

BCI Philippines Trip Report by Fiona Reid (photos by George Smiley)
January 17 to 28, 2011

Jan 17

We arrived in Manila and spent the night at the Dusit Thani Hotel, a very nice large hotel about 15 minutes from the airport.

Jan 18

We flew to Puerto Princesa, Palawan, on Philippines Airlines. We were met by Mylene Dee Rico, our local guide, and two vans and drivers. We had lunch and made a few stops en route, including observing a Common Flameback Woodpecker at its nest hole, an Ashy Drongo, and several other birds. After check-in at Daluyon Resort in Sabang we went to visit Lion Cave. The cave was set on the side of a hill and access was very wet, but Derek and I walked in. We saw few bats, but did identify a Dayak Fruit Bat. It was a very large, high-ceilinged cave with beautiful formations. Later we set a net on the trail leading to the cave. We immediately caught a number of bats: 2 Short-nosed Fruit Bats (*Cynopterus brachyotis*), 3

Creagh's Horseshoe Bats (*Rhinolophus creaghi*), 1 Diadem Leaf-nosed Bat (*Hipposideros diadema*), and 1 Lesser False Vampire Bat (*Megaderma spasma*). I was really pleased with the spread of bat families. We closed the net, did a show and tell on the roadside and released the bats before returning to the lovely Daluyon for dinner and night by the beach.



Figure 1 *Megaderma spasma*



Figure 2 *Rhinolophus creaghi* a horseshoe bat with a strange noseleaf – no sella projecting forward

Jan 19

In the early morning we visited Underground River. We boarded a colourful outrigger in Sabang and went by sea to the entrance, approaching a pristine region with forested hills and rocky cliffs before landing on the beach. We briefly explored the park area; saw Long-tailed Macaque and the Palawan Peacock Pheasant. Fred also saw Tabon Scrub Fowl. We climbed aboard a smaller boat for the trip underground, which was an amazing experience. No other boats had arrived so we had it to ourselves. We saw numerous bats. Near the entrance were

Figure 3 *Hipposideros diadema*



horseshoe bats hanging singly but in large numbers. These were most likely the species we captured the previous day, but we also saw a smaller species and a few very large horseshoe bats. Further in the horseshoe bats were mostly replaced by old world leaf-nosed bats – Diadems and a smaller species that I identified as Bicolored Round-leaf Bats, *Hipposideros bicolor*.

In the interior we started to see small clusters of bent-winged bats, usually 2-4, in crevices. I caught some of these bats by hand and we were able to examine 2 *Miniopterus schreibersi* and one *M. australis*. They were easily caught and gentle to handle. We also saw a Cave Racer on the wall

and in water.

In the afternoon we went out to look for birds, but it was raining and few were seen. We did see dragonflies with deep red wings. We also saw Palawan Tree Squirrel at our lodge. We ended up at the Last Frontier Resort where we set 3 nets. The garden was quite productive for birds. We ate dinner and checked nets, catching a total of 9 Asian Yellow Bats, *Scotophilus kuhlii*, and one Austral Bent-winged Bat (*Miniopterus australis*) – shown on right..



Figure 4 *Miniopterus australis*

Jan 20

We left early and returned to Puerto Princesa for our 10:10 a.m. flight to Manila. Here we met Willy our driver and the so-called guide Egay for our trip to Subic Bay. We had a very slow lunch at Pancake House and continued on, making a detour to visit Candaba Marsh, a very productive place for waterfowl and waders. We arrived at Mountain Woods Resort at about 7:30 p.m. for dinner and overnight. This is a very good hotel – small with good food and service and pleasant rooms with a great hillside garden.



Figure 5 *Pteropus vampyrus*

Jan 21

We did some early birding at the hotel, starting with following small bats, likely Bamboo bats, with a bat detector. When it was light we watched Black-naped Oriole, Coppersmith Barbet, Colasisi, Philippine Coucal and others, and ate breakfast outside on the balcony with scope set up. Later we went to the Naval Magazine for more birding and then on to the large roost of Golden-crowned Flying Foxes (*Acerodon jubatus*) and Giant Flying Foxes



Figure 6 *Acerodon jubatus*

(*Pteropus vampyrus*). The bats occupied 6 acacia trees,

with some overflowing into taller trees on the other side of the road. The colonies were mixed, but bats were grouped in separate species within each tree.

We ate lunch at a seashore restaurant, Rali's Grill, and later we went back out to the Naval magazine and birded with Len Robinson, a scantily dressed British birder. We saw Crested Treeswifts and a few others. When light rain started we went to watch the bat emergence. In amongst the huge flying foxes were tiny bamboo bats that I picked up on the bat detector. Activity peaked at about 6 p.m. We returned to our hotel for another good dinner.

Jan 22

After a very early breakfast we checked out and went back to the Naval Magazine where we saw Green Racket-tails with their distinctive concertina calls, and the Guiabero which made high squeaks.

We got back to the airport at 11:30, met Nina Fascione who had been delayed for personal reasons, and continued on to Tagbilaran on Bohol. We arrived at Rajah Sikatuna Park at 8 p.m. and met our guide, Ryan Sugala. We saw 3 Flying Lemurs, but they had already eaten and were not active. We continued on to the Chocolate Hills Resort, a poorly run place with about half the menu items unavailable, leaking bathrooms and toilets without seats.



Figure 7 Colugo male – much darker in color than the female



Figure 8 Female Colugo with young (hidden) – Acerodon below



Jan 23

We left early and went back to the park to meet Ryan. We saw a pair of Tarictic Hornbills and located two Flying Lemurs that were a little easier to see but still sleeping. We went to a small cave and caught a Pacific Sheathtail (*Emballonura alecto*) which I showed to the group. I also found a Serpent-lizard (*Hydrosaurus mindanensis*) under a rock – a dark chocolate brown animal with bright blue eyes.

We met bat biologist Reizl Pamaong at 10 a.m. and went to market to buy lunch items and drinks. Then we drove into remote countryside through

isolated villages until the road became impassable to our vans. At the last village we obtained permission from the mayor and also picked up 3 locals to accompany us. We hiked 1 km along the dirt road then branched off onto a small trail that got worse and worse as it straddled the side of a steep hill. Most of the group went back but Fred, George, Nina and I went on with Reizl. Eventually we reached a very large cave and set up a net at the entrance



Figure 9 Philippine Tarsier

and one inside the cave. I saw a Cave Salamander under a rock. There was a huge colony of **Geoffroy's Rousettes**, many Pacific Sheathtails, and large numbers of Horseshoe and leaf-nosed bats. We caught two large horseshoe bats, *Rhinolophus rufus*, and one *Miniopterus schreibersi*. We took one of the horseshoe bats back to show the group.

On our way back to Chocolate Hills we stopped at the park and saw one Colugo gliding – fantastic! I found a female with a baby. She was hanging in a typical position with the baby's head poking out above her belly. Everyone enjoyed seeing the mother's face as well as the baby.

Jan 24

We had a relaxing morning at Chocolate Hills, so that everyone could get some pictures and pack up. We left at 10 a.m. and went to the Butterfly Garden in Bilar, where we had lunch after touring the garden.

We continued on to Corella, where we visited a Philippine Tarsier sanctuary. The animals were in a very large (5 ha) fenced enclosure, and we were taken to see four animals, all very close. We were lucky to see one jump, as most of them were resting, but with their huge eyes open. Not strictly speaking wild, but nice to see up close.

We continued on to Panglao Island where we stayed at the Bohol Bee Farm, an interesting resort with organic, home-produced food. After our excellent dinner I gave a bat talk which was enlivened by bats circling to drink water at the indoor swimming pool behind us.



Figure 10 Rousettus with one albino

Jan 25

After another excellent meal at the Bee Farm we left for Tagbilaran airport and flew to Davao via Manila. We arrived at 5 p.m. and met our drivers, Jimboy and Alex, who took us to the Monfort Cave, where we met Dave Waldien and other scientists who showed us the **Geoffrey's Rousette Bats**. The cave was an incredible sight. Later we checked in at Precious Garden Resort, an attractive place, but unfortunately not entirely finished. Dinner was good but very slow to appear.

Jan 26

We had a productive early bird walk at the hotel. Later we went to Vanishing Island in a very small outrigger. As it was high tide we could not get off to explore the island. Some went to the cave for a visit, and later we all went to lunch at the site of the bat conference at Camp Holiday. Most of the group stayed to listen to talks on bat conservation. We then went back to Monfort Cave for the bat emergence and for dinner with Norma and presentations related to the Year of the Bat.

Jan 27

We had another early bird walk at Precious Garden then went back to Monfort one last time. We dropped Vicky and Mary at the airport and continued on to the Philippine Eagle Project. We enjoyed great views of the eagles, Brahminy Kites and other raptors, then returned to the airport, flew back to Manila for overnight at the basic but convenient Manila Airport Hotel.



Jan 28

We headed out on long flights overseas, arriving home the same day.

This report was prepared for the Bat Conservation International group, by Fiona Reid, who set up and guided the trip. For more information on trips led by Fiona, go to www.fionareid.ca or

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