for us yet. From hosting the West Visayas Conservation Workshop, to the first successful fledging of a Walden's Hornbill in nine years, we have come a long way in one year.

With the addition of new team members, our reach and our projects have gained greater momentum on Negros Island. With new partnerships and supporters, we can only hope for greater things for the protection of our forests and wildlife!

As we push forward in 2020, we know we can continue the work we do with your help and support. From all of us at TFI, we wholeheartedly thank you for your continued support, friendship, and trust!

Sincerely,

Dino



## **FERNANDO "DINO" GUTIERREZ**

### **PRESIDENT**

Fully involved in Talarak Foundation, Inc.'s operations, Dino is constantly ensuring the foundation is running efficiently. Dino's guidance for the whole team gives us confidence that our projects will see great success.



## **PAUL LIZARES**

### **VICE PRESIDENT**

Liaising with government offices and public relations, Paul is no stranger to the non-profit scene. He is also a trustee of the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation, Inc. Paul is essential in keeping the lines of communication with our partners open.





## ANTOINETTE BEGRE-LACSON

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS  
MANAGER

A trustee of the Foundation, Antoinette was appointed as the International Partnerships Manager this 2019. Her role in events management, fund raising, marketing, and communications for the Foundation ensures that our current supporters stay up to date, and that the Foundation strengthens and creates bonds with current, and new partners.



## MATTHEW WARD

HEAD RESEARCHER

Our key in-situ researcher, Matt leads the volunteer program, education program, and grant acquisitions for the Foundation. Being based in Negros Oriental, Matt spearheads the projects within that region, from Balinsasayao Twin Lakes, to Danapa. Having been with us for one year, he has played a key role in understanding the health of our forests, and the creation and implementation of education programs.



## **YSABELLA MONTAÑO-WARD**

PROJECT MANAGER

Working alongside Matt, Bell's work in the continuous search for funding to continue our in-situ projects plays a most critical role. Her involvement in field work, education, and research is also of great importance for us to understand the health of our forests.



## **JUSTINE MAGBANUA**

RESEARCHER

Leading the in-situ research for Negros Occidental, Justine has expanded his area of expertise this year by being accepted as one of Chester Zoo's scholars. With his newly gained knowledge, and ever growing experience, there are multiple new skills he can bring to the table.





## **DAVOY CASTOR**

EDUCATION OFFICER

The longest standing member of our team, Davoy has been in conservation for more than thirty years. This 2019, he was appointed to a position he loves the most. As Education Officer, he reaches children in far flung areas to teach them about the importance of environmental protection, and what they youth can do to save our forests.



## **STEPHANY DIAZ**

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Another long standing member of the team, Steph has worked in conservation for nearly thirty years. She manages all administrative roles of the foundation, as well as joins in on our conservation and education programs.



## JIMMY BENZUELA

HEAD KEEPER - NFP

For twelve years, Jimmy has worked in our Captive Breeding program. Having started with Negros Forest and Ecological Foundation, Inc., he was absorbed by TFI, and was promoted to Head Keeper this year. Having put his heart and soul into the animals under our care, he is very proud to conserve the different endangered species at Negros Forest Park. Jimmy hopes that through our programs, we will have more successful births in the center.

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## TRUSTEES

The foundation would not be what it is without our other trustees. We thank you for your constant support!

JUAN JOSE BONIN

MIKE BENEDICTO

JUAN ANDRES CORRO

JULIAN "COCO" GARCIA

RICARDO GARCIA

ANTHONY RAMOS

JENNIFER MARTHA GARCIA

We would also like to thank Micaela "Kaila" Trebol, who resigned from her position as Trustee this December 2019. She was a crucial part of Talarak Foundation's growth, and we are forever grateful for the hard work she had put into our conservation efforts and projects!



# WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

## MONICA ATIENZA

The newest member of our team, Monica spearheads the veterinarian program of the foundation. Ensuring all our animals are in top health conditions, they are nurtured, given ample enrichment, and happy.

Having graduated from the University of the Philippines this June, Monica spared no time in getting her licensure in September this same year. When asked why she chose to be a wildlife vet, Monica quipped *"One person that truly inspired me to be a wildlife veterinarian was my professor in UPLB, Dr. Emilia A. Lastica. She has very profound insights of zoos and its importance in conservation, as well as her way of widening one's appreciation to our endemic wildlife."*

*She once worked with the very same species that I'm taking care of now, and thanks to her, I became aware of the efforts of NFEFI and Talarak Foundation Inc. in biodiversity management and reforestation and wildlife breeding and conservation."*

Monica not only takes care of the animals under our care, but she is also passionate about conservation, and educating the youth to strengthen reforestation efforts. She is of the firm belief that as a Filipino, she has high hopes for the future of Philippine biodiversity.



**"I may not be a native of Negros, but I am a Filipino that still has high hopes for the future of the Philippine biodiversity."**

# NINE YEARS IN THE MAKING

Many locals can't believe these majestic birds exist in our forests. It's the sad truth! The Walden's Hornbill (*Rhabdotorrhinus waldeni*), locally known as the Talarak, or known as the Visayan Wrinkled Hornbill, Rufous-Headed Hornbill or the Writhed-Billed Hornbill is one of the most remarkable looking birds at Negros Forest Park.

These Critically Endangered birds used to be seen throughout the forests of Negros and Panay, but now, you're lucky to even hear stories about their existence on Negros. According to Talarak Foundation's (TFI) President, Fernando Gutierrez, *"They are functionally extinct in Negros, and there have only been a few sightings and calls heard, but no photographic proof so far."*

But, TFI has some huge news about the Walden's! This year, after what seemed like an eternity of waiting, we have a fully-fledged Walden's Hornbill! Last January 4, 2019, a female Walden's Hornbill, named Ligaya, sealed herself in a nest box, while her mate, Kalantiw, patiently waited. On February 14, a chick was heard crying inside the nest box. It was then confirmed that Ligaya laid three eggs, but only one had hatched. On April 19, Valentin, the newly fledged Hornbill, emerged!

*"They are functionally extinct in Negros, and there have only been a few sightings and calls heard, but no photographic proof so far."*

Why is this such big news? *"It took us nine years to have our first ever successful breeding. They take so long to mature, and bonded pairs are hard to form in captivity. Pairs have to be totally compatible to breed successfully, since once sealed, females and young are totally dependent on the male."* Says Gutierrez.

In the wild, Hornbills mate for life. And when the female lays her eggs, parents seal the female in the trunks of trees, and the female stays with the eggs for a whole 28-30 days of incubation. This means, she puts her life in the wings of the male, and relies on him to bring her food every single day. If the male is poached or hunted, the whole family dies. The total length of time a female is in the sealed trunk with her chicks can last up to 105 days, until the chick is ready to fledge.



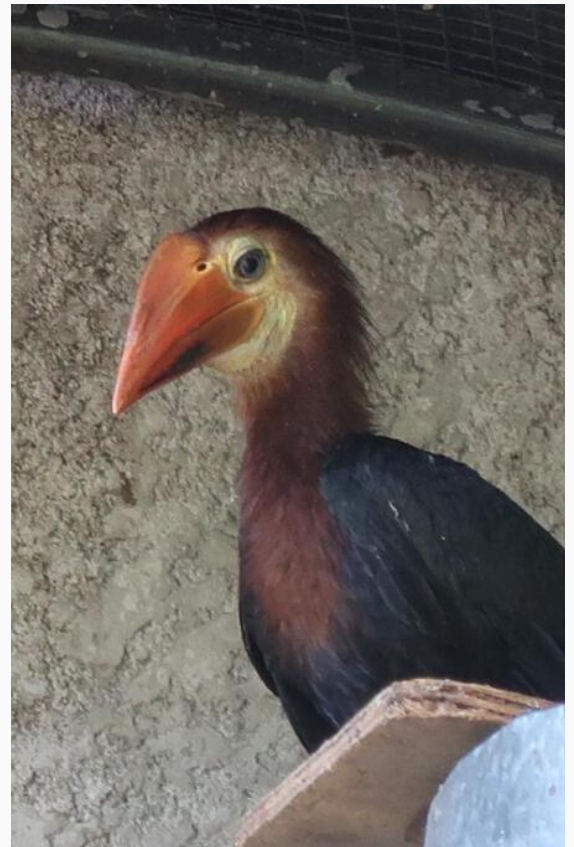




So why this year's successful breeding? NFP's Head Keeper, Jimmy Benzuela, did not take a single off day in the 105 days the female was sealed. He tirelessly watched over the new family, ensuring their health and nutrition was everyone's top priority. And all his hard work and dedication to conserving this species is the biggest news in Negros' Conservation efforts this year!

The last successful captive breeding of a Walden's Hornbill was in 2010, in Mari-it Conservation Center, in Lambunao, Panay. Since then, captive numbers have plateaued at a mere 32, with one female with a congenital defect. Only Mari-it and Negros Forest Park have these birds in captivity, and only these two centers are working hard to keep this species alive.

Hunting for sport, poaching for the illegal wildlife trade, and the lack of mature nesting trees in our forests, are key factors to their rapid decline in numbers. *"Being big birds," says Gutierrez, "with poaching and hunting still an issue in our remaining forests, the future looks very bleak if there are any wild birds remaining. It is of great importance to properly secure our remaining forest cover."*



**"Being big birds, with poaching and hunting still an issue in our remaining forests, the future looks very bleak if there are any wild birds remaining. It is of great importance to properly secure our remaining forest cover."**



*"Bilang isa ka zookeeper, dako ko gid nga kalipay kag dongog nga first time naka pabuto ko sang Rufous-Headed Hornbill, every breeding season ginatagaan ko gid sila estra time kag effort para lang maka breed. Kag sa akon nga kadugay nga hulat nakapabreed gid man ko. Lubos gid ang akon kalipay."* Says Benzuela about his dedication to the animals in his care.

TRANSLATION: "Being one of the zoo keepers, I have much joy and pride, that for the first time I was able to successfully hatch a Rufous Headed Hornbill (Talarak). Every breeding season I really give them extra time and effort just so they could breed, and for the longest time waiting, I was actually able to get them to breed successfully. My joy is full!"

Another key factor is that Negros Forest Park, though in the middle of the city, is Bacolod's rainforest right in the heart of it! For thirty years, endemic trees have been given the chance to grow and mature, making it the perfect environment for what is left of Negros Island's wildlife. It is a stronghold for key Negros species, a place for them to thrive securely. Although not ideal, and despite Talarak Foundation's dedicated efforts to bring these animals back home to their natural habitat, it is one of the key Captive Breeding Centers in the country, and an important part in Philippine conservation efforts!

According to NFP's Curator David Castor "I'm so happy to see the beautiful young Walden's, that at last we have successfully bred after many years. It is a feeling of achieving a breakthrough, a new height in our conservation and breeding program." Castor has been with this project from the very beginning, and he has seen the ups and downs of Philippine conservation, and seen the trees in NFP grow and flourish. It is because of his, and the rest of the team's, hard work, that these successes will continue to happen.

Valentin has since been moved to the TFI Kabankalan Captive Breeding Centre, where we hope he can soon interact with a different family of Walden's Hornbills.



Valentin in his new enclosure in TFI Kabankalan



# Bringing Worlds Together for Conservation



This year marked one of the Foundation's milestone efforts. Having been given the honor of hosting the first West Visayas Conservation Workshop last June 24-27, at Sugarland Hotel, Bacolod City, we were graced by some of the greatest minds in the conservation industry.

This four day workshop tackled a multispecies conservation strategy for the conservation of our West Visayan Big Five Species, the Visayan Spotted Deer, Visayan Warty Pig, Walden's Hornbill, Tarictic Hornbill, and the Negros Bleeding Heart Pigeon.

The first of its kind, this multispecies strategy has not been done in the country before, we streamlined efforts to create action plans for the protection of these five key species, and their habitat.

Co-hosted by the Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), the workshop was facilitated by Kristin Leus of the CPSG. Breakout groups and sessions were put to work to gather information about the assessment of populations, both in situ and ex situ, identification of threats, and the identification of existing conservation plans and strategies. In the end, they hope to create a 25 year plan to save the remainder of Western Visayas' forests, and wildlife.

Resource persons to tackle each specific species was invited to brainstorm with us. Noam Werner from Jerusalem Zoo shared his knowledge about deer and ungulates. Pritpal Soorae for reintroduction programs. Johanna Margono and Parag Deka represented the pigs. Aparajita Datta who flew from India gave her insights on the Hornbills. And Joe Wood from Toledo Zoo shared their successes in their Doves programs. This well attended and well represented group of conservationists and scientists ensured each topic was closely discussed and managed.





Our local counterparts from the government agencies gave us crucial insights to the workings of the Natural and National Parks, and what the current programs are to save and protect them. Representatives from Philippine NGO's also shared their efforts in conservation.

All our efforts could not have been possible without the generous support of our partners. Chester Zoo, CPSPG, Synchronicity Earth, ZGAP, ASAP, WRS, Planckendael Zoo, Zoo Liberec, Don Papa Rum, Three Hens Wine, Energy Development Corp.

We are beyond grateful for this opportunity, and are looking forward to hosting more workshops, and bringin worlds together for conservation.



Clockwise from left: IUCN SSC Wild Pig Specialist Group Co-Chair Johanna Rode-Margono with TFI's Matt Ward; IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group Co-Chair Aparajita Datta with Chester Zoo's Curator of Birds Andrew Owen; CPSPG Multi-Species Planning Program Assistant Claudine Gibson; and the WVCW participants



# Much Needed Repairs

Both Negros Forest Park (NFP) and TFI Kabankalan received much needed love and care. Renovations of the aviaries and enclosures commenced starting September of this year, and lasted for over a month.

In NFP, dying trees which were already deemed hazardous were taken down. Aviaries were repaired. Drainage in enclosures, as well as fences were given some care. Minor landscaping, and major repairs to the Park's drainage system was done.

In TFI Kabankalan, general repairs and maintenance work to the mammal enclosures were accomplished. We also constructed a new complex of multi-purpose aviaries which are now being used by our young Hornbills and Negros Bleeding Heat Pigeons.

We thank our supporters, ZGAP and the Provincial Government of Negros Occidental, for their generous support.



Top Photo:  
Visayan Warty Pig  
enclosure

Left, clockwise from the  
top:  
Visayan Spotted Deer  
enclosure; Hornbill  
aviary; Row of hornbill  
aviaries that were  
repaired and built





## VETERINARIANS IN THE MAKING

Last July 31, 2019, four Veterinary Medicine students from the University of the Philippines Los Baños campus (UPLB), along with their advisor, Emilia Lastica, conducted research on several bird species in Negros Forest Park (NFP) for their thesis. They collected blood, swabs, and feather samples to detect Newcastle Disease, Infectious Larungotracheitis Virus, and Marek's Disease. A total of 22 birds were included in the study.

Through their research, they are hoping to provide insight into the health of the birds housed at Negros Forest Park. This would also give them baseline data for our birds, as well as suggest management protocols should any of our birds be infected with the diseases they are testing for.

On the second day of their visit, Emilia Lastica, who once was the curator at NFP, conducted a Curator Workshop for the benefit of all TFI team members. It was attended by all the keepers, curator, administration, as well as trustees.

Key learnings were differentiating healthy from sick animals, quarantine protocols, first aid, as well as animal enrichment. The TFI team was also taught how to look at blood samples under a microscope, as well as blood smearing.

"Training is very important to the growth of the foundation. And we welcome events like this to ensure our team stays up to date" says Antoinette Begre-Lacson, a trustee of TFI, and a participant of the workshop and sample collection.

We thank the UPLB students Carmela Lizares, Arnel Simangan, Gabriel Comota, and Ched Aguilar for conducting your research at NFP. And our most heartfelt thanks to Emilia Lastica for your guidance and teaching!



Collecting samples from NFP's birds

"TRAINING IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THE GROWTH OF THE FOUNDATION. AND WE WELCOME EVENTS LIKE THIS TO ENSURE OUR TEAM STAYS UP TO DATE"





TFI President, Dino Gutierrez, and Bayawan City Mayor, Henry Pryde Teves, signing the MOA



A male Visayan Spotted Deer, one of our key species that will be housed at the Danapa Nature Reserve



Aerial view of the Danapa Nature Reserve in Bayawan City, Negros Oriental

## AS CLOSE TO HOME AS YOU CAN GET

On October 2, 2019, an official Memorandum of Agreement was signed between Talarak Foundation, Inc., represented by Dino Gutierrez, and the City of Bayawan, represented by Mayor Henry Teves, to formalize the development of the Danapa Nature Reserve.

This 250 hectare City owned property will be co-managed by Talarak Foundation, Inc. (TFI), to create a safe haven for our Negros endemic species. Over the years, the City of Bayawan has reforested this site, and this year, work has begun through the TFI, to restore the forested areas to ensure that only endemic tree species remain, and to plant more endemic trees.

Danapa Nature Reserve is meant to be a stepping stone for our Critically Endangered species bred in captivity to return to their natural habitat. Not only will our captive bred animals have a taste of what it's like to return to the wild, our researchers will gain much needed insight into their natural habits and behaviour.

Little is known about some of our key species, such as the Visayan Spotted Deer, and how they interact or live in the wild. Do they live in small herds? What are their natural feeding habits? How many bucks in a herd? We have no answers. And Danapa Nature Reserve will help us answer these questions.

We have big goals for Danapa Nature Reserve, and with the help and support of the City of Bayawan, we know the future looks bright for our wildlife!

*Creating a micro-ecosystem in Negros Oriental. A safe haven for our endemic species.*





TFI Vice President, Paul Lizares (third from left), with the SMART Communications team at Negros Forest Park

## *BIG CORPORATION, BIG HEART*

October is Masskara season, a very lively and festive time in Bacolod City. Streets are filled with concert stages, parades, light shows, noise. It's that one time of the year where people from all over the country flock to the city to be part of all that's abuzz.

Masskara is also a stressful time for our captive bred animals at Negros Forest Park. With the Park in such close proximity to the festivities, they are engulfed in blasting music, noise from the crowds, and sometimes, firecrackers. And our animals have no clue what is going on.

Negros Forest Park's Talarak enclosures are situated near the perimeter wall of the Park. And it just so happened, that this October, we had two successful Talarak pairs who sealed themselves in their nest boxes. Because these birds are so susceptible to stress, subjecting them to such loud noises and chaotic light shows can mean the death of their incubating eggs.

A stage was set right beside our Talarak enclosures. SMART Communications, Inc. was the organizer. During sound check, it was made evident that having the stage so close to our incubating Talaraks would mean the death of these unborn chicks.

Talarak Foundation, Inc.'s Vice President, Paul Lizares appealed to the organizers, and to SMART's representative, Jules De Guia, and left the situation in the latter's hands. What happened next was something we did not expect.

As evening settled, there was silence.

No band playing. No host screaming. No crowd. Just silence.

SMART Communications, Inc. put our Critically Endangered Talaraks ahead of their own corporate marketing agenda and postponed their event! They had the stage relocated for the next day, reorganized the artists involved, sent out public announcements, all for our incubating eggs!

This is a heroic example of big corporations doing things right! We would like to thank everyone behind SMART, namely Jules De Guia, Maria Jane Paredes and Des Gocotano, for helping us ensure a future for our Critically Endangered species!







## 19 YEARS OF PROTECTION

On November 21, 2019, Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park celebrated its 19th Anniversary. Talarak Foundation, Inc. took part in this celebration by organizing a “Nature Walk”. This was intended to give tourists and participants insight into the flora and fauna that could be found within the Park. This initiative was spearheaded by TFI’s very own Matt and Ysabella Ward.

Photos of our Big Five: the Visayan Spotted Deer, Visayan Warty Pig, Tarictic Hornbill, Talarak Hornbill, and the Negros Bleeding Heart Pigeon, along with photos of other animals such as the Brahminy Kite, Visayan Leopard Cat, and a Reticulated Python, were strategically placed along the hiking trails. Guests were then given activity sheets, which had clues to these species, where they would have to find the animals along the trails and answer the question “What Am I?”

The anniversary celebration was well attended by members of the Protected Areas Management Bureau (PAMB), as well as the local government officials of the surrounding towns, and the Vice Governor of Negros Oriental.

We hope that by continuing to be a part of the efforts of Balinsasayao, we can increase our presence in the region, educate the surrounding communities, and protect what is left of our flora and fauna.



## SECURING 25 YEARS

For the last three years, our beloved rainforest in the heart of Bacolod City, Negros Forest Park, was under threat of being relocated. We lived through uncertain times, not knowing the fate of our animals or our trees.

This year, with the appointment of Negros Occidental’s new Governor, Bong Lacson, our fears were put to ease. Just one month after his appointment, Governor Bong set a meeting with Talarak’s trustees, and it did not take much convincing for him to believe in our vision.

The result? We secured another twenty-five years with the complete support of the Provincial Government! This achievement is proof that together, progress can be achieved without compromising the environment.

We thank Governor Bong Lacson wholeheartedly for this support of Talarak Foundation, for his support of our environment, and for giving us hope in tomorrow!



## Provincial Wildlife Month 2019

As part of the Government's advocacy of protecting our endemic species and natural resources, the Province of Negros Occidental has celebrated Provincial Wildlife Month every November for the past fifteen years. And this year, Talarak Foundation, Inc. took part in more than one of their planned activities.

Along with the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation, Inc. (PRRCFI), TFI conducted a SWEEP (Sea Waste Education to Eradicate Plastic) Trek in the Tinagong Dagat trail of the North Negros Natural Park last November 24, 2019. 46 volunteers from the Negros Mountaineering Club, the University of St. La Salle Earth Guards, CLIMB Mountaineering Club, Verdant Streams Eco-Adventure Mountaineering Club, together with team members of TFI and PRRCFI made their way through the trails to pick up trash left behind by tourists and hikers.

A total of 31.25 kilos of trash was collected. Most of which were plastic sachets from fast-moving consumer goods, weighing in at 9.5 kilos! Part of the segregated trash came from Mineral Water Bottles, which weighed in at 2.75 kilos. Followed by tin cans at 2 kilos. The volunteers also collected empty glass liquor bottles from the trails.



Matt giving a talk at Ayala Capitol Central

Another activity held by both PRRCFI and TFI were talks held at Capitol Central Bacolod on November 13, 2019. The team discussed the importance of Biodiversity Conservation, as well as terrestrial and marine conservation efforts done by both foundations. The talks were attended by students from both La Salle and St. Scholastica schools.

Finally, the highlight of the Provincial Wildlife Month is the foot parade, which is done annually. Participants from the city, province, and other environmental government offices showed their support for Mother Earth by creating their best animal costumes, and taking part in the walk towards the capitol.

**At TFI, we believe every month should be wildlife month, and we hope that more initiatives will be conducted locally for the benefit of Mother Earth.**



Volunteers at the SWEEP walk in Tinagong Dagat

**We believe every month should be wildlife month!**





## Committing to the Future

We know that the future of our forests is in the hands of the next generation. To instill a love for Mother Nature in the youth, we at TFI, are taking the much needed steps to create future wildlife warriors.

Our Junior Conservationist Workshop came full swing this November 2019. Timed with the Provincial Wildlife Month of Negros Occidental, the team took our knowledge, and some fun, to schools in different areas of the island.

The first, held on November 8, 2019, engaged 142 students from the 5th Grade level of Paglaum Village Elementary School. The second, on November 15, 2019, was a smaller number of 43 students from the Spur 16 Elementary School in Don Salvador Benedicto.

These future conservationists, were given the opportunity to meet some of our animal ambassadors. Bonsai, a Southern Rufous Headed Hornbill who was born stunted, and whose flight feathers never grew. And Nigiri, a Reticulated Python. Animal encounters such as these help children further appreciate the animals they have in their backyards. It is a wonderful method for us to teach children the importance of animal welfare and love.

They also joined in lectures and talks about biodiversity, conservation, our Negros Big Five, species and forest protection, as well as how to be a better citizen for Mother Nature. Our team and volunteers engaged the kids through games, such as the web of life.

We are grateful to the Provincial Government of Negros Occidental for their support of this initiative, and we are confident that with more Junior Conservationist Workshops, we can reach more youth to fight for the future of our forests.

**If you wish to support this project, you can Adopt A Class through our website! Just log on to [www.talarak.org](http://www.talarak.org) and you're one click away from helping us educate the youth!**





*A Visayan Warty pig caught on a camera trap at BTLNP*

## Camera Trapping

TFI launched three camera trapping projects this 2019. Our in-situ research team, led by Matt Ward, was busy installing camera traps, and collecting data from Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park (BTLNP); Banban Forest, Ayungon; and Gawahon, North Negros National Park.

This effort is meant to identify what species are persisting in these areas, as well to run an ecological study to establish the possibility of reintroducing or restocking key species.

## Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park

The BTLNP project began in March, and is currently ongoing. Camera traps were donated by Chester Zoo, Liberec Zoo, and Phoenix Zoo, and the research team has captured many exciting images from these traps! Wildlife such as our Visayan Leopard Cat, Emerald Dove, Jungle Fowl, Palm Civet, Tarictic, and Visayan Warty Pig.

Sadly, through their surveys and research, the team has also discovered multiple animal traps, evidence of poaching and killing of the Tarictic Hornbill, and much evidence of human activity within the protected areas.



*A Visayan Leopard Cat on camera trap footage*





## BANBAN FOREST, AYUNGON

In June this year, camera traps from Chester Zoo were installed in Banban Forest, and was left there for 45 days. Unfortunately, this was a short project due to growing insurgencies in the area, leading to safety concerns for our research team.

In three separate locations in this site, the team was able to capture footage of Visayan Warty Pig family groups, making this a very promising discovery for our much-needed research. The footage also captured domestic animals, which proves human activity is very much present in this area.



*Visayan Warty Pigs caught on the Banban Forest camera traps*

## GAWAHON, VICTORIAS NORTH NEGROS NATURAL PARK

One of the most exciting sites we have is in Victorias City. This Bristol Zoo funded project is mostly focused on the Negros Bleeding Heart Pigeon, and determining if there is a population in this portion of the NNNP.

The camera traps have revealed populations of the Visayan Warty Pig, Emerald Doves, Red Jungle Fowl, Asian Water Monitor Lizard, Visayan Leopard Cats, and Asian Palm Civets. We have yet to see evidence of the Bleeding Hearts, but the findings have been very exciting! With full support from the City of Victorias, we are confident that we can further develop more protection efforts for this section of the NNNP.



*TFI team in the field at Gawahon, Victorias*



## Building A Conservation Network

In every industry there is constant change, and in conservation we are not exempt. What better way for the TFI team to learn about advancements, research opportunities, discoveries, learnings, and new organisations than to attend the Philippine Biodiversity Symposium (PBS).

Last August 13-16, the team made their way to Leyte, where the PBS was hosted by the Visayan State University. They attended talks that discussed ongoing conservation projects nationwide, current problems and how these have been tackled, and most importantly, built a new network of potential partners throughout the country.

*Top Photo: The TFI team manning our booth*

## Continuing William Oliver's Legacy

This year, Chester Zoo launched a scholarship program in honor of the late William Oliver. Five budding researchers from the Philippines were selected to take part in the program. The young candidates presented proposals for research on Philippine Endemic species that are listed in the IUCN Red List.

Candidates were selected based on their involvement with an organization that is working in the field of conservation, is still in the early stages of their career, with no more than ten years of experience, and of course, their submitted proposals.

TFI's very own Justine Magbanua was one of the select few! On October 10, 2019, Justine embarked on this most exciting opportunity to be mentored by one of Chester Zoo's curators.

Justine proposed a study on the Negros Cave Frog (*Platymantis spelaeus*), who is only found in the Southwest portion of Negros Island. These rare frogs live in specific limestone forests on Negros, and his study will tackle the effects and presence of the Chytrid Fungus (*Batrachochytridium dendrobatidis*) in the microhabitats of the cave frogs.

For two years, Justine will be mentored by Chester Zoo's Gerardo Garcia, curator of lower vertebrates, and Iri Gill, assistant curator of lower vertebrates. Justine hopes that his selected project will increase the amount of ecological data for this species, which, currently, very little is known.

Because frogs are an indicator species, Justine's proposal will help us understand the health of their habitat, and identify possible environmental stressors. We wish Justine luck with his upcoming research, and we thank Chester Zoo for giving one of our own this much-needed opportunity.

**"My greatest take away is the project management training we received from this award. This experience will not only benefit my project with Chester Zoo, but my work here in TFI."**



*Justine presenting at Chester Zoo*





## Sharing Best Practices

Imagine walking through your city where cockatoos fly overhead. Where our wildlife is safe to live alongside humans. Where nature meets the urban landscape, and both worlds co-exist. This is what Katala Foundation has accomplished in Palawan. This is our dream for Negros Island.

Last November, TFI President Dino Gutierrez, along with our researchers Matt and Bell, attended the highly regarded Katala Festival held at the Palawan State University. They hoped to learn from Katala Foundation's successes in promoting conservation education in their region.

The TFI team also visited Rasa Island, the field site of Katala Foundation, in the municipality of Nara. Here, because of their community engagement programs, livelihood development, and research, the Philippine Cockatoo, or Katala, dramatically increased in population from a mere 30 individuals, to over 350 in twenty years!

Katala's success is primarily due to Peter and Indira Widmann, their dedication, hard work, and their skills in community engagement. TFI hopes to learn from their successes, instill pride in our countrymen for our wildlife, and create a desire to conserve our endemic animals.

The Philippine Cockatoo was once widespread throughout the country. Due to poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, these birds can only be found on the last strongholds in Palawan. We dream that one day, these birds can be seen on the island of Negros, and that all our endemic animals will be safe from poaching.



Top Left Photo: TFI team with the Katala Foundation team at Rasa Island

Top Photo: TFI President and his wife with the Katala mascot

*Using the cockatoos as a proxy for the hornbills, facing similar conservation threats, we can try and use their charismatic look and endemism to build a sense of pride and desire for conservation of the species. We can also look at the methods that Katala are using for community engagement and use these to bring communities into projects and on side of land protection as well as wildlife protection. – Matt Ward*

## Continued Learning

Last July 29 to August 9, our project manager, Ysabella Montano-Ward, was selected to attend the Wildlife Conservation Course which was facilitated by Dr. Cedric Tan of Oxford University Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, in association with the Centre for Conservation Innovation Philippines.

This twelve day course held at the University of de La Salle in Dasmarinas Cavite was meant to give additional training to those from select institutions involved in conservation work. They tackled a range of skills from GIS mapping, analytical modelling, community discussions, as well as scientific debates and study design.

From this added learning, Ysabella has opened new ideas for teaching conservation, as well as giving her a new perspective on the involvement of different stakeholders involved in conservation projects. We are confident that she can apply all of this knowledge in her work on Negros Island.

## Mapping from Space

Last September, a most exciting collaboration between TFI and NASA began to create habitat maps to identify where the Visayan Spotted Deer and the Visayan Warty Pig could possibly exist on Negros and Panay. This tracked projecting thirty years into the future, and looking back thirty years in the past, to see how trends in land use and habitats have changed, and will change.

Footage from seven satellites dating back from 1988 were collected to gather the much needed data, and using complex modelling software, they interpreted how the changes in habitat across the thirty years would impact the future of these habitats on the islands.

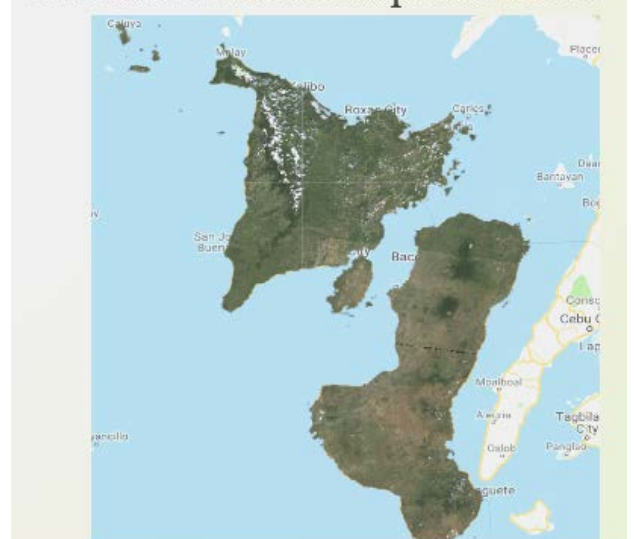
With the assistance of the NASA Develop Project Team, University of Georgia USA, and the NASA Develop personnel, the project officially ended in November. This project would not have been possible without the coordination and assistance of Dr. Jan Schipper of Phoenix Zoo, and Dr. Johanna Rode-Margono of Chester Zoo.



*Using these maps and predictive maps, we can both target areas for survey where we suspect our focal species may be, but also use the predicted habitat changes to prioritise some areas for conservation protection. –*

**Matt Ward**

### Greenest Pixel Composite 1988



Top Photo: Ysabella and the rest of the WCC participants

Bottom Photo: A snap from the NASA Report





## ANIMAL EXCHANGE

To improve the genetics of our captive breeding program, this year TFI successfully transferred birds from CENTROP, Siliman University; and Mari-it, West Visayan State University, to our breeding centers in Negros Occidental. We are confident these animal transfers will help us in more future successes in our breeding program.



Three pairs of Negros Bleeding Heart Pigeons were transferred to Negros Forest Park, Bacolod City, from CENTROP Siliman University last May 30, 2019.

CENTROP has been successfully breeding these birds with the help of Bristol Zoo.

On February 9, 2019, two pairs of Walden's Hornbills, or the Talarak, were successfully transferred to TFI's facility in Kabankalan City.

We thank both Siliman University, and West Visayan State University, for this collaboration.



*Topmost Photo: MOA signing between TFI and CENTROP*

*Top Photo: TFI's Dino Gutierrez with Siliman University's Dr. Mike Alcala, overseeing the NBHP transfers.*

*Left Photo: CENTROP's Loujean handling one of the NBHP.*

*Far Left Photo: Handling of the Talarak in preparation for transfer.*



# BIGGEST WIN FOR 2019!



Last November 18, 2019, securing 25 years for Negros Forest Park finally became official! Governor Bong Lacson graced us with his presence, as we signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Province of Negros Occidental to ensure our Rainforest in the Heart of Bacolod City stays safe for future generations.

Governor Bong also signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Association of Negros Producers (ANP), where a street facing portion of the Park will be turned over to them to create a flagship showroom of all things Negros-produced.

“

**THIS IS A GREAT WIN FOR ALL OF US ON NEGROS ISLAND. AND WE COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF EVERY NEGRENSE, AND FILIPINO, WHO RALLIED BEHIND US TO MAKE OUR HOPES AND DREAMS A REALITY! - ANTOINETTE BEGRE-LACSON**

This partnership merges the Natural Heritage, Cultural Heritage (via the Negros Museum), and the Economic and Agricultural Heritage of what Negros has to offer! Creating a diverse hub to showcase the best of Negros Island, this is a most exciting venture for all of us!

Not only will this new partnership bring more visitors to the Negros Forest Park, we hope to create an educational hub where we can teach the future generation about the importance of our endemic flora and fauna, and why we must preserve and conserve our environment.



*Leftmost Top Photo: Members of TFI, ANP and the Provincial Government*



*Top Left Photo: MOA signing between TFI and Governor Bong*

*Bottom Left Photo: MOA signing between ANP and Governor Bong*





## Updated Animal Inventory

### Kabankalan

SPECEIS	COMMON NAME	Stocks
Rufous Headed Hornbill	<i>Rhabdotorrhinus waldeni</i>	7.6.0
Visayan Tarictic Hornbill	<i>Penelopides panini</i>	15.15.0
Southern Rufous Hornbill	<i>Buceros mindanensis</i>	1.2.3
Samar Rufous Hornbill	<i>Buceros semigaleatus</i>	1.0.0
Mindanao Writhed Hornbill	<i>Rhabdotorrhinus leucocephalus</i>	8.7.0
Negros Bleeding Heart Pigeon	<i>Gallicolumba keayi</i>	11.11.3
Blue-naped Parrot	<i>Tanygnathus lucionensis</i>	14.19.3
Philippine Blue-backed Parrot	<i>Tanygnathus everetti</i>	1.2.0
Visayan Warty Pig	<i>Sus cebifrons negrinus</i>	4.7.8
Visayan Spotted Deer	<i>Rusa alfredi</i>	8.14.5

### Negros Forest Park

SPECEIS	COMMON NAME	Stocks
Rufous Headed Hornbill	<i>Rhabdotorrhinus waldeni</i>	2.2.0
Visayan Tarictic Hornbill	<i>Penelopides panini</i>	4.3.0
Southern Rufous Hornbill	<i>Buceros mindanensis</i>	1.1.0
Mindanao Writhed Hornbill	<i>Rhabdotorrhinus leucocephalus</i>	1.1.0
Negros Bleeding Heart Pigeon	<i>Gallicolumba keayi</i>	11.17.0
Philippine Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua haematuropygia</i>	1.1.0
Philippine Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo philippensis</i>	4.4.2
Blue-naped Parrot	<i>Tanygnathus lucionensis</i>	2.2.0
Visayan Warty Pig	<i>Sus cebifrons negrinus</i>	18.17.0
Visayan Spotted Deer	<i>Rusa alfredi</i>	16.14.0
Visayan Leopard Cat	<i>Prionailurus bengalensis rabori</i>	4.5.0

# Our Partners



**Bristol Zoological Society**  
Saving Wildlife Together







**From all of us at Talarak  
Foundation, Inc.,  
THANK YOU  
for making 2019  
GREAT!**