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ILLEGAL ONLINE TRADE IN INDONESIAN PARROTS

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A NETWORK TO COUNTER NETWORKS



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Summary

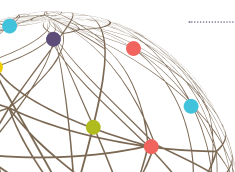
This report aims to address how the illegal parrot trade is conducted online, and to what extent the use of internet-based platforms has facilitated the international trade. It examines the overall structure and key figures in the parrot trade, and addresses how trade chains and interactions between different actors in the illegal market have changed with the emergence of new, virtual forms of doing business. The increased efforts of Indonesian authorities to clamp down on wildlife trade and to pursue criminal actors operating online are also covered, as well as the effect these operations¹ have had on the strategies used by parrot traders to avoid detection. It also addresses the relationship between the illegal and legal trade in captive-bred parrots and opportunities for laundering. Drawing together these strands, the report considers both the challenges and opportunities the online parrot trade offers for effective monitoring and law-enforcement responses.

Key points

- In Indonesia, the growing rate of internet accessibility has allowed the illegal online wildlife trade to flourish. This, together with the younger age profile of buyers involved in the online parrot trade, suggests the upward trend in the online wildlife trade in Indonesia will continue.
- Online platforms, particularly social media, are playing an increasingly central role in the illicit trade in wild-caught Indonesian parrots.
- Specialist discussion groups and online forums of parrot enthusiasts allow collectors to reach a wider, often international audience.
- The younger age profile of buyers involved in the online parrot trade suggests the upward trend in the online wildlife trade in Indonesia will continue.
- The legal parrot trade may help stimulate the illicit trade in parrots, providing an opportunity for unscrupulous breeders to introduce wild-caught birds and claim that they have been captive-bred
- Specialist animal courier services, hired to deliver birds in both the legal and illegal market segments, are important links in the supply chain. Curtailing their activities would help disrupt the marketing chain.

Methods

The findings in this report are based on extensive primary and secondary research. The authors undertook a review of prior relevant literature in both Indonesian and English. This included academic literature, publications from international and non-governmental organizations, reports from government agencies and media outlets. This was supplemented by several expert interviews conducted with a range of NGO, conservation and law-enforcement officials, as well as direct observation of online forums over a period of three months. While these methods are suitable for achieving a grounded picture of the online parrot trade as it stands today, by both drawing from reliable expert sources and observing the market first-hand, the methodology does have certain limitations, however. Without the benefit of long-term fieldwork, the findings offer are a snapshot of the market, making it difficult to assess long-term trends. Results are also focused on Indonesia, and do not represent how parrots are traded in other parts of the world, such as the Philippines, the Middle East and elsewhere.



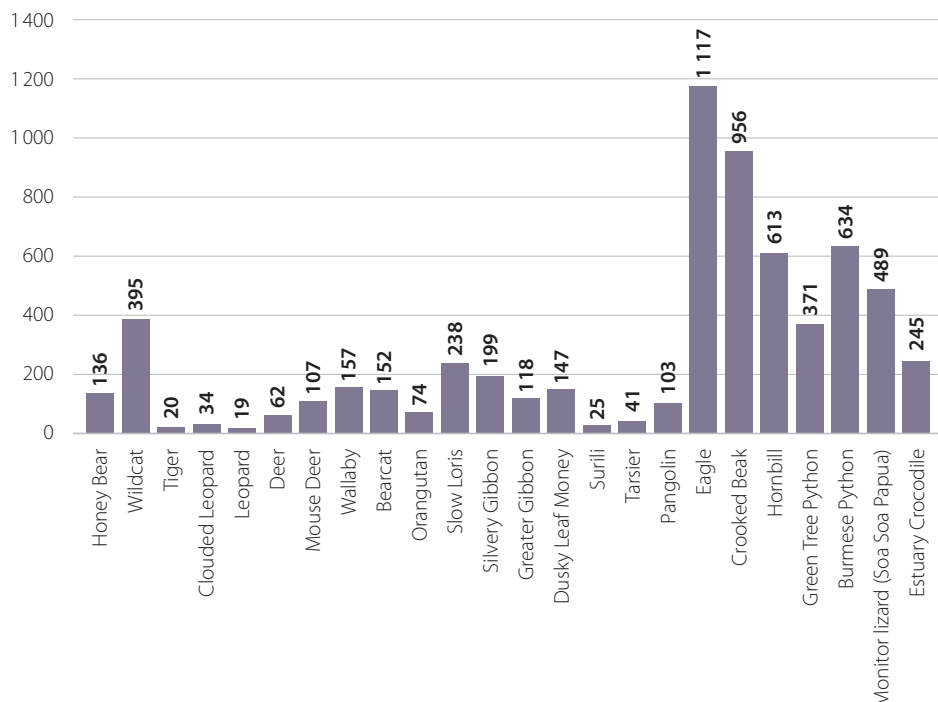
Introduction

The Indonesian archipelago is one of the world's great biodiversity hotspots, boasting a number of unique ecosystems – from coral reefs to the most extensive rainforests in Asia. It is home to a large number of charismatic native species, from Sumatran tigers to Komodo dragons.² However, together with habitat destruction, rampant illegal wildlife trade poses a major and growing threat to this idyll. Data from the Attorney General for General Crimes (Jampidum)³, Bareksrim⁴ and the Wildlife Crime Unit of the World Conservation Society (WCS)⁵ shows a steady increase in criminal cases brought against illegal wildlife traders between 2013 and 2016. The drive towards illegal trade lies primarily in economic factors, as exploitation of Indonesia's bountiful natural resources offers a lucrative source of revenue, particularly in poor rural areas. Estimates from the WCS value the illegal wildlife market in Indonesia at US\$1 billion a year – most commonly including tigers, elephant ivory, primates and birds – demonstrating the vast economic opportunity this market offers.⁶

Over the past 13 years, increased access to technology and the internet has allowed the wildlife trade to boom, particularly through social media. Monitoring of the market by the NGO ProFauna shows a dramatic increase in the frequency of social-media-based illegal marketing, with a jump from around 3 640 advertisements on Indonesian social networks in 2014, to 5 000 in 2015. To take one species as an example, there were 1 177 instances of eagles being traded on social media between November 2015 and April 2016 alone.⁷ Since the proportion of the Indonesian population with internet access through smartphones is forecast to increase to almost 40% by 2021, it seems logical to predict a continuous upward trend in this kind of trade.⁸

As can be seen in Figure 1, the online market for wildlife in Indonesia is highly diverse. This is true both in terms of species numbers (including several types of mammals, reptiles and birds) and the fact the market includes both live animals for international pet markets and animal products.

Figure 1: Wildlife species most commonly traded on Indonesian social media, November 2015–April 2016



Source: WWF Indonesia, 2016, as quoted in Perkumpulan Skala, *Potret Perdagangan Ilegal Satwa Liar di Indonesia*, 2016

This report deals with one segment of this diverse trade: the booming market in Indonesian parrots. Parrots are highly valued in the pet trade not only for their bright plumage, but also for their intelligence and ability to interact with people. Indonesia is home to some 85 separate parrot species, 14 of which are classified as threatened.⁹ The Wallacea region – a group of islands in the centre of the archipelago – has particularly abundant parrot populations, with the largest concentrations being in the Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara and Maluku islands.

International trade in these species is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and, domestically, under Indonesian law. Five species are listed in CITES Appendix I, making all international trade for commercial purposes in birds caught from the wild illegal. These are: Goffin's cockatoo (*Cacatua goffini*), the salmon-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*), the yellow-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*), the palm cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*) and the red-and-blue lory (*Eos histrio*). Demand for parrots on the illegal market is high both within Indonesia (where keeping birds has long held great cultural significance)¹⁰ as well as internationally, with the primary routes for Indonesian parrots being towards the Philippines and the Middle East. The illegal trade, along with habitat destruction, is a major contributing factor in the decline of many Indonesian parrot species. Numbers of wild yellow-crested cockatoos – listed as a Critically Endangered species – have fallen rapidly in recent years, with only around 7 000 individuals remaining in the world in 2015.¹¹ Conservationists have also been strongly critical of the illegal trade over inhumane treatment, as many animals transported for trade are kept in unhealthy, cramped conditions and high numbers die en route.

Global picture of the Indonesian parrot trade

The trade chain for Indonesian parrot species begins in the remote, forested areas of the Indonesian islands where they thrive. For example, the area of North Halmahera experiences prolific parrot poaching, thanks in part to its remote location. The large number of natural ports in the area also supports illicit activity and challenges intervention. Poaching is predominantly carried out by members of local communities, often small-scale farmers, in an opportunistic rather than professionalized way. Often, they turn to poaching at times of economic scarcity and lulls in the agricultural calendar, such as during the coconut harvest. Poaching seems to be motivated by economic reasons – many of these rural communities are desperately poor. They also tend to turn to poaching only in response to demand from parrot collectors for particular species. In addition, poachers are often unaware of the protected status of these birds, seeing it purely as an economic venture rather than an issue of criminality or conservation.

Poachers pass on the captured birds to local collectors, the first in what may be several transactions before a parrot reaches its final destination as a pet. These low-level collectors often live on the same islands as the original poachers, and several poachers may supply the same collector. A 2012 study by Burung Indonesia identified 180 poachers and 20 collectors in North Maluku, which gives some indication of the relative numbers of each.¹²

As it moves through the trade chain, a bird may be transported from the more remote islands towards larger trade and transport hubs. For the domestic trade, this may be Surabaya or Jakarta. For the international trade, many are sent to the Philippines, which is the key transit route. In March 2018, 312 birds were seized in a major operation in Pasay City, Philippines, including CITES Appendix I listed species, such as sulphur-crested, Moluccan and palm cockatoos, and black-capped lorries.¹³

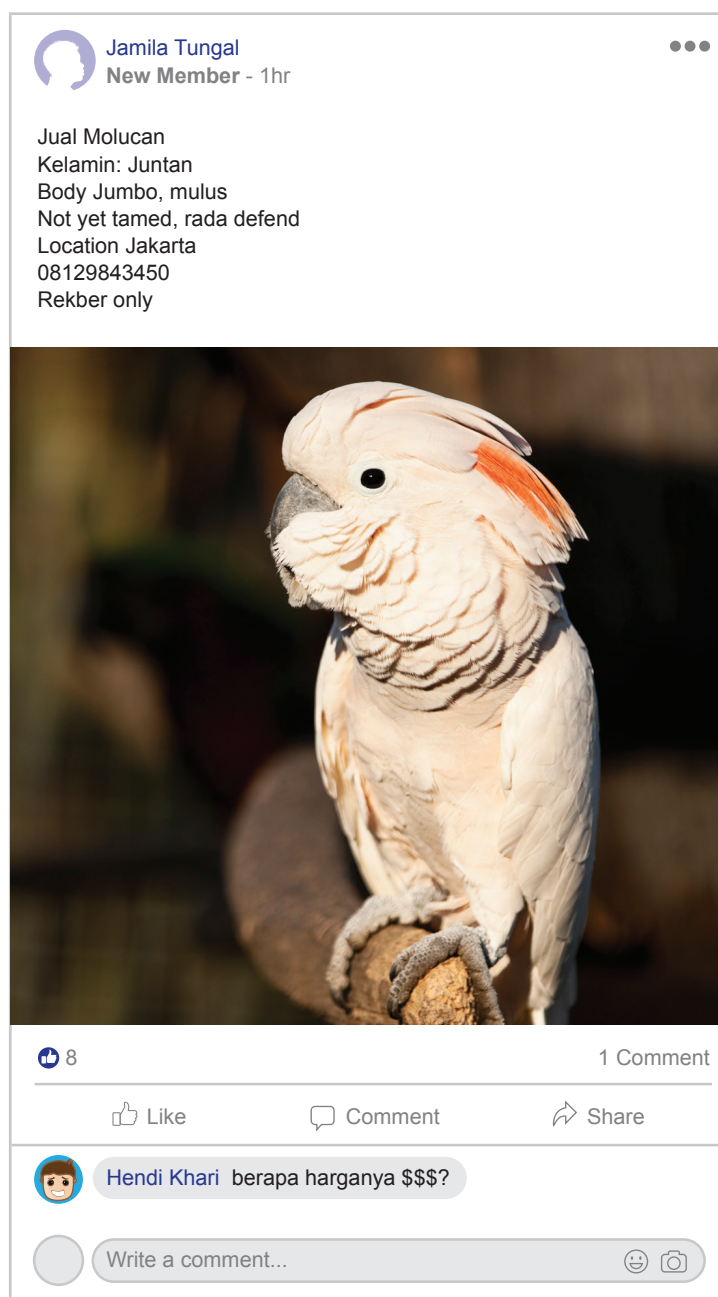
Birds are primarily transported by land or sea – rather than by air – as inspections of cargo are less stringent this way.¹⁴ To avoid detection, traders may resort to extreme techniques which cause significant harm to the animals. There have been reports of instances where small birds are tied together, forced into plastic bottles, thrown into the sea and collected further out to sea to avoid detection by the authorities.¹⁵ A high proportion of trafficked birds consequently die, and squalid living conditions exacerbate the spread of infectious diseases,¹⁶ adding to the unsustainable environmental cost of poaching. Smugglers seem to be willing to shoulder these major losses, nevertheless, and still make their trade profitable.



The role of online platforms in the parrot trade chain

As is the case with other illicit markets (both in wildlife and other products), the parrot trade involves a number of actors along the chain with specialized roles. As well as the central players mentioned above – poachers and low-level collectors – there are also domestic bird dealers and end buyers. More peripherally, the trade also depends on the cooperation of couriers, people with access to manipulated documents and parrot breeders, who are able to disguise smuggled birds as legitimately captive-bred.

Figure 2: A mock-up advertisement offering a parrot for sale, with details of its gender, size, condition and behaviour. Adverts often include the seller's location too, and sometimes the price. Here the seller says 'Rekber only'. 'Rekber' is an abbreviation of 'Rekening Bersama', an Indonesian escrow service. The fact that the bird is untamed suggests it has been trapped in the wild, rather than bred in captivity.



The online trade, particularly through social-media platforms, as mentioned above, primarily plays a role only at the latter stages of the chain as a marketing tool. Primarily through Facebook, specialist discussion groups and online forums of parrot enthusiasts allow collectors to reach to a wider, often international audience, far beyond the confines of their physical space and social networks. These groups – either public or closed (for which membership requires approval by an administrator) – can be easily found on Facebook by searching for keywords, like ‘Kakatur’, ‘Jual Kakatur’, or ‘Jamkun’ (the generic names of popular traded birds) (see Table 1). Sources suggest that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the contact between parrot collector and final buyer is instigated through such hobby groups and communities. Some cases have been reported of the use of agents, who are tasked by collectors to advertise their parrots on social media, illustrating the importance of this channel in the contemporary online trade. The agent acts as an intermediary and gets the parrot from the collector before passing it on to the buyer.

Table 1: Indonesian Facebook community groups focusing on parrots

| Facebook groups | Members |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Komunitas Pecinta Burung Asli Maluku (Nuri Dan Kakatur) | 661 |
| Bursa Paruh Bengkok Bandung | 2 933 |
| Paruh Bengkok Surabaya | 9 159 |
| Paruh Bengkok Jatim | 28 036 |
| Forum Jual Beli Hewan Eksotis Indonesia | 22 933 |
| Jual Beli Paruh Bengkok | 19 227 |
| Lovebird Mania Cirebon (LMC) | 43 423 |
| Jual Beli Hewan Peliharaan Kaltim: Samarinda Balikpapan Bontang Tenggarong | 25 135 |
| Komunitas Paruh Bengkok Kota Malang Dan Sekitarnya | 1 342 |
| Jual Beli Burung (online), Area Parung, Ciseeng, Jampang, Ken Bogor | 36 442 |

After initial contact is established, negotiations continue and are concluded through private messaging channels, such as WhatsApp. Collectors are therefore able to disguise illicit trade by creating a more secretive environment. Traders no longer need to invest in physical infrastructure, such as market stalls or shops, to base their business but can instead use the more anonymous medium of online channels. Anonymity is crucial to sellers and they use various strategies to maintain their disguise – for example either by using pseudonyms or taking advantage of children to make them appear as sellers for the endangered animals. Sellers tend to avoid transactions involving cash on delivery or any other form of face-to-face transactions, preferring instead bank transfers and courier services.

The emergence of hobbyist discussion groups as a major venue for trade is in many ways a reflection of the sellers, dealers and end buyers themselves, as enthusiasts for these species, whose interest in parrots is long-standing. Among these groups, ownership of parrots, and rare species in particular, is viewed as prestigious. Many sellers, for example, are from communities of bird enthusiasts who have kept parrots since childhood, and before transitioning into online trade have been active in traditional bird markets. However, the emergence of social media has also drawn in younger traders.

End buyers, similarly, are primarily bird hobbyists and collectors with an interest in these rare species. Collecting protected species is often seen as something to be proud of and symbolic of high socio-economic status. According



to one Indonesian study, 78% of buyers of protected animals online were active in discussion groups made up of individuals who have a shared interest in the collection of these birds.¹⁷ These groups function not only as a place for advertising birds for sale, but where a broader array of discussions take place, such as showcasing pet birds and sharing tips on bird care. In addition, a substantial change in the demographic of buyers has been noted. Whereas, previously, parrot keeping was an older person's hobby, younger people have increasingly become involved, which may be connected to the shift in parrot trading to online channels.

New roles in the online trade chain

Trading through online platforms, as opposed to face-to-face interaction, has changed the nature of both buying and selling wildlife. The entire process of advertising, finding a buyer, negotiating a sale and transferring the funds may take place without any real-world contact between the two parties. The platform allows both parties to distance themselves from their activities and from each other. Although the use of such platforms does not change the fundamental structure of the chain from seller to buyer, it has given rise to another specialized role within the market: the animal courier, recruited by the trader as a third party. The animal courier service has emerged as a new business activity within the wildlife sales syndicate. Using dedicated animal couriers offers the advantage of anonymity to online wildlife sellers.

These services may be legitimate courier businesses¹⁸ that transport animals, and which may also engage in the transport of illegally traded animals. According to ProFauna data, many couriers were originally animal traders who, spotting a more lucrative opportunity, shifted to providing courier services. Reportedly, some couriers guarantee the confidentiality of the identity of buyers and sellers if at any time they should be caught by the law-enforcement authorities.

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Legal framework, law enforcement and legal trade

At the international level, CITES is the main instrument governing trade in endangered species of flora and fauna. The CITES annexes segregate species according to their conservation status:

- Appendix I indicates those species threatened with extinction. Commercial trade in wild-captured specimens of these species is completely prohibited.
- Appendix II indicates species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but whose trade must be strictly regulated to avoid overexploitation, which may jeopardise the species' survival in the wild. In this category, wild-caught specimens may be traded commercially in accordance with CITES permit rules.
- Appendix III indicates species that are not threatened by extinction, but are listed at the request of one member country to the other signatories for assistance in controlling the trade in species. As is the case with Appendix II, commercial trade must adhere to CITES permit rules.

Apart from five Appendix I-listed species, most Indonesian parrot species are listed under Appendix II.



At the national level, there are three pieces of relevant legislation:

- Government Regulation No. 7/1999 on Preserving Flora and Fauna Species: this regulation sets out a list of species that are nationally protected, including the five species of CITES Appendix I-listed parrots.
- Law No. 5/1990 on Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation prohibits the capture and trade in protected animals, alive or dead.
- Minister Regulation No. 447/ kpts-II/2003 (SK No. 47/2003) concerning Administration Directive of Harvest or Capture and Distribution of the Specimens of Wild Plant and Animal Species (Article 61) states that 'all and any activities of domestic commercial distribution shall be covered by Permit for Domestic Transport of Wild Plants and Animals (SATS-DN)'.

Enforcement of these regulations is, in part, enacted through the policies of the online platforms on which wildlife is traded. The content and enforcement of such policies can therefore be both a help and a hindrance to state authorities wishing to curb illegal wildlife trade. To take Facebook as the major example, at the regional level Facebook Asia Pacific has reiterated that its terms of service do not permit the sale and trade in endangered animals, and that it would not hesitate to remove any reported and verified content that violates these terms.¹⁹ However, at the national level, Facebook in Indonesia does not yet have a policy that prohibits wildlife trade on its network.²⁰ This poses a significant challenge to any efforts aiming to inhibit illegal wildlife trade in the region.

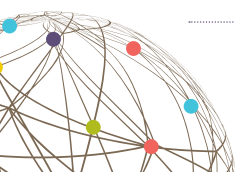
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The role of the legal parrot trade

In accordance with the legal framework explained above, trade in protected parrot species (i.e. CITES Appendix I-listed species) is permitted for birds that have been captive-bred. Guidelines state that such birds can be traded on condition that they are equipped with a studbook, logbook, ring and a captive permit. Breeders should also regularly report the numbers of birds they are breeding in captivity. Currently in Indonesia there are three merchants that have exporting permits, 207 individual cockatoo breeders and 19 domestic commercial cockatoo breeders.²¹ However, the challenge for ensuring that such guidelines are not exploited lies in the fact that, naturally, the numbers of captive-bred birds rely on breeding rates, rather than predictable quotas. There is therefore an opportunity here for unscrupulous breeders to introduce wild-caught birds and claim that they have been captive-bred, and to procure the relevant documentation. Alternatively, sourcing documentation through corrupt official channels or producing forged documents also mask the illegality of wild-caught birds. Individuals who are able to perform these laundering roles play an important part in the wider illegal trade chain.

In the online trade, it is possible for buyers to ask the trader for the studbook, logbook and ring in order to show that the bird has been legally procured. In some cases, legality is discussed on private channels, yet such concerns often take a secondary place to the financial opportunity such trade offers.²² Some traders doctor the identity and origin of wildlife, so that it appears legal. However, reports suggest that requests for documentation are uncommon in the online trade, and when it does happen the trader may simply cut communication with the buyer. The Indonesian cybercrime unit Bareskrim said that wildlife traders prefer to make transactions online because they assume authorities will be unable to track them.²³

However, one possible way of investigating whether commercial breeders are making legitimate claims that their birds are captive-bred is by ascertaining the species. Evidence illustrates that some parrot species are more difficult to breed in captivity than others. For example, experience of breeders of the salmon-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*) suggests that captive breeding is fraught with difficulty, to the point that it was thought to be essentially impossible. By contrast, the Goffin's cockatoo breeds in captivity more successfully than some



reports would initially suggest. Therefore, if an online trader claims to be selling a captive-bred Goffin's cockatoo it is more plausible than a trader making similar claims for a Salmon-crested cockatoo. Such comparisons of the relative breeding dynamics of different species could therefore provide a useful tool for online monitoring purposes.

Concerted efforts in policy and law enforcement

In recent years, Indonesian authorities have shown commitment to strengthening their response to illegal wildlife traders, on both the legislative and enforcement side. To some extent, this effort may be connected to a major case of parrot trafficking that caught national and international attention. The case involved the smuggling of 24 yellow-crested cockatoos (known locally as 'Jacob Jambul Kuning') in bottles of mineral water. Discovered in the port of Tanjung Perak, in Surabaya, en route to other parts of the archipelago, 11 of the birds died due to lack of oxygen on the five-day journey. A subsequent campaign, Save Jacob Jambul Kuning, rose to prominence and caught the attention of many political parties. The Minister of Environment and Forestry has called for action to protect the species.

In legislative terms, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry is in the process of revising Law No. 5/1990 (on natural resources and ecosystem conservation). The revisions have been prompted by widespread concerns among legislators that current penalties for wildlife trafficking – usually less than a year's imprisonment and fines of less than Rp100 million (US\$7 476) – are too lenient, and that higher penalties would prove a more effective deterrent. However, whether such a change would have an impact in practice is yet to be seen. The revisions the law also aim to change the fact that current legislation has little power to bring cases against those importing illegal wildlife into the country, meaning prosecutors instead have to rely on tax and customs regulations.

However, enforcing these national regulations – particularly No. 7 1999 – presents another key challenge. Cases brought under this legislation require an expert witness to identify whether the species of plant or animal is prohibited or not. This is because, under the ministry regulations, birds are considered according to the type of breed, and not the species.²⁴ This poses a challenge on the assessment of evidence in court, as bird specialists are needed to assess legality of the trade. If such a specialist is unavailable, bringing prosecutions may be difficult.

In enforcement terms, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has considerably increased its efforts to combat the illegal wildlife trade, with particular attention paid to online activity. The number of security operations relating to wildlife crime carried out by the ministry increased from just four in 2015 to 65 in 2016, resulting in the recovery of 6 122 protected live animals in 2016 as opposed to 21 in 2015.

The Directorate-General of Law Enforcement of the ministry (known as Gakkum KLHK), established in 2015, has been tasked with overseeing and monitoring wildlife trade on online platforms, such as on Kaskus (an Indonesian internet forum), e-commerce platforms and Facebook, with the aim of shutting down illegal trade via e-commerce. Its investigations identified more than a hundred species of wildlife traded on Facebook within a single week. The division has collaborated with the Indonesian E-Commerce Association – a collection of the leading e-commerce companies in Indonesia, including, for example, Tokopedia – to end animal marketing. At the time of writing, Gakkum KLHK had filed 70 cases of illegal wildlife trade for the courts.

In 2017 the ministry set up a cyber patrol unit under Gakkum KLHK, which takes the lead on all cyber-criminal environmental and forestry cases. The unit recorded 532 cases of illegal wildlife trade in the six months leading to April 2018. The unit conducts surveillance of online wildlife traders, with the aim of tracing protected wildlife back to individual traders. The cyber patrol team of the conservation section in Lahat has had some success in these investigations, tracing one lory back to a trader via online channels. The ministry also provides a quick-response call centre to the Conservation of Natural Resources offices, which enables local communities to report poaching and illicit trade in protected species. Meanwhile, the Police Department set up a similar cybercrime



unit (Bareskrim) in 2015, which is responsible for monitoring cybercrime cases, including ones involving illegal wildlife. In November 2017, the unit launched an e-reporting initiative, which allows members of the public to report illegal trade online.

Responses to law-enforcement efforts

Wildlife traders have responded to the concerted efforts by law enforcement to curb online illegal trade by adapting their methods of communication and the platforms they use. The cybercrime unit of the Police Division said that illegal traders are now using not only conventional platforms, but also the deep web, also known as the dark web. This is a non-indexed internet domain search engine, like Google, but with a much larger volume of content. Indeed, Google-indexed content represents only about 10% of total content on the internet. The rest is situated in the dark web. Deep web activity is hard to trace, because IP addresses are anonymous.²⁵

Wildlife traders have responded to the concerted efforts by law enforcement to curb online illegal trade by adapting their methods of communication and the platforms they use.

Price differentials through the trade chain

Several factors may influence the price of an illegally traded parrot. These include its condition in terms of colour and plumage health, its age, and how tame and well trained it is for its handler – for example, whether it can mimic a human voice or other sounds.

However, certain other factors besides the characteristics of the bird also influence price. Crucially, online prices are significantly higher than for birds sold offline. To use an example, the typical market price for a bird in Central and East Java ranges from Rp500 000 to Rp1 million (US\$37–74); if sold online, however, prices for the same bird can be between Rp1 million and 10 million (US\$74–740).²⁶ The WCS has released data from monitoring activity on a number of Facebook groups from 2015 to 2018, noting the number and species of parrots traded.

The latest data found an average price of Rp2 458 889 (about US\$180) for yellow-crested cockatoos traded on Facebook in 2018, with a sample size of 119 individual birds, the largest number of any species and a significant increase on previous years. This reflects a similarly high proportion of yellow-crested cockatoos in cases of illegal parrot trading where arrests have been made. The same study found an average price of Rp3 214 286 (about US\$240) for the salmon-crested cockatoo, across a smaller sample of 35.²⁷ Although the increase in the number of parrots traded may not represent an actual increase in illegal online parrot trading (given the difficulties of monitoring online trade), an increase over time may reflect growing internet accessibility throughout Indonesia. The data also shows that protected and CITES Appendix I-listed species can command high prices among parrot collectors.

There are also substantial increases in price at each stage that the animal is traded along the supply chain. Poachers, who are often from poor agricultural communities, are paid only small amounts for their catches by low-level collectors, with some sources reporting as little as five dollars for a black-capped lory, or they receive small payments in kind, such as food for a day's hunting or a pack of cigarettes for a rare bird, which shows that even very modest financial incentives may pose a threat to entire species. As the bird is passed from the low-level collectors to other intermediaries the price may increase exponentially. By the time a yellow-crested cockatoo reaches Java, for example, the price may be more than ten or twenty times greater than the original poacher's sale price. In turn, the price quoted by a trader who is able to smuggle the bird internationally is much higher still. The relatively high prices online may therefore also reflect the fact that, as the bird is often being marketed internationally through these forums, the online activity is often focused at the higher end of this trade chain.



Conclusions and recommendations

These findings demonstrate the increasingly central role that online platforms – especially social media – play in the illegal trade in wild-caught Indonesian parrots, with particular emphasis on CITES Appendix-I listed species, whose commercial trade is strictly prohibited. To conserve these species, many of which are endemic to specific Indonesian habitats, it is now vital to form an effective response to their online illegal marketing.

As is true of many online markets, online platforms shift the dynamics by allowing bird traders to reach out beyond their immediate connections and physical locations to buyers further afield – and often internationally – among online communities of parrot enthusiasts, and command higher prices for rare specimens. The degree of anonymity provided by such platforms – even between seller and buyer at the final stage of negotiations – allows sellers a greater level of security than with forms of offline trade. Maintaining such anonymity has given rise to a new specialized role, namely that of the dedicated animal courier.

The collective efforts of the Indonesian authorities to curb the online trade using both legislative and enforcement channels has brought about some changed behaviour among wildlife traders, most notably the emergence of activity on the dark web.

The proportion of the Indonesian population with access to the internet is increasing year on year. This, together with a younger age profile of buyers in the online parrot trade suggests that the upward trend observed in the levels of illegal trade conducted online will continue. In addition, the fact that much of this trade is conducted on specialist forums, which are not dedicated marketplaces but which host many different discussion threads among parrot enthusiasts, means that these forums could serve to stimulate demand for rare and illegally sourced birds further, as they provide ambitious parrot collectors an opportunity to display the prestige of their specimens, and capitalize on their value as a status symbol among their peers. Therefore, continuing to increase the capacity of law-enforcement agencies to investigate online trade thoroughly, and working with online providers to make a less hospitable online environment for illegal trade would be a well-placed investment, perhaps more fruitful than tracking offline aspects of the trade.

The value of public-awareness and messaging campaigns

The fact that the online trade is primarily conducted among parrot enthusiasts, whose regard for the ‘prestige’ of possessing certain species is based on their rarity, suggests that campaigning, educational work and messaging by government agencies and NGOs that argues against the illegal trade by emphasizing the rarity of species and the need for preservation may in fact be counterproductive. Such messaging may in fact draw attention to the key characteristics of these species that increase their value, thereby exacerbating the problem by driving demand along the chain. Hence, strategies ought to seek to avoid making species more desirable in the eyes of the collector market. That being said, the value of public awareness and campaigning about the conservation and animal welfare plight of these species has, evidently, done much in the last few years to raise the issue on the political agenda, as has been seen in recent legislative and enforcement initiatives. Agencies working on conservation issues may wish design messaging campaigns according to whether an audience of wildlife consumers or legislators is targeted.



Forming a cohesive legislative and enforcement framework

The current drive in Indonesia towards more stringent punishment regimes for illegal wildlife trade cannot be evaluated directly at this time. More information would be needed before such a judgement can be made, and perhaps caution should be voiced about whether harsh punishment regimes will prove an effective deterrent based on experience of other markets. Instead, developing a cohesive legislative framework that keeps up with the changing face of wildlife crime and provides adequate foundation for cybercrime units to do their work – and providing sufficient resourcing for these units – should be a key focus. Alongside such legislative reform, work with private technology firms to ensure that policies are kept in line with national regulations, so that platforms do not facilitate illegal activity may help create a less accommodating environment for illegal traders.

The emergence of the dark web – a cause for concern?

The emergence of parrot marketing on the deep web in addition to the surface web may be seen as a barrier to law-enforcement efforts, as this activity is more secretive and anonymous. While this may be the case, one could argue that this development demonstrates the efficacy of targeted law enforcement, which is not seen in many other wildlife markets, in that it has disrupted established trading patterns in the surface web and caused traders to adapt their behaviour by trying to hide online. In addition, displacing trading to the dark web means it becomes less accessible to casual parrot collectors, who may then turn their attention to more legitimate channels. Effectively, dark-web channels cut parrot traders off from a significant part of their potential customer base.

Monitoring the legal trade and distributing species information

The legal parrot trade plays an important supporting role in masking and laundering wild-caught birds. As the legal trade works in an existing regulatory framework, adaptations of this framework that seek to close the link between legal and illegal trade would be an effective counter-trafficking route, including, for example, more effective oversight of captive breeders and reporting methods to prove that birds have been captive-bred. Effective use of all available resources by authorities – for instance, developing a knowledge base on captive breeding rates of parrot species – may help target breeders who are making implausible claims about the parrots they have bred. Development of an effective knowledge base on parrot species, their identification, behaviour and breeding patterns may also go some way in solving the problem posed by the need for parrot experts to support police investigations, since it may allow identification of protected species to be done by a wider range of personnel and drive investigations forward more efficiently.

Targeting law enforcement at key links in the online market

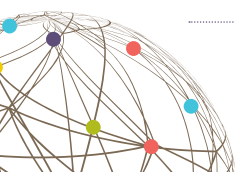
Finally, recognizing the new dynamics of the parrot trade created by the use of online platforms – and in particular the use of couriers – is essential for creating an effective law-enforcement response. The research has demonstrated that couriers act as important links in the market not only at one stage but between a number of intermediaries before the parrot reaches its final customer. Effective enforcement work that seeks to prevent couriers operating freely would disrupt the market at several points simultaneously. However, to achieve this aim, a significant knowledge gap needs to be addressed, including gaining an understanding of the demographics and methods of these couriers, what allows them to transport protected wildlife without detection, and whether they rely on



corrupt connections to avoid oversight by the authorities. Additional information may identify effective points for intervention. More effective oversight of the legal animal courier business may also be a prudent move, as reports suggest that couriers may be operating in both legal and illegal capacities.

Acknowledgements

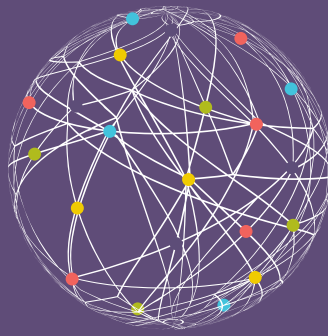
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Notes

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- 7 See ProFauna, December 2015, <https://www.profauna.net/id/content/tahun-2015-ada-5000-kasus-perdagangan-satwa-liar-dan-370-kasus-perburuan-satwa-liar#.W0ltPNlzY2w>; note that the original source does not specify the name of the species.
- 8 Data from Statista. More information on internet and social-media access in Indonesia can be found at <https://www.statista.com/topics/2431/internet-usage-in-indonesia/>.
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