

UK BIRD EXPERT IMPRESSED

Leading British bird expert, Nigel Simpson, was in Bacolod last week to host with the Negros Forests and Ecological Foundation, Inc (NFEFI) and Fauna & Flora International (FFI), a seminar on establishing stud books and using the latest software to ensure the genetic diversity of animals thus safeguarding their long-term survival.



Dr. Leo Suarez, curator of NFEFI's Biodiversity Conservation Center, Renee Lorica, FFI-PBCP researcher – holding one of the Center's prized Visayan Leopard Cat Kittens – Nigel Simpson from Bristol Zoo.

During his visit, Mr. Simpson, who is Senior Overseer of Birds at England's Bristol Zoo, took time out to tour NFEFI's Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) alongside the Provincial Capitol Lagoon to see the breeding program of endangered species. These includes Visayan Warty Pigs, Philippine Spotted Deer, Visayan Leopard Cats and Visayan Tarictic Hornbills.

Of special interest was the new and far-reaching Bacolod-based project investigating the conservation status and likely future management needs of the Visayan Leopard Cat. Headed by researcher Renee Lorica, this is backed by FFI and the Philippine

Biodiversity Conservation Project (PBCP). It is being funded by a grant from the Florida--based Sea World-Busch Gardens Conservation Fund.

The Visayan Leopard Cat is one of the world's smallest and most threatened felines. NFEFI currently has two Leopard Cat kittens, both rescued from a local farm in January.

"NFEFI is doing important conservation work," said Mr. Simpson. "Given their limited budgets, what they have achieved is truly impressive".

Before flying back to England on Sunday, he said he found his visit to the Visayas very valuable and enjoyable.

"I plan to return in the future to see the progress being made with the many conservation projects here. They are essential if critically endangered species are to survive and flourish once again," he added.



Dr. Leo Suarez, curator of NFEFI's Biodiversity Conservation Center, shows Nigel Simpson from England's Bristol Zoo one of the Center's prized Visayan Leopard Cat kittens.

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Issued by the Negros Forests and Ecological Foundation, Inc. (NFEFI). For additional information, please contact NFEFI Trustee, Robert Harland on 433 2036 or 0916 343 7048.