

New population record of Philippine crocodile (*Crocodylus mindorensis*, Schmidt, 1935) in Southern Philippines

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Abstract: The extant wild populations of the Critically Endangered Philippine Crocodile (*Crocodylus mindorensis*) remained barely understood. Its elusive nature, added with security concerns in some areas, stalled the exploration of *C. mindorensis* populations in the southern Philippines. In December 2019, a new population has been confirmed and recorded in three major river systems in the Municipality of Malabang, Lanao del Sur. Molecular phylogenetic analysis was performed to show the relationship of the sampled individuals. Maximum Likelihood tree showed identical COI sequences. The discovery of this healthy viable population signifies that Mindanao remains the stronghold population of this species. We perceive that its existence will continue into the next decades through the ecologically harmonious cultural practices of the indigenous Muslim communities protecting the shared habitat.

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