

A WORLD FIRST FOR BACOLOD

In a world first, the Negros Forests and Ecological Foundation (NFEFI) in Bacolod City has successfully bred in captivity a threatened and endangered Philippine Eagle-Owl.

The Philippine-Eagle Owl – *Bubo Philippensis* – is one of the largest species of owls in the world. It is on the critically endangered list.

As part of its captive breeding program, NFEFI's Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) acquired three female and three male Eagle-Owls from the Avilion Montalban Zoological Park in Rizal through the Philippine Owls Conservation Program.

Only two pairs successfully paired. One pair began showing breeding behavior late last year. They had several unfruitful attempts at breeding earlier this year, but on October 13 an egg was discovered which the female successfully incubated. It hatched on November 21.

Said NFEFI chairman, Gerry Ledesma: "We are thrilled with the arrival of the owlet. We congratulate the Center's curator Dr. Leo Suarez and his team on the being the first to breed

this threatened species in captivity. Their hard work and patience have paid off.”

There have been numerous attempts to breed this species in captivity for later release into the wild, but until now, all attempts have failed.

“The first few weeks of the owlet’s life are crucial especially as this the first time the parents have reared a chick”, said Dr Suarez.

“We are closely monitoring the owlet and we’re delighted to report it seems healthy and is growing fast”.

Little is known about the breeding biology of the Philippine Eagle-Owl. Dr Suarez and his team are collecting as much data as possible to have a better understanding of the species.

Known as “kuwago” or “bukao” the Philippine Eagle-Owl is endemic to the Philippines. It has a small, severely fragmented population which is undergoing a rapid decline as a result of extensive lowland deforestation

It has lengthened feathers above and behind the eye known as “horns” and “ear tufts”. Its conservation status is that of an

internationally and nationally protected species whose trade is not allowed.

Continued human development means extinction for many species. Captive breeding programs may be the only hope of saving some species for succeeding generations. In 1995 NFEFI launched an active breeding program by building its Biodiversity Conservation Center by the Lagoon in Bacolod City.

At the Center visitors can learn about NFEFI conservation projects especially the endangered species captive breeding programs. Visitors can see rare warty pigs, leopard cats, spotted deer, Visayan hornbills and many more animals in danger of vanishing forever.

ends