

BORN TO BE  
**WILD**

**MIYERKULES**  
PAGKATAPOS NG **SAKSI**

## Doc Nielsen rescues rare bitatawa on his first “Born to be Wild” episode

On his pilot episode for “Born to be Wild,” wildlife veterinarian Dr. Nielsen Donato and the Born team were able to rescue three *butaans* and the rare *bitatawa*.

On the episode “Vet on a Mission” in September 2011, Doc Nielsen toured Aurora province in search of animals that are in captivity and need rescue. He also went around the province to educate locals about wildlife care and preservation.



Doc Nielsen and the Born team uncovered an illegal animal trade in the province that has been around for years. In previous years, Aurora was notorious for selling monitor lizards, locally known as *tuko*, which can sell for thousands of pesos per kilo. Some residents are known to have earned over P100,000 by selling monitor lizards.

After days of work, Doc Nielsen and the Born team tracked down and confiscated three *butaan* (*Varanus olivaceus*), locally known as *duntog*, and one *bitatawa* (*Varanus bitatawa*), which were being held captive to be eventually sold.

As a deputized wildlife enforcement officer by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Doc Nielsen has the capacity to confiscate wildlife that is in captivity, following R.A. 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

The *bitatawa* is a recently discovered monitor lizard in the Philippines and is said to be endemic to Luzon. Meanwhile, the *butaan* is considered one of the world’s most rare reptiles and, according to the wildlife conservation group Mampam Conservation, “was discovered in 1845 and not seen alive by a scientist until the late 1970s.”

Through this episode, “Born to be Wild” contributed to the country’s documentation on the rare *butaan*. “Ito ang kauna-unahang record ng oliveacious, actually north of Bulacan. Ang pinaka-north na record namin ng oliveacious ay sa Angat Watershed,” said Dr. Arvin Diesmos, a herpetologist from the National Museum. – Ayisha Fabian



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