

Prize money boosts chances for Philippine croc

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A young Philippine crocodile swims in the water in the zoo in Cologne, western Germany on July 25, 2013

Efforts to save a critically endangered species of crocodile have been given a major boost from a prestigious environmental prize, the winner said Friday.

The Philippine crocodile has been savaged by hunting and [habitat loss](#)

and is now considered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources to be just one step away from extinction in the wild.

But Marites Balbas, the deputy director of the Philippines' Mabuwaya Foundation, one of the leading organisations dedicated to saving the reptile from extinction, said an award from the Whitley Fund for Nature would now improve the animal's chances of survival.

"The Whitley Fund for Nature will help us increase the population of [crocodiles](#) in the wild, through nest protection, head-starting, releasing of crocodiles and habitat restoration," Balbas told AFP from London, where she received the prize on Thursday.

"Head-starting" involves the captive rearing of hatchlings from eggs collected in the wild.

Balbas was one of eight people awarded 35,000 pounds each (around \$60,000) for their conservation work.

Crocodylus mindorensis is considered the world's most endangered crocodile.

Found only in the Philippines, it is smaller and less aggressive than its relative, the salt-water crocodile, which is widely found in the Asia-Pacific and is not endangered.

However many people in the Philippines do not distinguish between the two and hunt both of them. The Philippine crocodile, which is largely confined to freshwater, has also suffered from loss of its habitat.

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