

## 2-DECADE JOURNEY

2023 REPORT | ISSUE 07

### A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER & PRESIDENT



"From a family NGO to a well-established international NGO; certainly, my long-time goal"

The D'ABOVILLE Foundation and Demo Farm Inc started as a family endeavor soon after our family built our house in what is now Malasimbo Estate way back in 1995, when we started inter-acting with our neighbors by first inviting them to share a meal on Easter. Shortly after, we started granting scholarships to a dozen of students whose families could not afford to send them to high school which lasted for at least 4 years until their graduation. And eventually, we founded DAF in 2004 to create a legal entity as an NGO in order to pursue and develop our humanitarian and community-development projects which started with our coffee and mushroom demo farm to provide an alternative means of livelihood to displaced coconut farmers after the collapse of the copra industry.

Then, in 2011 at the beginning of Malasimbo Music & Arts Festival, DAF turned to the needs of the Mangyan IPs of Mindoro. DAF's first project was the donation and installation of solar energy in sitio Baclayan where the Iraya Mangyans lived without electricity. On the same year, DAF provided college scholarship to a Hanunuo Mangyan mother in her late 30s to pursue her dream of college education. In exchange for her scholarship, she taught school children in her village in Mansalay to write their ancient script Surat Mangyan. This Surat Mangyan program was expanded to 3 different elementary schools that ran for several years.

Ten years ago DAF had a major development with an ambitious biodiversity conservation program focusing on tamaraw and the mangyan indigenous communities living with this iconic animal. This has been a long journey, but I am proud to see the scale and scope that this originally humble initiative has taken us along the years, getting more and more qualified people working with us, with many local and international prestigious partners on our side. **Continue on Page 8**



## TOP NEWS

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# THE COMMUNITY - TAMARAW DRIVEN LANDSCAPE PROGRAM – PROGRESS AND FINDINGS

*by Emmanuel Schutz, Program Director*

## 2023, ALL PROGRAM'S COMPONENTS BACK IN MOTION



The goal of the Program is to create, preserve and restore the socio-environmental conditions to:

- (1) Expand Tamaraw populations across Mindoro and ensure the long-term conservation of the species and the habitats it can be found
- (2) Enhance the well-being, food independence and capacity for self-determination of the indigenous communities sharing their living space with the tamaraw

It has three main pillars of action:

- Research work on species and habitat
- Bio-cultural landscape approach with local indigenous communities
- Strengthening on-site protection and stakeholder coordination

In 2023, all components are back in motion thanks to new support and partnerships.

## Research Work on Species & Habitat

### MTS IGLIT-BACO NATURAL PARK – OVERESTIMATION OF THE TRUE NUMBER OF TAMARAW CORROBORATED

In April 2023, we conducted a second iteration of the tamaraw point count using the independent double observer estimator method. The method aims at providing a more robust estimate of the number of animals in the count zone by measuring the probability of detection and decreasing the subjectivity induced by direct observation of animals in the field and by removing multiple counts.

This year, the operation was conducted at the same time as the traditional point count. Similarly to the operation in 2022, rangers were trained in the protocol before the main operation. Raw results were thereafter analysed by our scientific partner in France, using the same statistical model that was developed the year before. A comparative look at the results corroborates our concerns:



2022: Double Observer Point Count [163 – 200] versus traditional annual point count = 403  
2023: Double Observer Point Count = [135 – 180] versus traditional annual point count = 325

Just like 2022, the 2023 estimate is nearly 50% lower than what the annual count is returning, while the proportion of the difference between both methods is constant over the two consecutive years. This reinforces the conclusion that the traditional point count is overestimating the number of tamaraws present in the count zone in April.

In addition, the lower abundance estimates in 2023 compared to 2022 might highlight that the tamaraw population at MIBNP is decreasing, which is also visible in the results of the annual traditional count for the past few years.

Yet more analysis is needed to determine if the population has truly started a decline or is subject to an artifact of the method.

Nevertheless, these findings substantiate the absolute need to increase the range of the species to enable the population to grow again. This is the aim of the third pillar of the program, working hand in hand with the residing Taobuid communities and Park authorities, exploring ways to create a larger “tamaraw safe zone” based on customary laws.

To learn more, use your mobile phone to scan the QR Code on the right.



## ARUYAN-MALATI: LIFE OF COMMUNITIES AND TAMARAW INTER-MINGLING

Last November 2023, DAF provided technical assistance to a new survey in the Aruyan-Malati region, combining field patrol with information from local indigenous communities. Signs of presence were collected beyond the 200ha polygon rendered by the camera trap survey conducted in 2021 and 2022. This validates our hypothesis that the potential area of presence of the species over time is much larger than what can be assessed during a research with a definite time frame. Yet, this area of presence is highly affected by the lifestyle and movement of the semi-nomadic indigenous communities living there.



Some communities are reporting worsening issues with tamaraw entering crops (slash-and-burn type of agriculture). This issue of human-wildlife conflict must be addressed seriously if we want this population to have a future, even more than the number of animals in the Aruyan-Malati region remains very low, and the population is still at high risk of local extinction. DAF is committed to supporting the in working on these challenges.



# NEW FINDING OF TAMARAW PRESENCE IN THE INNER MINDORO REGION

DAF provided technical support and coaching to rangers and technical staff of the TCP in their mission to identify all remaining tamaraw populations or isolated groups across Mindoro, outside known sites. The assistance included training on protocols, preparation of maps, analysis of results and maps. We also took the lead in planning and conducting some verification surveys, which was the opportunity to test and refine our “four-step methodology” in defining and verifying tamaraw presence.



We were successful in confirming the presence of the animal in a new location within Mindoro’s mountain range, confirming that the Inner Mindoro region may shelter more tamaraws than originally thought, thus extending the overall distribution of the species. Yet we still need to determine if this new location is connected to the main area of presence in the Upper Amnay Watershed Region, thus being part of the same subpopulation, or if those tamaraws are isolated or if they are vagrant animals.



In addition, several members of the upland indigenous communities, who we used as informants and guides, expressed confidence that tamaraws are also present in other areas that were not surveyed for a long time or at all. This would mean that the species could be expanding in recent years or that we have been missing information about tamaraw presence for decades. This information substantiates our assumption that the inner Mindoro region is of crucial importance for the long-term survival of the species and still need further efforts to determine the exact extent of presence of the species.



Such surveys enable us to highlight the natural richness hidden in these remote mountains of Mindoro and the need to conduct consistent biodiversity assessments. For instance, upland communities are reporting the existence of a large rodent similar to the mysterious Ilin cloud runner.



# BIO-CULTURAL LANDSCAPE APPROACH WITH LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

## CREATING A SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE FOR THE TAOBUID AND THE TAMARAW IN MIBNP

Our journey towards building a peaceful and functional system of collaboration between the Taobuid communities sharing their living space with tamaraw and the local authorities is underway. Substantial progress was made in 2023 thanks to the support of the **UK Fund/DARWIN Initiative and Mandai Nature**.



## THE BORDERS OF TAOBUID ANCESTRAL DOMAIN NOW ON THE MAP

Despite rough terrain and harsh weather, the team composed of NCIP staff and Taobuid community members who volunteered to delineate and geo-reference the boundaries of the Taobuid Ancestral Domain made their way through. The boundaries are now mapped and undergoing the necessary process of validation with other agencies of government. This is a major milestone towards the awarding of the Taobuid Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title. DAF has been supporting the entire process.



## MINDORO TAOBUID REPRESENTATIVES VISITS MT. KITANGLAD, MINDANAO

DAF was thrilled to bring several Mindoro Taobuid leaders for an inspirational journey in Bukidnon, Mindanao, where they met other indigenous peoples facing similar challenges.

From our place of stay in an eco-farm in Malaybalay, the team visited the Mount Kitanglad Range Natural Park (MKNRP), where they met tribal leaders of the Bukidnon tribe residing at the park's buffer zone. An acceptance ritual was performed, followed by a discussion with key members of the community on history and challenges. A walk in the astonishing forest of Mt. Kitanglad provided an opportunity to discuss with the park office staff and learn about the management of this protected area where DENR, LGUs and residing communities are working hand in hand.

Although, the context of MIBNP and Taobuid is unique, we hope that such experience can help to improve collaboration in park management.



Each QR code that you see in every page provides more information, we recommend that you scan all of them.

# CARE, PRINCIPLES, AND BIOMASS TO BUILD COMMON GROUND IN THE UPLAND



Although nature needs time, our permaculture journey at Station 2 base camp in MIBNP is taking shape and bearing fruits. Experiments are underway in all sections of the system, from the vegetable garden under the canopy to the food forest and the habitat restoration plots in the grassland.

More garden products means less import of external food supply, and this triggers increasing interaction with the generally secretive upland Taobuids who wish to see what is in process in this area under the management of the park office.



Native trees are growing in the biomass mounds, attracting insects that are generally absent from poorly diversified grassland habitats, showing that an ocean of grassland can be reverted to higher biodiversity biotopes if time and care are provided.

## USING BAMBOO TO BUILD-UP SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURE AND GROUP COHESION



A series of workshops led by our partners from the Philippine Permaculture Association (PPA) was the incentive for a get-together of rangers and Taobuid to learn and work together in building a 100% bamboo structure. Named “Bale Mangibok” (Mangibok House) as it is facing the Mt Iglit or Mangibok in Taobuid language, it overlooks the grassland at Landing area, demonstrating that this amazing natural resource can also be used as structural material. The cogon roof will be completed in the first quarter of 2024.



# TOWARDS A LARGER “TAMARAW SAFE REPRODUCTION ZONE” UNDER CUSTOMARY LAWS



After thorough consultations, DAF team, rangers and Taobuid representatives made their way south of the current “2016 No Hunting Agreement Zone” towards the edge of the Protected Area to delineate what shall become a “Fagfatungkudan mangilafang” literally, a safe area for wildlife to reproduce in the customary land-use system of the Taobuid. This aims to provide more space for the tamaraw population and other wildlife to be viable.

The modality of management and the proposed map will go through further consultations for validation and endorsement by all parties and it shall become a major component of the system of cooperation between the Park’s authorities and the Taobuids – the **Community Conservation Plan (CCP)**.

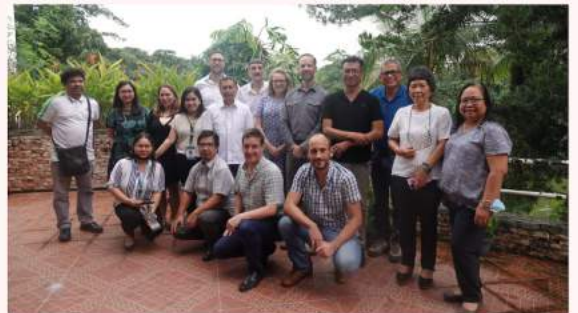


## KICKING OFF STRATEGIC WORK-PLAN WITH OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

After an inception visit in May to launch a work-plan of activities funded by the Fondation Segré, our international partners from Re:wild, Zoological Society of London (ZSL), and IUCN SSC Asian Wild Cattle Specialist Group (AWCSG) came back in force last September to pave the way for three major objectives:

- *Re-establish a law enforcement forum (LEF) as a platform to improve multi-stakeholder coordination.*
- *Introduce wildlife crime prevention science in frontline protection.*
- *Launch the feasibility study (FS) to evaluate if translocation or captive breeding has the potential to help, or not, achieve long term conservation goals for the tamaraw.*

This culminated in a three-day multi-stakeholders workshop in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro and important meetings with the DENR MIMAROPA Regional Office and Biodiversity Management Bureau in October 2023.



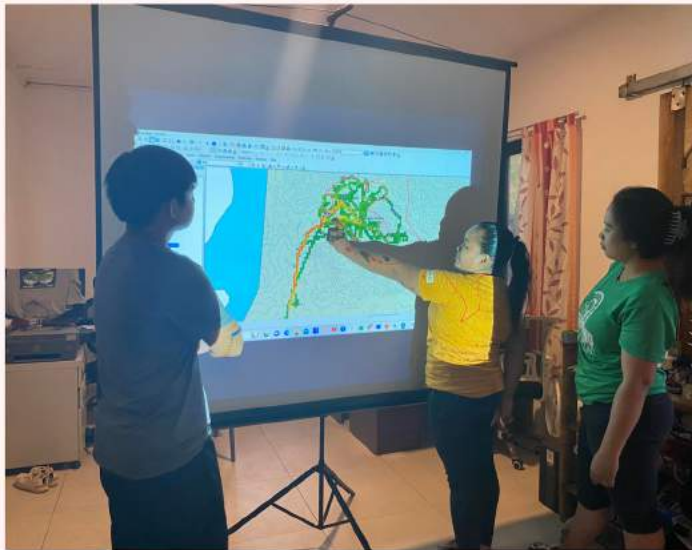
D'ABOVILLE Foundation



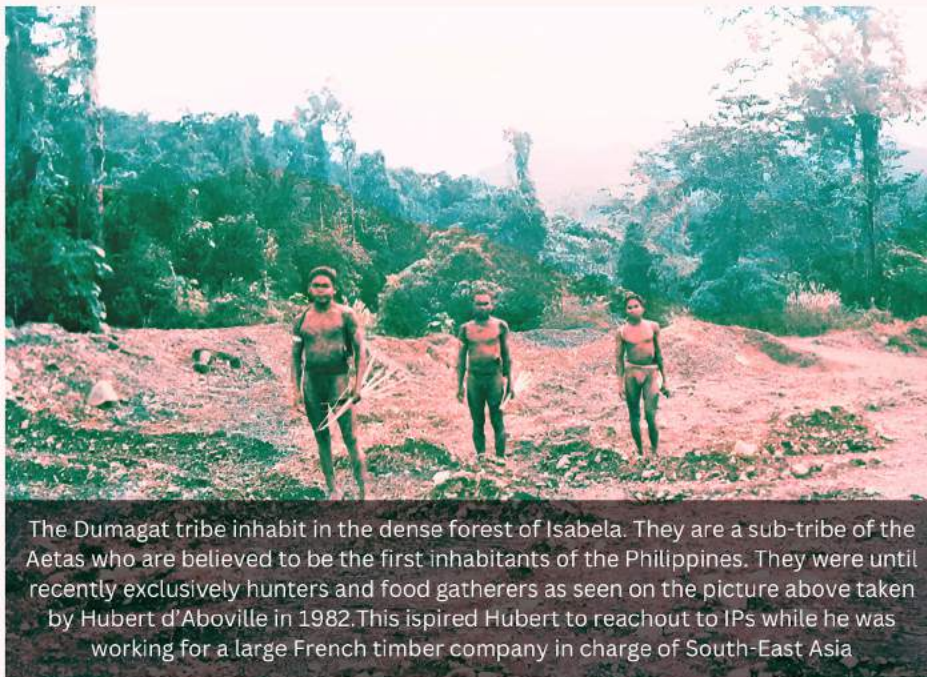


## TRAINING OF DAF TEAM, RANGERS AND DENR TECHNICAL STAFF

Subsequently, we initiated a program of capacitation of both TCP and PAMO MIBNP as well as our junior staff, starting with training and coaching of technical staff on the use of GIS software and Spatial Monitoring and Reporting tool technology (SMART).



### CONTINUED... A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER & PRESIDENT



The Dumagat tribe inhabit in the dense forest of Isabela. They are a sub-tribe of the Aetas who are believed to be the first inhabitants of the Philippines. They were until recently exclusively hunters and food gatherers as seen on the picture above taken by Hubert d'Aboville in 1982. This inspired Hubert to reach out to IPs while he was working for a large French timber company in charge of South-East Asia

Although the activities of DAF are now centered on this important program managed by Emmanuel "Manu" Schütz, Rodolfo "Ronet" Santos, and Fernando Garcia Gil, I am glad to see that this enables us to tackle a wide range of topics including the one which are very important for me, such as the preservation of cultural identity of indigenous people, and the training and coaching of new generation of young Filipinos to become future leaders and qualified resources.

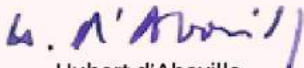
I must admit that to make a small NGO such as DAF develop is not an easy task as we are constantly looking to do projects, but also to cover the running cost of the organization.

2023 has marked the start of a new collaboration with the Zoological Society of London under the fund of Fondation Segré for the next two years but, importantly,

it is also the closure of the project under the prestigious DARWIN Initiative grant, which was our main source of funds for the past three years.

2024 will be crucial as we are looking to jump to another level with a new grant from DARWIN that will run up to end 2028. The final decision will be given to our major partner Re:Wild within March 2024. As local partner for this new 54 month project will be Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, Inc. (MBCFI) that will concentrate more specifically on legal and policy, also capacity building and education. We know well MBCFI since many years, collaborating regularly on common objectives.

2024 will be also a special year as we will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the creation of DAF. Together with our board of trustee Commissioner Ramon Moreno, I'm planning the organization of an International Conference for Conservation this coming November. Last, I want to thank all those associated to DAF for the good and smooth operation of 2023. Looking forward to an amazing 2024 together.

  
Hubert d'Aboville  
President and Founder





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## GENERAL NEWS



### CONDUCTING WORKSHOP ON THE “BIG THREE” DURING THE 31TH ANNUAL PHILIPPINE BIODIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM



Ronet, Fernando and Jackie, in collaboration with University Santo Tomas and MBCFi invited participants of the symposium to learn about the “big three” of Mindoro (tamaraw, Mindoro warty pig and Philippine deer) and to explore collaboration and new ideas for their study and conservation.



# D'ABOVILLE FOUNDATION (DAF) WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Welcoming the newest member of the DAF family, John Carlo R. Santos and Nicole A. De Castro, they will be working with us under the Fondation Segré funded activities.

Thanks to Delma Buhat for her contribution to the program in delivering documented reports on the 3-day multi-stakeholder workshop and stakeholder landscape assessment.

## JOHN CARLO REDEÑA SANTOS

We are very happy to announce the newest member of our Protection and Law enforcement officer.

John Carlo Redeña Santos. He is a young Philippine conservationist who has been working in Mindoro since 2018, including collaborative research in Mt Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary between DOST PCAARRD, University of Santo Tomas University.

We are sure that Carlo will bring great outcomes in the protection and conservation of wildlife in Mindoro.



## NICOLE ALEXIA VERIDIANO-DE CASTRO

Nicole earned a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science and Management from Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry in Vietnam in 2018. She received the DOST-SEI ASTHRDP scholarship and graduated with a Master's Degree in Biology from the University of Santo Tomas in 2022.

She formerly worked as a Project Coordinator for the World Wide Fund for Nature--Philippines on the Extended Producer Responsibility Project from the No Plastics In Nature Initiative and as a Science Research Technician II at the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau's Coastal Zone and Freshwater Ecosystems Research Division for the Microplastic Project.

As the project coordinator of the D'ABOVILLE Foundation, she collaborates with the team to achieve the project's goals of preserving the tamaraw population by representing DAF and his international partners to official government and non-government audiences, as well as producing evidence-based documentation and recommendations to guide the meta-population's long-term recovery.



## D'ABOVILLE FOUNDATION (DAF) WELCOMES OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER DURING THE 2024 BOARD MEETING



Between the stone walls of the San Agustin Church in Intramuros, Manila and in the presence of several of our international and local partners that we were delighted to welcome Dr Nikki H. Dagamac, Assistant Professor at the University of Santo Tomas, as a new board member of the Foundation. This is where Dr. Nikki introduced his accomplishments, proposals and what he can contribute to the board and the DAF team.



### PROFESSOR NIKKI HEHERSON DAGAMAC



Nikki Heherson Dagamac specializes in the evolution, ecology, and population genetics of tropical and subtropical slime molds. Please see a summary of his qualifications and background below:

- **Biogeographic Contribution:** His studies in the Philippines and Paleotropical regions support the moderate endemism hypothesis, challenging prevailing models for microorganisms.
- **Educational Background:** Currently a postdoctoral researcher in Landscape Ecology and Nature Conservation at the University of Greifswald, Germany.
- **Teaching Experience:** Volunteered as a visiting foreign lecturer at Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam, overseeing international students from the ASEAN region.

- **Balik Scientist Role:** Served as the first Balik Scientist at the University of Southern Mindanao in 2018.
- **Project Leadership:** As an early-career scientist, he leads a project funded by the German Research Ministry, focusing on slime mold traits under the threat of climate change.
- **Skills Development:** Actively learning sophisticated statistical algorithms and environmental niche modeling to understand range expansion, local genetic adaptation, and phenotypic plasticity.
- **Current Position:** Currently a long-term Balik Scientist at the University of Santo Tomas, involved in teaching technical biological subjects and leading a DOST-PCAARRD-funded project.
- **Current Projects:** Currently involved in a wildlife inventory project using camera-trapping technology in Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary and conducting a coastal assessment of flora in vulnerable communities in San Fernando City, La Union.



## Partners and collaboration

DAF team wishes to thank all the partners and donors that have made this 20 year journey possible. First of all, the government and institutional partners in the Philippines and Mindoro with whom we are working with (**DENR, Offices of the Governors.**). Then our **international partners** who contribute to the perseverance and quality of the work undertaken. Finally, the **donors** who, through their grants, acknowledge the solidity and relevance of what we try to achieve in Mindoro.

## How we work

### APPROACH AND STRATEGY OF ACTION

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY?



OUR FIELDS OF EXPERTISE



D'ABOVILLE FOUNDATION PROGRAMS AND ADVOCACY

### WHO WE ARE

The D'Aboville Foundation and Demo Farm, Inc. is a French-Filipino non-profit, non-government organization established in 2004 to work with the indigenous Mangyans, environment, and eco-cultural tourism in the Island of Mindoro in the Philippines.

The Foundation has four principal platforms of action:

- alleviation of poverty and the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Mangyan indigenous people
- the protection of the environment and biodiversity;
- development of sustainable agriculture and organic farming practices;
- uplifting of the community through responsible tourism and eco-friendly development.

### OUR VISION

The unique natural and cultural heritage of the Island of Mindoro is preserved for future generations and the well being of its people is enhanced.

### Board Members and Directors



Hubert d'Aboville  
President - Executive Director



Ara d'Aboville  
Board Member



Emmanuel d'Aboville  
Media - Communication



Aidan Hülker  
Board Member



Olivia d'Aboville  
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### You may deposit donations to :

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Account Number: 131300000336

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