

# Cebu Flowerpecker project

Final Report | Andrew Ross Reintar







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## Project summary

Over the last two years the Cebu Flowerpecker conservation project has contributed to both the conservation of the Cebu Flowerpecker and its habitat, which also includes several threatened endemic species. This was done strategically through community-based forest protection, research, capacity building, conservation awareness and habitat management.

A total of 12 conservation awareness events were held, 10 of which were biodiversity lectures and a further two through the annual Cebu Provincial Wildlife Quiz Bowl. The lectures were delivered to a diverse audience, including students and teachers, local leaders and decision makers, private corporations, NGOs, uniformed personnel (Philippine Airforce) and mostly to local communities in areas where the Cebu Flowerpecker exists. The project opened up a dialogue with local leaders to introduce, discuss and garner support to the project and raise awareness of the Cebu Flowerpecker and its habitat. This was important to the success of every aspect of the project.

Two of the highlights of the project were the 2017 and 2018 Cebu Provincial Wildlife Quiz Bowls, where in 2017 53 schools participated in the activity with over 450 individuals in attendance, the highest in the quiz bowl history.

In total, 1,124 individuals from over 90 institutions were reached through the awareness raising activities of the project.



## Introduction

The Cebu Flowerpecker is one of the rarest and most threatened birds in the world. It was once believed to be extinct until its rediscovery in 1992 (Dutson, 1993) in a small patch of forest in central Cebu. Since then it has been recorded in two other sites in southern Cebu; Nug-as forest, Alcoy and Babayungan forest, Dalaguete. It is considered to be one of the rarest birds in the world with <100 individuals remaining, and it is found in one of the most biologically degraded islands in the world.

In total, the habitat that remains for the Cebu Flowerpecker is ~1,000 hectares of forest. This ~1,000 hectares of forest is not only home to the Cebu Flowerpecker but also of other threatened endemic species of Cebu, including the Critically Endangered Cebu Brown Dove, Endangered Black Shama and Cebu Boobook (IUCN 2016), Critically Endangered Cebu Small Worm Skink (IUCN 2009) and Cebu Cinnamon (DENR DAO 2017-11) amongst other endemic subspecies.

Following its rediscovery, a site conservation programme was initiated first with Philippine Wetlands Conservation Foundation and then with Cebu Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. (CBCFI) from 1999 until 2012. CBCFI facilitated habitat rehabilitation and forest protection activities in Tabunan. Recognising the importance of the species and of promoting birdwatching in the Philippines, the Department of Tourism supported BirdLife International's 'Preventing Extinctions' programme for Cebu Flowerpecker.

In 2014 the PBCFI, in partnership with Foundation for the Philippine Environment, updated the conservation status of Cebu's Key Biodiversity Areas. The outputs from this workshop identified Cebu Flowerpecker and its known distribution sites as a priority for conservation. PBCFI, with support from Chester Zoo, LEAR Corporation, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Provincial and Local Government Units, academic institutions, local communities and key individuals, built on the previous initiatives of the Southern Cebu Biodiversity Conservation Project.

Despite the work that has been done, the Cebu Flowerpecker population is still estimated at 60-70 individuals (BirdLife International 2018). The rediscovery of the Cebu Flowerpecker has given Cebuanos a second chance to take good care of their fragile biodiversity. This project has contributed to preventing the extinction of the Cebu Flowerpecker and other threatened wildlife in the species remaining forest habitat.



## Project Objectives

This project aimed to contribute to the conservation of the remaining population and habitats of the Cebu flowerpecker in Cebu Island, Philippines through research, forest protection, habitat management, capacity building and information education.

The project objectives were:

1. To provide an update on the population and habitat status of the Cebu flowerpecker
2. To strengthen forest protection activities in the remaining forests of southern and Cebu central protected landscape
3. To facilitate integration of Cebu flowerpecker conservation in local government plans
4. To develop biodiversity conservation awareness to local communities and other stakeholders through information education and;
5. To facilitate training and development activities of local communities to strengthen on-site conservation programmes



## Methods

### Cebu Provincial Wildlife Quiz Bowls

This is an annual quiz that started in 2011 as a small event attended by less than 20 secondary schools. It was conceptualized and initiated by PBCFI and CTU-Argao, and over time has grown significantly to where in 2016 it was recognized and adopted by the Provincial Government of Cebu. Over the years the number of schools and students that take part in the quiz has increased, as has the difficulty of the questions and the knowledge level of participating students and teachers. This is currently the only quiz bowl in Cebu Province that is solely focused on biodiversity and wildlife.

Question categories cover general biodiversity and wildlife knowledge, Philippine and Cebu biodiversity and wildlife and news and current events. The winners (1st, 2nd and 3rd place) of this event will represent Cebu Province in the Regional and then the National Wildlife Quiz Bowl (2015 – 2018) competing against other provinces and regions of the Philippines.

Since 2013, Andrew has been one of the main organisers of the event and has been responsible for developing the questions. From the project onset in 2017 Andrew has incorporated questions about the Cebu Flowerpecker and its habitat into the quiz, as part of an effort to raise awareness of the species.

### Local biodiversity lectures and discussions

To address the lack of local knowledge and awareness of the Cebu Flowerpecker and its conservation, the project delivered biodiversity lectures to local communities and leaders. Through these lectures and discussions this project provided conservation education to different relevant stakeholders and sectors.

### Stakeholder meetings

Several stakeholder meetings were held with local associations (KMYLBNA, BALAK and BASKET) in Nug-As, Alcoy, and local communities in Tagbao and Tabunan, where the project was presented and discussions held about the conservation of the species. A meeting was also held with the Mayor and councillors of Alcoy, which included a visit to Nug-as Forest. Finally, meetings were conducted with the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office of the Cebu Provincial Government, to partner with the implementation of the project.

### Forest warden training (capacity building)

In partnership with and supported by the Provincial Local Government Unit of Cebu, the project provided biodiversity training to local forest wardens of Alcoy and Dalaguete town, as well as staff of the Environment office of Dalaguete. The training topics were about the importance of biodiversity, Philippines and Cebu's biodiversity, biodiversity monitoring systems, bird morphology, identification and monitoring.



## Results

### Cebu Provincial Wildlife Quiz Bowls

Both quiz bowls were conducted successfully with the 6th (2017) quiz bowl having the highest number of attendees since its inception, with 53 schools and around 450 participants. The 7th quiz bowl in 2018 featured less participating schools with 31 and around 300 participants because of a schedule conflict of another activity with most of the schools. The two quiz bowls garnered a total of around 750 participants most of which were secondary school students and teachers. On the two quiz bowls, the Cebu Flowerpecker was recognised as the theme species and were the trophy design with several questions in the quiz about the Cebu Flowerpecker and its habitat with photos and trivia.

### Local biodiversity lectures and discussions

A total of 10 biodiversity lectures and discussions were conducted throughout the project. These lectures were presented primarily to local communities and local leaders and decision makers in sites where the Cebu Flowerpecker exists. Lectures were also held at multiple institutions, from the local elementary, secondary and tertiary schools and teachers, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Cebu Provincial Environment and Natural Resource Office, other NGOs including the Soil and Water Conservation Foundation, provincial and local tourism offices and private corporations.

The lectures informed attendees about the importance of biodiversity, the status of biodiversity in the Philippines and Cebu, the threatened endemic species of Cebu, the threats and what can be and should be done about it. For student presentations, Andrew included an additional topic about being a wildlife biologist, the work, its uniqueness and privileges of being one. This is to (hopefully) inspire them to pursue a career on wildlife and biodiversity conservation.

### Stakeholder meetings

In April 2017 stakeholder meetings were successfully held with local associations (KMYLBNA, BALAK and BASKET) in Nug-As, Alcoy, and local communities in Tagbao and Tabunan. Andrew also met with the Mayor and councillors of Alcoy, which included a visit to Nug-as Forest.

A significant outcome of the meeting with the Environment and Natural Resources Office of the Cebu Provincial Government was the development of the Cebu Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2018. Andrew was able to provide his input and help with facilitating the discussion.

### Forest warden training (capacity building)

The project delivered biodiversity monitoring systems training for local forest wardens of Alcoy and Dalaguete town and staff from the Dalaguete Environment office. A total of 40 participants joined the training, and were educated about the endemic species of Cebu, including the Cebu Flowerpecker. As a result of this training, bird species monitoring has now been incorporated as part of the wardens regular monitoring work. T-shirt uniforms were also distributed to the forest warden participants.

A full list of all of the awareness raising activities held is shown on the following pages.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>	<b>Participant group/sector</b>
June 2017	Biodiversity and Cebu Flowerpecker lecture in Nug-as, Alcoy Elementary School	60	Elementary school teachers and students
April 2017	Biodiversity and Cebu Flowerpecker lecture in Tabunan, Central Cebu Protected Landscape	32	Local communities, Barangay/Village officials, College students, Protected Area Superintendent personnel of CCPL and Soil and Water Conservation Foundation Staff
July 2017	Biodiversity and Cebu Flowerpecker lecture in Sonog, Central Cebu Protected Landscape	34	Local communities, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office of Cebu, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officer of Balamban and Soil and Water Conservation Foundation personnel
July 2017	Site visit in Nug-as Forest, Alcoy and dialogue with Alcoy Mayor, councillors and Head of Alcoy Tourism Office and personnel	16	KMYLBNA Forest Wardens, Alcoy Mayor, councillors and Head of Alcoy Tourism Office and personnel
August 2017	Educational Visit of local communities from CCPL to Nug-as Forest in Alcoy	38	Local communities from Balamban, CCPL, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office of Cebu, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources personnel of Balamban, KMYLBNA forest wardens and Soil and Water Conservation Foundation personnel
August 2017	6 <sup>th</sup> Cebu Provincial Wildlife Quiz Bowl	450 from 53 secondary schools	Secondary school teachers and students, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office of Cebu and other department personnel, NGOs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources
December 2017	Biodiversity monitoring, system training and biodiversity awareness lectures in Magalambak, Dalaguete	40	Forest wardens of Alcoy and Dalaguete, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources personnel of Dalaguete, Cebu Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office personnel
June 2018	Biodiversity monitoring, system training and biodiversity awareness lectures in Catmon, Northern Cebu	26	Local upland communities in Mt. Kapayas of Catmon and Carmen, Cebu Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office personnel, Department of Environment and Natural Resources



<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>	<b>Participant group/sector</b>
August 2018	7 <sup>th</sup> Cebu Provincial Wildlife Quiz Bowl	300 from 31 secondary schools	Secondary school teachers and students, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office of Cebu and other department personnel, NGOs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources
October 2018	Biodiversity lecture during the Dalaguete Biodiversity Strategy and Action Planning	36	Local village officials of Dalaguete, Municipal councillors and department heads of Dalaguete, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources personnel of Dalaguete, local academic Institutions, NGOs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Office
March 2019	Biodiversity monitoring, system training and biodiversity awareness lectures in Alegria, Southern Cebu	28	Local upland communities of Alegria, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office personnel of Alegria and Cebu Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office personnel
May 2019	Biodiversity lecture to a private corporation (Crimson Resort and Spa) in Nug-as, Alcoy	64	KMYLBNA forest wardens, Crimson Resort and Spa staff, Philippine Air Force, Eco Explorations (NGO)



## Recommendations

### Continued support for the annual Cebu Provincial Wildlife Quiz Bowl

This event directly engages a large number of schools and individuals, and widespread academic (schools and teachers) participants in all conservation activities in Cebu. Though ecology and biological science is taught in secondary schools, there is little to none about biodiversity, particularly local biodiversity. This activity serves as one bridge to that gap - this is the only quiz bowl in Cebu that is focused on biodiversity and wildlife. Though the number of participating schools is increasing, there are still more to reach, particularly in far flung secondary schools. Developing more partnerships in supporting this activity is important to sustain this annual activity. Support may vary from money to manpower, educational materials (e.g books) and sponsoring field trips in biodiversity sites, so that the students and teachers may get to experience what they have studied and read.

### Production and Distribution of educational materials

One important medium for biodiversity conservation awareness is through educational materials. Informative booklets and posters would be a great resource to produce and distribute to schools and the general public. Distributing these materials to schools for students and teachers or to other strategic places is vital for spreading information and awareness.