

Malaysian authorities save hundreds of lizards

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A monitor lizard flicks tongue as it roams freely around the Philippine island of Palawan. Malaysian wildlife authorities have seized 422 clouded monitor lizards being smuggled out of the country and destined for cooking pots in Asia.

Malaysian wildlife authorities said Wednesday they had seized 422 clouded monitor lizards being smuggled out of the country and destined for cooking pots in Asia.

Abdul Razak Majid, wildlife and national parks chief in southern Johor state, said two men were arrested on September 20 when their lorry was stopped following a tip-off, leading to the discovery of the lizards.

"The monitor lizards, which we believe were captured in jungles in the

area, were wrapped in nets and placed in fruit crates," he told AFP.

"Investigations show that the animals were being smuggled out of the country and would be sold for their meat which is considered a delicacy in some neighbouring countries and also for making medicine," he added.

Abdul Razak said that once investigations were completed, the [lizards](#) would be released into the wild in the state's national parks.

A Malaysian court earlier this month sentenced Malaysian wildlife trafficker Anson Wong to six months in jail for trying to smuggle 95 endangered boa constrictors to neighbouring Indonesia.

Activists have criticised the lenient sentence and authorities have promised to seek a tougher punishment.

Despite efforts by Southeast Asian authorities to crack down on illegal smuggling and wildlife trafficking, the practice still persists in the region, posing a threat to a number of species, activists say.

The Star newspaper reported this week that Malaysia's wildlife department will undergo a shake-up to remove officers collaborating with [wildlife](#) traders.

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