

Philippines probes death of rare eagle released in wild

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A Philippine eagle at the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao, on the southern island of Mindanao on April 9, 2011

Wildlife authorities said Saturday they are investigating the death of a rare Philippine eagle, one of the world's largest and most endangered raptors, shortly after it was captured by a local resident.

The carcass of the giant bird, belonging to a species that is threatened with extinction, was recovered from a resident of Gingoog city on the southern island of Mindanao, the Philippine Eagle Foundation said.

It had only been released into the wild by conservationists two months earlier.

"Minalwang (the name given to the bird by the foundation) was captured. The bird died of infection that had been aggravated by its captivity," the foundation's communications officer Beauxy Auxtero told AFP.

She would not discuss the cause of the infection, nor comment on a statement by a government wildlife official that the [eagle](#), a juvenile male, had been shot to death.

Auxtero said the Gingoog resident who had captured the bird had not been placed under arrest.

The bird had two bullet wounds, Josie de Leon, wildlife resources division chief of the environment department's Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, told AFP earlier Saturday.

Killing [endangered species](#) in the Philippines is punishable by a 12-year prison term and stiff fines, she added.



Graphic fact file on the Philippine eagle, one of the world's rarest raptors

"Our people are gathering information on who might have killed it," de Leon said.

The young male was believed to be less than a year old when it was captured for the first time by another Gingoog resident in 2011, Auxtero said.

The foundation, a non-government outfit based in the Mindanao city of Davao, retrieved the bird from the resident and nursed it back to health.

The bird was fitted with a radio transmitter and let go at the Mount

Balatukan natural park near Gingoog two months ago, the fifth Philippine eagle rescued by the foundation and released back into the wild, said Auxtero.

The Philippine eagle, found only on four of the Philippines' largest islands but mostly on Mindanao, grows to a metre (3.3 feet) with a two-metre wingspan.

Famed for its elongated nape feathers that form into a shaggy crest, it is considered "critically endangered" by the Swiss-based International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The group says there could be as few as 250 individuals left in the wild due to the depletion of its tropical rainforest habitat and hunting.

A Mindanao farmer was arrested in 2008 after he confessed to shooting and eating another male Philippine eagle.

The bird, named Kagsabua, had been released on Mount Kitanglad just four months earlier by the foundation after it was shot and and wounded by game hunters at the Kitanglad range.

Five years later, the case is still on trial but the suspect is temporarily out of jail after posting a 100,000-peso (\$2,322) bail, de Leon said.

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