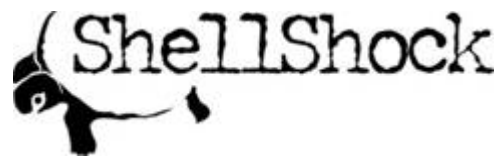


FRESHWATER TURTLE CONSERVATION

IN PALAWAN

FINAL REPORT



Project Partners



By

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Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines

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FINAL REPORT

COUNTRY: PHILIPPINES

**PROJECT TITLE: FRESHWATER TURTLE CONSERVATION IN PALAWAN
Project Phase I**

PROJECT DURATION: December 2006 - December 2007

PROJECT SITE: Palawan, Philippines

PHILIPPINE PROJECT COOPERATORS:

**Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB)
Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center (PWRCC)
Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD)
Municipal Government of Narra, Palawan, Philippines
Western Philippines University (WPU)
Concerned agencies and authorities**

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FRESHWATER TURTLE CONSERVATION IN PALAWAN

FINAL REPORT

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Project aims (purpose)

The main purpose of the project is to conserve the threatened freshwater turtles of Palawan. To achieve this, the project aimed in its first phase which was covered by Shellshock from December 2006 to December 2007:

1. to develop a facility for the captive management of threatened turtle species;
2. to accommodate those threatened turtles that were confiscated by the government, rescued or obtained from private turtle collectors;
3. to identify appropriate pilot sites for release and protection of the turtles; and
4. to conduct environmental education on the status and threats of local freshwater turtle species and raise awareness among local communities, academe, and local government units.

In the future, a second phase of the project is aimed:

5. to capacitate local communities for turtle conservation and prepare them for turtle releases in their areas; and
6. to conduct an experimental soft-release at one pilot site.

Project outputs expectation and accomplishment

The following gives a summary of accomplishments in line with the expected outputs (Table 1). For details please refer to the monthly reports.

Table 1: Expected and accomplished outputs of the Freshwater Turtle Conservation in Palawan Project.

Expected output	Accomplished output
1. An assurance colony of threatened turtles consisting of, but not limited to <i>S. leytensis</i> obtained from confiscation and from private collectors who held them in captivity has been established in the facilities of KFI in Narra, Palawan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On 1000 m² of the land area of the Katala Institute of Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation (KIEBC) facilities for keeping freshwater turtles were developed. This includes among others quarantine cells, outdoor enclosures, caretaker house, drainage, and septic tank.• As of 31 December 2007, KIEBC accommodated 37 <i>Siebenrockiella leytensis</i>, 11 <i>Cyclemys dentata</i>, 11 <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>, and 2 <i>Dogania subplana</i>.
2. Local staff of KFI and interested volunteers and students has been trained in properly keeping freshwater turtles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A total of two trainings on basic turtle identification, morphology, health and captive care have been conducted.• A total of 29 people including caretakers, volunteers, college students, KFI staff, wildlife wardens and staff of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources were trained.
3. A potential output might be that the animals develop breeding activities which eventually	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mating was observed in three (<i>S. leytensis</i>, <i>C. amboinensis</i> and <i>D. subplana</i>) of the four species kept.

<p>result in successful reproduction. This would be especially interesting if <i>S. leytensis</i> would breed, since almost nothing is known on the reproduction of the species.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of six eggs were laid – but not properly nested - by <i>S. leytensis</i>. • One artificial nesting area was constructed for <i>S. leytensis</i>. • New knowledge was gained on breeding behaviour of the species.
<p>4. Pilot site(s) for release and conservation are described in terms of existing turtle populations (size and composition) and habitat conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term population size studies with focus on <i>S. leytensis</i> were conducted in five sites in Northern Palawan. • Studies provided estimates on population size of all three hard-shelled turtle species. • Morphological data of a total of 240 <i>S. leytensis</i>, 67 <i>C. amboinensis</i> and 108 <i>C. dentata</i> were collected. • Habitats of the sites were described and threats identified. • Potential for soft-release determined.
<p>5. Educational materials on the status of Palawan’s non-marine turtles, the threats to the species, and the laws and legislation pertaining to illegal trade of the species have been developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The follow education materials were developed: 2000 bookmarks, 8 posters one each per species (4 in English, 4 in Tagalog), 1000 calendars, and one fact sheet. • A total of 50 conservation education campaigns were conducted in Narra (21), Puerto Princesa City (2), Dumaran (13), Roxas (3), Taytay (4) and Rizal (7), approximately reaching 5300 students of both high school and elementary schools, college students, barangay officials, and community members from all target sites. • Two cross visits of students at KIEBC. • Facts about Palawan’s freshwater turtles were presented during a festival in Narra, the Ecology Week of the Western Philippine University and a national conference on wildlife trade. • The abstract of the research paper entitled “Conservation status of the critically endangered Philippine Forest Turtle <i>Siebenrockiella leytensis</i> (Taylor, 1920) in Palawan” and authored by Schoppe and Matillano was submitted for oral presentation at the 17th annual symposium of the Wildlife Conservation Society of the Philippines that will be held in Baybay, Leyte from 14-17 April 2008.
<p>6. Collaborative research activities between KFI and the Western Philippines University have been strengthened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In three of the sites the fieldwork was done in financial and technical collaboration with the Western Philippines University. This led to the joined publication (see above). • In addition collaboration with the Department for Environment and Natural Resources, the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development and the Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Centre were

	<p>strengthened.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project activities especially fieldwork was coordinated with other turtle projects in Palawan [CEPF of Joie Matillano (WPU), and with BP Conservation Program of Mr. Pierre Fidenci].
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Financial breakdown

A total of 603,101.35 PHP (equivalent of Euro 10,000.00 or USD12,468.50) were received from the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Shellshock Campaign and had been deposited on the KFI account last June 2006. Please find below the total expenses per budget item (Table. 2). Itemized expenses are attached to this report as excel file.

Table 2: Expenses per budget item and total expenses.

Budget Item	Amount allocated based on proposal	Spent	Balance
Travel/Food/Accommodation	PHP 72,372.00	PHP 58,038.86	PHP 14,333.14
Salaries	PHP 120,620.00	PHP 121,885.00	-PHP 1,265.00
Equipment	PHP 60,310.00	PHP 40,703.53	PHP 19,606.47
Communication	PHP 6,031.00	PHP 7,804.00	-PHP 1,773.00
Field supplies	PHP 12,062.00	PHP 12,090.83	-PHP 28.83
Construction	PHP 259,333.00	PHP 320,949.97	-PHP 61,616.97
Info Material	PHP 12,062.00	PHP 41,619.05	-PHP 29,557.05
10 % Contingency	PHP 60,310.00		
	PHP 603,101.35	PHP 603,091.24	PHP 10.11

Additional sources of financial or in-kind support for the development of the Katala Institute for Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation in general and for the Freshwater Turtle Conservation project specifically were received from the Municipality of Narra, Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP), Ford Foundation Philippines, the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program (PCCP), and Katala Foundation.

Future plans

Populations of *S. leytensis* at sites that were identified as having potential for future soft-release or that need special conservation support will be monitored by KFI for at least five consecutive years. The funding for the fieldwork of this was secured from the Turtle Conservation Fund (TCF) through EAZA-Shellshock Campaign for two years (2008 and 2009). Funding for the follow three years has still to be applied for.

We also intend to intensify our efforts to improve breeding facilities of *S. leytensis*. Several artificial nesting designs will be tested. At the same time hatchery facilities have to be elaborated and we consider the acquisition of an incubator if finances will allow.

We hope to be able to enroll our turtle care taker in the near future in a zookeepers training seminar to improve her skills and knowledge.

Information Education Campaigns will be continued in PCCP project sites.

Acknowledgement

KFI is indebted to the following individuals and organizations that in one or another way helped in the implementation of this project:

- First and foremost to the Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) through the Shellshock Turtle and Tortoise Conservation Campaign, in particular to Dr. Kevin Buley, Shellshock Campaign Organizer and Curator of Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates at Chester Zoo, UK.
- Roland Wirth, Chairman of the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP).
- Mayors Lucena D. and Atty. Clarito D. Demaala Jr. and MENRO Rolando R. Tagyab, and the Sangguniang Bayan of the Municipality of Narra.
- Regional Director Reynaldo R. Villafuerte of DENR-EMB; Director Dr. Mundita Lim of DENR-PAWB; PENRO Juan dela Cruz, and Vivian Soriano of DENR-PENRO; CENRO Fernando Tactay, EMS Mercy Almorfe, and PASu Emmanuel Alfaro of CENRO Narra.
- The multi-partied monitoring team (MMT) headed by CENRO-Narra.
- OIC Director Dr. Glenn Rebong, Dr. Joanne Justo and Rainier Manalo of PWRCC.
- OIC Director Romeo Dorado of PCSDS and the provincial government of Palawan.
- PCCP principal sponsors and partner donors: Loro Parque Fundacion (LPF) Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP), Chester Zoological Gardens, and Conservation des Espèces et des Populations Animales (CEPA).
- President Dr. Concepto B. Magay, and Roger Dolorosa of the Western Philippine University (WPU), especially the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) of Conservation International (CI) that financed the Philippine Pond Turtle study headed by Joie Matillano.
- The municipal and barangay officials and communities of Narra, Puerto Princesa City, Roxas, Dumarán and Taytay.
- Field researchers Miguelito Cervancia, Diverlie Acosta, Geoffrey Aludia, Edward Bolen, Marites Peneyra, Jona Miguel, Benjie Galindez, and RJ Malcampo.
- KFI staff Siegfred Diaz, Janice Tupas, Rommel Cruz, Glesselle Batin, and Michael Plazos.
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- To carpenter Galpok and the laborers.
- Last but not least, the turtle caretakers Miguelito Cervancia and Diverlie Acosta, and volunteers Ivy Regodos, Geoffrey Aludia, and Ronelito Esuma.

Thank you!

