

Rare turtles returned to the Philippines

April 27 2012



Officials hold Philippine pond turtles at the Manila International Airport. Thirty-one live turtles, including some rare species, that were smuggled to Hong Kong, were flown back to the Philippines.

Thirty-one live turtles, including some rare species, that were smuggled to Hong Kong were flown back to the Philippines on Friday but five others did not live to make the trip, an official said.

Three environment department workers arrived at Manila international airport carrying the [turtles](#) in a wooden crate more than two months after they were recovered from a Chinese smuggler in February, said Theresa Lim.

"The turtles are fine, active. Unfortunately, two of the pond turtles and three Asian box turtles died in Hong Kong due to stress," said Lim, director of the government wildlife bureau.



Critically endangered Philippine pond turtles arrive in Manila. Three environment department workers arrived at Manila international airport carrying the turtles in a wooden crate more than two months after they were recovered from a Chinese smuggler in February

She said the turtles suffered stress when they were kept hidden as they were smuggled into Hong Kong.

The turtles, many slightly larger than the size of a matchbox, were cradled in pink foam-like material soaked in water in individual compartments inside the crate.

The animals, which include the critically-endangered *Siebenrockiella leytenensis* pond turtle and the vulnerable *Cuora amboinensis* box turtle, will be taken to the western island of Palawan, Lim told AFP.

The Katala Foundation, a private wildlife protection group, will rehabilitate the animals for about three months before they are released back into the wild.

The Chinese smuggler was arrested at Hong Kong International Airport on February 8 after the turtles were seized from his luggage.

He was charged and fined HK\$8,000 (\$1,000) under local laws aimed at protecting endangered species.

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