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**'Extinct' amphibians found in Palawan**

June 3, 2015 9:44 pm

**PUERTO PRINCESA CITY:** The National Geographic's (NatGeo) "Weird & Wild" website segment featured on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila) "two species of amphibians thought lost to science" but were rediscovered again in the mountain forests of Palawan in the Philippines.

A feature written by Jason Bittel for NatGeo noted that it had been "50 years since anyone laid eyes on the Malatgan River caecilian, a legless amphibian native to the island province of Palawan in the Philippines."

Before the rediscovery, Bittel said "science dreaded that the species, whose last record was lost in a museum during World War II, was gone forever."

That was the common belief until a group of scientists made a recent trip to the Philippines and found "something slithering through the dirt."

One of the members of the group, evolutionary biologist Rafe Brown of the University of Kansas (UOK), said the seeing afresh was "basically a coincidence."

This was because one of the students, who went with them, "walked by it and thought it was a worm. But lo and behold, it was a Malatgan River caecilian."

Brown and his team have been striding and sifting through muds in Palawan for "over 15 years looking for signs of this and other species lost to science."

The serpentine amphibian was found accidentally in Cleopatra's Needle, a mystical mountain surrounded by lush forests in Puerto Princesa that is home to the Batak, Tagbanua, and other indigenous communities.

Brown said the amphibian does not have any "flashy colors or anything like that, but it's one of those last, iconic species that we couldn't find."

Also rediscovered was the Palawan toadlet (*Pelophryne albotaeniata*), which Bittel wrote, "had been missing for the last 40 years."

The rediscoveries were the result of a survey launched in December 2014 by the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC), and the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA), and Rainforest Trust (RT).

Bittel's article quoted Robin Moore, conservation officer of ASA, in saying when they started the project, they didn't know for sure if the animals were in Cleopatra's Needle.

PNA

