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TRADE IN COCKATOOS

Tens of thousands of Yellow-crested Cockatoos, Umbrella Cockatoos, Salmon-crested Cockatoos and Tanimbar Corellas were legally exported from Indonesia during the 1980s, as were hundreds of Philippine Cockatoos from the Philippines. This is not the total number of birds taken from the wild. When the illegal trade, domestic trade and death before export are taken into account, the figure is likely to be double the number of birds reported as being exported. Frank Lambert estimated that the number of Umbrella Cockatoos trapped in the north Moluccas in the early 1990s was probably twice the number allowed under permit. He noted that permits were often used more than once and that the numbers or species listed on permits were often disregarded. Letters of recommendation were sometimes used instead of real permits. This highlights the problem of identifying illegally trapped birds when a legal trade exists. Since that time, all the heavily traded Indonesian cockatoo species have been placed on Appendix I of CITES and all species are protected within Indonesia. However, this has not prevented cockatoos from being sold in local or international markets.

Chris Shepherd and colleagues, investigating the pet trade in Medan, Sumatra, found that four of the top 10 species in markets were cockatoos. At any one time, only small numbers of cockatoos were present. As turnover rates were unknown it was impossible to estimate the actual numbers of birds being traded. Approximately 400 Yellow-crested Cockatoos and the same number of Tanimbar Corellas were observed over a four-year period. Around 100 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Salmon-crested Cockatoos were also recorded. Margaret Kinnaird and co-workers noted in 1998 that despite Salmon-crested Cockatoos being listed as a protected species, there were up to 40 at any time in Ambon markets. Birds in Indonesian markets are most likely destined for domestic use, though some will enter the international trade.