

Thailand seizes 2,000 monitor lizards

April 8 2011



Thai custom officials display one of the monitor lizards it seized in Prachuap Khiri Khan province. Thailand has made its largest-ever seizure of monitor lizards after finding more than 2,000 of the reptiles being smuggled in a convoy of pick-up trucks heading for the capital.

Thailand said on Friday it had made its largest-ever seizure of monitor lizards after finding more than 2,000 of the reptiles being smuggled in a convoy of pick-up trucks heading for the capital.

The live Bengal monitors were found in plastic baskets on the back of three vehicles when they were stopped by authorities in Prachuap Khiri Khan province, south of Bangkok, on Thursday.

Customs officials, who put the estimated street value of the reptiles at 1.8 million baht (\$60,000), said officials believe they were destined for Chinese customers.

"They are from Malaysia and transported through southern Thailand and northeastern Laos to China for eating," said Seree Thaijongrak, head of the customs investigation and suppression bureau.

"We knew there was a monitor lizard racket... this time it's the largest [seizure](#) ever," he said.

Wildlife anti-trafficking organisation Freeland said monitor [lizards](#) are protected by the Convention on International Trade in [Endangered Species](#) of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and are threatened with extinction.

International trade in the [reptiles](#) is banned and they are protected under Thai and Malaysian law.

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