

Near-extinct Philippine eagle shot dead

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Photo illustration of a Philippine Eagle (*Pithecopaga jefferyi*) at the Philippine Eagle Center on the outskirts of Davao City, in the southern island of Mindanao. The bird of prey, also popularly known as "monkey-eating eagle", is a one-metre (3.3-foot) raptor found only in the Philippines and whose numbers have declined due to hunting and deforestation.

An endangered Philippine eagle, one of only a few hundred left in the world, has been shot dead, a conservation group that had previously rescued the bird said Friday.

The two-year-old female [raptor](#) was found last month with a bullet embedded in its carcass in a forest in the southern island of Mindanao, according to Dennis Salvador, head of the Philippine [Eagle](#) Foundation.

Villagers who found the carcass -- which had been tagged with a [radio transmitter](#) by the foundation -- turned it over to Salvador's group this

week, he told AFP.

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"Even with all our hard work, if there is just one guy with a gun who decides to shoot the bird, he can undo everything," Salvador said.

He warned that the species, one of the world's largest and most powerful eagles, could become extinct within 20 years unless stronger measures are taken to protect the eagle and its habitat.

A farmer had captured the eagle in May 2010 when it tried to prey on his puppy.

He handed the bruised bird over to the foundation, which nursed it back to health and released it back into the wild tagged with the transmitter, Salvador said.

The International Union for the [Conservation of Nature](#) lists the animal as "critically endangered" and estimates that there may be only 670 birds left.

The Philippine Eagle Foundation has released six eagles -- either bred in captivity or rehabilitated after injuries -- but four of them have since died, at least three of after being shot.

The eagle is the country's national bird and harming or capturing it is against the law, but people still hunt the creature for food or sport, Salvador said.

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