

Indonesia: A Forestry Department Officer Also A Wildlife Trafficker

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The illegal wildlife trade is rampant in Medan city, North Sumatera, according to a recent investigation conducted by ProFauna Indonesia in collaboration with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

It was recorded that around 10,000 wild species endemic to Sumatera Island were poached to supply the domestic and international illegal wildlife trade in 2007.

The hub is in Medan, at Bintang animal market. Many protected wildlife such as eagles, cockatoos, slow lorises, gibbons, mitered-leaf monkeys, sun bears and others are sold freely. Each animal could fetch between IDR 100,000 (US\$ 11) to IDR 1,500,000 (US\$ 160).

Some traders in the market also supply other traders in Pramuka market Jakarta, the largest wildlife black market in Indonesia. Every two weeks, wildlife traffickers in Bintang market smuggle about 300 animals to Jakarta through Polonia airport in Medan.

Medan is also an exit point of wildlife smuggling to Singapore and Malaysia, through the ports of Belawan and Tanjung Balai in Medan, Kuala Tungkal in Jambi, and Batam, Riau.

Investigations have uncovered a corrupt government officer from the Natural Resources Conservation Center (BKSDA) of the Forestry Department, who is involved in the wildlife trafficking between Medan - Jakarta. The officer employs two key methods to illegally aid the poachers. He has been issuing false licences for Wild Plant and Animal Transportation, declaring that the consignments which contained protected animals, as unprotected species. He also overlooks poachers smuggling protected species in specially constructed hidden bottom drawers of carrying crates, which transport the CITES unprotected common song birds that can be transported freely.

The smuggling through Polonia airport in Medan usually takes place in the evening when security is slack. ProFauna has successfully filmed the process undercover.

The corrupt officer's involvement in wildlife trafficking mars the department's commitment to stop crime against wildlife.

According to the 1990 wildlife law regarding Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservations, trading in protected species is prohibited. Offenders will receive up to a 5 year jail sentence and up to IDR 100 millions (US\$ 11,000) in fine. Asep R. Purnama, ProFauna's campaigns officer, stated, "The Forestry Department and the Police must conduct a confiscation operation in Bintang market, Medan."

ProFauna also demands that the Forestry Department and the Police make an example of the corrupt officer and prosecute him to the full extent of the law. Illegal wildlife trade is a cruel crime, that must not go unpunished.

On the 18th June 2008, ProFauna Indonesia in collaboration with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) launches 'WILDLIFE TRADE IN MEDAN' report in Medan, North Sumatera. It is complemented with a film revealing the involvement of a government officer in the crime. For further information please contact Butet A Sitohang, International Communication Officer, mobile: +6281333899741 or email: international@profauna.org

ProFauna Indonesia (www.profauna.org) is a wildlife protection organization in Indonesia, established in 1994. ProFauna has become the largest wildlife protection organization in Indonesia with 500,000 member and supporters.

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