



# PIRATED PARROTS

**ProFauna's Investigation of the Indonesian Parrot Smuggling to the Philippines**



**Supported by**



# Introduction

There are about 85 parrot species in Indonesia, 14 of them are classified as threatened. One of the regions with many parrot species is Wallacea which includes Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, and the Maluku Islands. 4 endangered species in Wallacea are the red-and-blue Lory (*Eos histrio*), yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*), blue-napped Parrot (*Tanygnathus lucioinensis*), and black-winged Lory (*Eos cyanogenia*).

The most threatened genus in Wallacea are the lorry and cockatoo ones, mainly caused by the trapping for trade. This trapping is made worse by habitat loss resulting in local extinctions for some species like the yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*), salmon-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*), red-and-blue Lory (*Eos histrio*), and the chattering Lory (*Lorius garulus*) (Coates, BJ. 2000).

All parrot species (*Psittaciformes spp*) are in Appendix II CITES, except those in Appendix I and a few in Appendix III. There are 5 parrot species listed in Appendix I: Goffin's Cockatoo (*Cacatua goffini*), the salmon-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*), yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*), palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*) and the red-and-blue Lory (*Eos histrio*). This means that the commercial international trade in these parrots is principally prohibited and must be from captive bred birds not wild caught ones.

Other species in Appendix II can be traded under the catching quotas and the permits issued by the Forestry Department. In 2007, Indonesia didn't issue export quotas for any species, including parrots. Therefore, there is no legal export of Indonesian parrots.

Even though there is no legal export for parrots from Indonesia, poaching of birds from the wild which are subsequently smuggled into the Philippines and domestically traded is still going on. A ProFauna Indonesia investigation in June – September 2007, funded by **Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)**, reveals the fact that parrot smuggling from Maluku, Indonesia to the Philippines has been taking place until now. This poses a serious threat towards the parrot conservation in the wild.

## Parrot Poaching:

### The Beginning of the Bird Smuggling and Death

In June – September 2007, ProFauna Indonesia investigators had visited 30 sites of parrot poaching in North Sulawesi and North Maluku. One of them was Karakelang Island, Talaud Islands, the habitat of the red-and-blue Lory (*Eos histrio*).

Parrot poaching in these sites in most cases uses gum. First, the poachers look for a tree which has suitable perching branches used by red-and-blue Lories. The top branches are then cut off and replaced with ones which have been smeared with the sticky gum.

After that, the decoy bird is put on the top of the tree. Its job is to make noises when it sees any wild red-and-blue Lory flying around the tree. The wild Lory will come closer to the decoy bird, get stuck in the sticky gum, and end up in the hands of the poacher.

The death rate caused by this way of poaching is 5 %. Most of the birds die due to stress. Some poachers told ProFauna that if they used netting to catch the parrots, it would cause a bigger number of the death rate, about 10%. Therefore, the poachers prefer to use gum than nets due to the lower death rate and its cheapness.

The centre of red-and-blue Lory (*Eos histrio*) poaching sites was in Karakelang Island, Talaud. Yet, red-and-blue Lory poaching and trade have been drastically decreasing due to the intensive confiscation operations in 2005. Likewise, the Karakelang Village Regulations prohibiting Red-and-blue Lory poaching have curbed bird poaching.

On a smaller scale, poaching red-and-blue Lories for "souvenirs" is still continuing. In July 2007, ProFauna found 60 red-and-blue Lory birds being kept in front of villagers' houses. If anyone was

interested in the parrots, the villagers would sell the birds for Rp 75.000 – 100.000 each. Sometimes, an individual could be exchanged for 2 pieces of cloth.

The poaching of the red-and-blue Lory in Talaud Islands has been decreasing drastically. However, the large scale poaching of other species is still taking place on Halmahera Island, North Maluku. The poaching occurs the most in north Halmahera, while in the central and the southern parts it has been reducing.

The regions where intensive parrot poaching takes place are the villages in Galela District, North Halmahera; Togawa, Dodowo, Togasa, and Pune. The poaching activities also occur in Bere-Bere in Morotai Island as well as Tanjung Jara-Jara and Wasile in east Halmahera. The poached birds are taken to the dealers in Tobelo and Pelita, Galela District. In Tobelo, there are 3 big dealers, Agus, Gajah, and Max. While the dealer in Pelita village, located in the north end of Halmahera Island, is Mei Lumombo.

From the field investigation and the interview with some poachers in north Halmahera, it is estimated that there are around 9760 individuals of parrot are poached for the trade every year. They are white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*), chattering Lory (*Lorius garrulus*), Eclectus parrot (*Eclectus roratus*), and the violet-Necked Lory (*Eos squamata*).

The total of each species is difficult to estimate as poachers mix them altogether. By way of illustration, in the dry season in a week, a bird poacher in Togawa can catch 15 individual White Cockatoos, 20 chattering Lory, 10 Eclectus parrot, and 30 violet-necked Lory.

It is thought that about 41% (4000 individuals) of the parrots are smuggled to the Philippines. The rest, 59%, enter the domestic trade where the birds poached from north Halmahera are transported to Surabaya City, east Java by sea. In Surabaya, there are 3 bird markets which have been selling parrots freely, despite the fact that some of the birds are classed as protected.

According to the wild animal catching quotas for 2007 issued by the General Director of PHKA Forestry Department, it is obvious that the parrot poaching in Halmahera exceeds the catching quotas. The catching quotas for white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*) in 2007 was 10 couples to be used for breeding parents. The facts showed that in 2007, there were at least 200 white Cockatoos caught from the wild in north Halmahera whilst the poaching of other parrot species also exceeded the catching quotas.

The high level of parrot poaching in north Halmahera is due to the lack of supervision by Natural Resources Conservation (KSDA) officers in the Forestry Department. There is no regular enforcement or patrol by the KSDA officers. The nearest KSDA guard post in north Halmahera is in Galela District Town. On the contrary, the villages where the parrot poaching take place are far away from the KSDA post.

## Parrot Smuggling to The Philippines

Due to the closeness of Indonesia and the Philippines and the lack of supervision, parrot smuggling from Indonesia to the Philippines is still happening. Most smuggling activities are carried out through the sea route because this way is safer and cheaper.

Social and cultural issues are another factor. Many Indonesians (WNI), about 8000 people, live in Mindanao, especially south Mindanao. Most of them are concentrated around the city of General Santos which is the centre of the big fishing industries in the Philippines.

Most of the Indonesians living in Davao and General Santos are from Sangihe and Talaud. Many of them are third or fourth generation meaning that they were born and grow up in the Philippines. Yet, they still maintain their relationships with the natives in Sangihe and Talaud.

### Offshore Transactions

Indonesian parrots, most of which come from Halmahera Island, North Maluku, are smuggled to the Philippines through the port in Pelita village, Galela District in north Halmahera. Pelita village is around

70 km from Tobelo. A large sale dealer named Mei Lumombo operates from there. He gets the parrots from many poachers in Togawa, Dodowo, Togasa, Bere-Bere, Wasile, and Tanjung Jara Jara.

Once in 2 weeks, he goes around the poaching villages to collect the birds and then put them in the cages at his house. To disguise his illegal work, the birds are kept in a shelter in a forest 1,5 km from Lumombo's house.

If many birds are collected, Lumombo will send them to Balut Island or General Santos, the Philippines, using a private boat. From Pelita or Tobelo to the Philippines, the boat (the local name is *pambot*) carrying the birds transits in Karakelang, Talaud. Sometimes, there is a local person secretly selling red-and-blue Lories to the boat crews.

It takes 5 hours to get to Karakelang Island, Talaud from Tobelo, Halmahera, Maluku. While the journey from Karakelang to General Santos takes 4 hours. In total it takes 9 hours to smuggle the parrots from Halmahera to the Philippines.

In a month, Lumombo delivers about 200 individuals to the Philippines. It means that in a year he can smuggle approximately 2400 individuals to The Philippines through General Santos. The species smuggled are white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*), Eclectus parrot (*Eclectus roratus*), violet-necked Lory (*Eos squamata*) and the chattering Lory (*Lorius garulus*).

According to an interview with Mike Artocila and Rendi Mandumi, two Indonesian animal smugglers arrested in Davao in July 2007, they smuggled the animals to the Philippines once every three months (Mindanao Times, 07/10/2007). For every single smuggling operation, 400 individual Indonesian parrots were transported, meaning that 1600 individuals were smuggled in a year.

If the number of the birds smuggled by Mike Artocila/Rendi Mandumi is totalled with Lumombo's smuggling operation, in a year, 4000 Indonesian parrots are smuggled to the Philippines through the cities of General Santos and Davao. It is believed that the exact figure is bigger since there are other smugglers escaping detection.

Most ships carrying the smuggled Indonesian parrots do not dock directly at the General Santos port to unload the birds. Previously, the transactions are done offshore. The Philippine dealers then have their men pick up the parrots from the Indonesian ships in the middle of the sea.

Arriving at General Santos, the birds are sent to Manila, the centre of animal trade in the Philippines. One of the animal trade centres in the Philippines is Cartimar Market in Manila. Mike Artocila has an animal shop in the market where his network operates.

Besides Pelita village, sometimes the smuggling route passes through Togasa village, Halmahera. Many Philippine fishermen stop in Togasa but this is for small-scale smuggling as opposed to the larger scale which occurs in Pelita village.

Another small-scale smuggling operation is based on Karakelang Island, Talaud involving both Indonesian and Philippine fishermen. Sometimes, Philippine fishermen buy red-and-blue Lories for Rp 75.000 each from the fishermen in Karakelang. The transactions are done offshore too. It is estimated that 25 individuals Red-and-blue Lories are smuggled to the Philippines through this route in a year. Arriving at the Philippines, the bird costs Rp 250.000 each.

Based on the confessions of some smugglers and dealers in Halmahera who use the method of the bird smuggling by sea, a 10 % death rate can occur. The dead birds are thrown out to the sea.

### **The lack of Law Enforcement Increasing the Parrot Smuggling**

During 2007, there had been some cases of Indonesian bird smuggling abroad, published by the mass media, they are:

- 8 July 2007, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Davao confiscated hundreds of Indonesian birds. These were 100 rainbow Lorikeet, one palm Cockatoo, 9 yellow-crested Cockatoo, 3 bird of paradise, 18 Gaski Lories, 4 black Lories, one crocodile and one wallaby.

The suspects behind this were two Filipinos, Mike Artocilla and Renante Todelo and an Indonesian named Randy Mandumi.

- 30 July 2007, the attempt to smuggle hundreds of parrots to Singapore from Sri Bintan Pura port, Tanjung Pinang was foiled.

No justice was done in the case of the hundreds of parrots smuggled to the Philippines by Mike Artocilla and Rendi Mandumi. The Philippine perpetrators were just released and Rendi Mandumi was extradited to Indonesia.

The parrot smuggling to the Philippines breaks the CITES agreements. Most parrots are listed in Appendix II. Parrots in Appendix II are not prohibited from international commercial trade unless they are captive bred or permitted by the export country. In Indonesia the bird trade is controlled by a catching quota. Any birds in Appendix I can't be traded commercially internationally. Some of the birds smuggled by Mike Artocilla are in Appendix I, such as the palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*).

ProFauna's interviews with some animal sellers in Cartimar, the Philippines reveal that some of the birds smuggled from Indonesia are intended to be exported to other countries, but relabelled with captive-bred labels. These allegations must be followed by actions to strictly check and control the breeding institutions in the Philippines.

High birds prices, resulting from poor enforcement, has encouraged the illegal trade in to the Philippines. The price difference between parrots in the poaching sites on Halmahera, Maluku with ones in the Philippines is very big. For examples, an individual Eclectus parrot in Halmahera costs around Rp. 60.000 – Rp 70.000, while in the Philippines, the species is sold more than Rp 1.000.000.

Parrots in Talaud and Halmahera are threatened not only because of the poaching for trade, but also habitat loss. Illegal deforestation for shifting cultivation or for timber becomes another problem in Halmahera Island and some parts of Karakelang Island, Talaud.

Another dangerous threat is the nickel mining operation on the east part of Halmahera Island. Not only does this activity destroy the parrot habitat, but also encourages the people to poach and trade the bird. ProFauna saw many birds be kept in the mineworkers' houses. Some of them were then sold in Java.

The parrot poaching in north Halmahera in order to be smuggled to the Philippines must stop, before it's too late. The smuggling breaks the Indonesian national law and also the CITES agreements. Thus, this illegal business can't be tolerated anymore. Regional Government and the Forestry Department (Central Government) must seriously control these parrot poaching and trade.

#### **40% Death Rate**

Parrot smuggling has a very high death rate, 40 %. At the poaching level in which gum is used, the death rate is 5% and at the transportation mortality level is 10%. So, the total death rate from the poaching to the transportation is about 15%. The ProFauna survey of the parrot trade in Indonesia carried out in 2001 shows that the death rate of parrots traded in the bird markets is 25%. The high mortality rate is due to cramped cages, malnutrition, disease, and stress during the interval when the birds are waiting for buyers.

Therefore, the total death rate of the parrot trade to the selling stage is about 40 %, a quite high percentage. If there are 1000 parrots caught from the wild, around 400 individuals will die in vain during the process of poaching, transportation, trade, and poor conditions. The more birds are caught, the more die. Moreover, the parrot population in the wild will drastically decrease towards the endangering level and become a bird conservation problem.

## Surabaya, The Centre of the Parrot Trade in Indonesia

The Cockatoo and Lory are the most wanted parrot species by the bird market traders in Indonesia. The birds are famous for their abilities to copy human speech. It is no wonder that almost in all bird markets in Indonesia, parrots are for sale. The birds also can easily be found in the people's houses near their natural habitat, like ones found by ProFauna team in Karakelang Island, Talaud in July 2007. We saw about 60 individual red-and-blue Lories (*Eos histrio*) being kept as pets by the villagers.

In general, the use of parrots is for pets. Besides their bright feathers, their abilities to copy human speech make parrots the most wanted animals for pet bird lovers. The buyers are not only from Java, but also from Halmahera, North Maluku, the habitat of the birds. Nevertheless, the biggest buyers are from the domestic markets in Java.

Java Island is the centre of Indonesian economy and government. There are many bird markets, from the small ones with less than 5 stands to the big ones with more than 100 stands. In January – November 2007, ProFauna monitored the parrot trade in 8 big bird markets in Java and Bali on a monthly basis.

These were Malang bird market in Malang, Bratang bird Market in Surabaya, Kupang bird market in Surabaya, Turi bird market in Surabaya, Pramuka bird market in Jakarta, Barito bird market in Jakarta, and Satria bird market in Bali. From the monitoring, it is revealed that the domestic trade in parrots is still at a high level. The most wanted species is the black-capped Lory (*Lorius lory*), the second the sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) and the third the Eclectus parrot (*Eclectus roratus*).



Turi market in Surabaya is the top selling bird market for parrots because it gets a direct supply from Halmahera Island, North Maluku. In a year, approximately 5760 individual parrots are poached in North Halmahera to supply the domestic markets, most of them ending up in the bird markets in Surabaya. There, we hardly see any animal confiscation operations. ProFauna has recommended that the Forestry Department BKSDA conduct confiscation operations many times but unfortunately they have yet to do so giving a number of excuses.

In 2007, the Forestry Department did not issue any catching quotas for the trade in parrots. Only catching quotas in small numbers were issued for breeding parents. In fact, the poaching of many species is still continuing in Maluku and Papua. One evidence is the many parrots for sale in the bird markets. All of them are taken from the wild, instead of being captive breeding.

The lack of control or confiscation operations in the bird markets in Java ensure the bird trade continues. Bird markets in Surabaya and the Pramuka bird market in Jakarta have been the centres

of the trade in protected parrots The Forestry Department seems to be reluctant to conduct law enforcement towards these two big markets.

### The Decreasing of Red-and-blue Lory Trade

Nowadays, the trade of the red-and-blue Lory has drastically decreased. Both large-scale trade for the domestic market and the smuggling to the Philippines have also decreased. The reduction of the trade in red-and-blue Lories is caused by the intensive confiscation operations performed by the police and the Forestry Department in 2005.

During 2003 – 2005, the police confiscated 232 individual Red-and-blue Lories in Karakelang Island, Talaud Islands (BirdLife Indonesia, 2006). The confiscation operations were:

- **November 2003**, The police of Essang District confiscated 45 red-and-blue Lories in Apan Village and 31 individuals from bird dealers. The total was 76 birds.
- **January 2005**, The police confiscated 119 red-and-blue Lories being kept as pets in 9 Villages in Karakelang Island, Talaud.
- **22 May 2005**, 5 Filipinos were put under arrest because they were about to smuggle 37 red-and-blue Lories.

The confiscations of these red-and-blue Lories reduced the bird smuggling operations to the Philippines. However, on a smaller scale, less than 10 birds, some people still sell red-and-blue Lories to Philippine fishermen coming along the coasts of Talaud Islands. Due to the strict inspection in Talaud, the transaction is done offshore, instead of on the land. One red-and-blue Lory costs approximately Rp 75.000, when sold to the Philippine fishermen. On arrival at the Philippines, the bird is sold for Rp 250.000 each.

Some poachers in Karakelang, Talaud told ProFauna that the Red-and-blue Lory smuggling to the Philippines is transacted offshore. There were around 25 individuals smuggled in 2007 using this kind of dealing.

Based on the data of BirdLife Indonesia (2006), it is reported that in 2004, there were 343 red-and-blue Lories exported from Karakelang Island. 311 of them were sold to the Philippine fishermen, and the other 32 were sold to Manado in North Sulawesi. In 2005, the red-and-blue lorry trade decreased to 49 individuals and in 2006 it fell to 32 individuals. In 2007, there were about 25 individuals for sale.

The reduction of the trade in red-and-blue Lory is very relieving and proves that good cooperation between the Government, NGOs and the local people can suppress the bird trade significantly. The law enforcement through the confiscation operations has curbed the threatened bird trade. The confiscations conducted by the police in 2005 in Karakelang Island, Talaud has given a real shock to the perpetrators of the red-and-blue Lory trade.

### Parrot Trade in Ternate Decreasing to 95%

Very good news comes from Ternate, the capital of North Maluku Province. Previously in 2001, Ternate was notorious as the centre of parrot trade in Maluku. ProFauna/RSCPA report entitled "Flying without Wings" (2002) publicized the facts that in 2001 there were approximately 15.000 individuals of parrot traded in Ternate every year. The birds were smuggled to a number of exporters in Jakarta and Bali. There were 2 big dealers of parrot in Ternate, UD Kinari and CV Baktimer.

The ProFauna/RSCPA report (2002) showed that in 2001, parrot poaching took place most in the central part of Halmahera Island, as well as Bacan Island, Obi Island and Mandioli Island. The last check done by ProFauna in 2007 reveals the fact that the activities of parrot poaching in the central of Halmahera have been drastically reduced as there is no demand.

There is no dealer in Ternate now. UD Kinari and CV Baktimer have been closed. As a result, the parrot smuggling to Ternate has fallen by 95 %.

One of the key factors to the decrease in the Ternate parrot trade is the campaigns by ProFauna during 2002-2006 which tried to stop the parrot trade in Ternate. These campaigns have gained their goals since the regional Government, the Forestry Department, the local people as well as the Indonesian Armed Force now cooperate well.

A year after ProFauna parrot campaign, on 3 April 2003, the Governor of North Maluku issued a letter to prohibit the poaching of parrot from North Maluku. The Governor forbids anyone to export a parrot from North Maluku. The Forestry Department has enforced the law towards KSDA officer who was involved in the illegal poaching of white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*). The Forestry Department has also conducted some confiscations of the parrot poached and traded illegally in Ternate.

This also proves that law enforcement is the key factor to control the illegal bird trade. A good cooperation among the Regional Government, the Forestry Department, NGOs can reach the goals of wild animal conservation.

However, parrot poaching and trade are still at a high level in the north part of Halmahera Island. The birds are then smuggled to the Philippines through the cities of General Santos and Davao.

### The Route of the Domestic Trade and the Bird Price List

Most parrots poached in North Halmahera, North Maluku are then sent to Surabaya city in east Java using freight ships from Tobelo and Galela ports. At least once every two weeks, there is a freight service to Surabaya. The birds are loaded together with copra, one of Halmahera agricultural commodities.

The parrots smuggled from Tobelo port come from other regions like Togawa Village, Dodowo Village, Morotai and Buli Islands (South Halmahera). There are 3 dealers in Tobelo: Agus, Gajah, and Max.

The parrots smuggled to Surabaya are cramped into the cages measuring 60 cm X 50 cm X 40 cm. In the cages, the birds are fed with bananas and honey so they won't die during the journey. More or less, 30 white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*), chattering Lory (*Lorius garrulus*), violet-necked Lory (*Eos squamata*) and sometimes Eclectus Parrot (*Eclectus roratus*) are smuggled every month for each delivery. The journey time for the freight boats carrying the birds from Tobelo, Halmahera to Surabaya takes 5 to 7 days, depending on the weather condition. The ship finally docks at Kalimas port in Surabaya.

The prices of the birds in Halmahera vary according to the species and their ages. Young parrots (the babies) usually cost around 2-3 times more than the adults.

Arriving in Surabaya, the minimum price may multiply 3 times the price in the poaching sites and the birds are then distributed to other cities all over Java, like Yogyakarta, Semarang, Jakarta, Banyuwangi, and Denpasar in Bali. Due to the high prices in the domestic markets, parrot poaching from the wild keeps rising.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Every year in North Halmahera, Maluku, there are 9760 individuals of parrot poached for the trade. 41 % of them are smuggled to the Philippines, and 59 % are for domestic trade. The species are white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*), chattering Lory (*Lorius garrulus*), Eclectus parrot (*Eclectus roratus*), and the violet-necked Lory (*Eos squamata*).

It is necessary for the Forestry Department and the police to conduct control and confiscation operations towards the illegal parrot trade in Pelita village, Galela District, north Halmahera Island in North Maluku. Most of the birds are smuggled to the cities of General Santos or Davao in the Philippines by sea. Furthermore, the Navy of Indonesian Armed Force (TNI) and the Indonesian Marine Police must improve the patrol at the marine boundaries between Indonesia and the Philippines as this is the route for wild animal smuggling from Indonesia. A good cooperation between the Indonesian and Philippine Governments is needed to curb this animal smuggling.

The parrot death rate is very high, around 40 %. The high percentage is caused by the poor poaching method (5% death rate), poor transportation conditions (10%), and poor keeping (25%).

Taking into account the high death rate for parrots poached from the wild, including the white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*), the Indonesian Republic Forestry Minister must raise the status of the white Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*) to a protected species. The zero catching quota for the white Cockatoo is ineffective to stop its poaching in the wild. The rising status of protection towards the white Cockatoo will prevent the extinction of this cockatoo species. As the white Cockatoo is endemic to North Maluku it is important to categorise this species into a protected animal.

Besides the classification of the white Cockatoo as a protected species, the status of the instruction letter from the North Maluku Governor prohibiting the parrot smuggling out of North Maluku needs to be put onto a legally binding Regional Regulation. The regulation must clearly state the penalty towards the offenders.

The Philippine Government is expected to put it on trial anyone found smuggling animals from Indonesia to the Philippines. Law enforcement is necessary to stop wild animal smuggling.

ProFauna launches ***Pirated Parrot*** report on the 22nd May 2008 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The report is complemented with a 14-minute film (VCD/DVD) about the Indonesian parrots being smuggled to the Philippines and to the Indonesian domestic trade level. For further information, please contact **Butet A. Sitohang, International Communication Officer of ProFauna International**, mobile: **+6281333899741** or email: [international@profauna.org](mailto:international@profauna.org)