



A male Philippine eagle named Geothermica is seen in an enclosure at Jurong Bird Park in Singapore.—AFP photos

The eagles have landed: Singapore shows off rare Philippine raptors

Singapore showed off two critically-endangered eagles Wednesday that were loaned from the Philippines as part of a breeding program to reverse the dwindling numbers of the feathered giants. Destruction of tropical rainforest and relentless hunting have decimated the population of the Philippine Eagle—one of the world's biggest and most powerful birds whose wingspan can reach 2 meters — with only around 800 believed left in the wild, conservationists say.

The birds, Geothermica and Sambisig, are the first breeding pair ever to be sent outside the Philippines and arrived in Singapore in June on a 10-year loan from Manila. The creatures are being cared for at the city-state's main aviary and were shown to the media Wednesday, as part of events marking 50 years of diplomatic relations between the countries. "Any future offspring of the eagles will be returned to the Philippines to contribute to the sustainability of the species' population," said Wildlife Reserves Singapore, which runs the aviary.

The scheme has echoes of China's "panda diplomacy", which sees the Asian giant send the black and white bears to countries as gifts. A breeding program is also being carried out in the Philippines by a small band of conservationists at a sanctuary outside the southern city of Davao, close to the eagles' main forest habitat. The bird of prey, which has white and brown plumage and an enormous wingspan, is classified as "critically endangered" by protection group the International Union for Conservation of Nature.—AFP

