



**Training farmers at Candaba Wetlands as Bird Watching Guides**  
**Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands, Inc.**

Prepared by  
**Amy Lecciones**

Type of Case Study

This training on awareness-raising and capacity development is part of a project that aims to conserve a portion of the Candaba wetlands.

Introduction to the Case Study

The Candaba wetlands continue to be drained or converted to wet agriculture severely limiting the habitat available for waterfowl. The conversion to fishponds causes the vegetation cover to become patchy and siltation is also apparent. The area is mostly privately owned with a small part that is state-owned. The land has been classified as “alienable and disposable land” thus posing a concern for conservation in the long term. Because of declining yields in agriculture, farmers are forced to sell their land and recently these wetlands are being filled to give way to real estate development including housing subdivisions, economic zones, etc. During our interviews, we learned that farmers consider migratory birds as pests and at that time they were indifferent to the idea of protecting them.

What was done and when and where did you do it?

We carried out rapid ecological, socio-cultural and economic assessments from August 2017 – September 2018. We organised the training of members of the Macagatal Irrigators Association and other community members as bird watching guides in March 2018 and also training in sustainable agricultural practices in September 2018. These training events were conducted by the Department of Tourism and Agricultural Training Institute of the Department of Agriculture, respectively. We led the preparation of a management plan that included designating a certain portion of the 132-hectare property as a conservation area to be supported by a Barangay (Village) Resolution.



**The 32,000 ha Candaba Wetlands, situated at Candaba Swamp, are located 60km north-east of Manila**

*Photo: Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands*

If relevant, identify your main target group

Local Government Officials and farmers

What was the result of the action?

The preparation of a management plan that included designating a certain portion of the 132-hectare property as a conservation area (including for migratory birds) to be supported by a Barangay (Village) Resolution.

What was the key to success?	Support from the Village Officials; Municipal Agricultural Office of Candaba; Department of Tourism (Central and Region 3); Key officials of the Macagatal Irrigators Association.
What was your biggest challenge in achieving success?	Getting the trust of the farmers and convincing them that they can still derive their livelihood from their farms even if there are migratory birds present and using the area. Conflicting information coming from the Department of Agriculture during the Agricultural Training Institute training, i.e. 'birds are pests'



**The farmers and trainers – indoor training**



**Practical training on bird-watching**

*Photos: Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands*

If relevant, identify your key sponsors/ partners for your activity	Ramsar Regional Center-East Asia (Sponsor); Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau – Department of Environment and Natural Resources; Department of Tourism (Central and Region 3) (Partners); Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Training Institute (Partner); Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Region 3 (Partner); Local Government of Candaba, Pampanga (Partner)
How is the Case Study useful for other Partners?	It can be replicated by sites that have migratory birds on rice paddies and where farmers perceive migratory birds as pests.
Useful links	<a href="http://www.wetlands.ph">http://www.wetlands.ph</a>
Name and contact details of the author(s) of the case study	Amy M. Lecciones, <a href="mailto:amy_lecciones@yahoo.com">amy_lecciones@yahoo.com</a> ; +63 917 544 4096; +632 6372409
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