

Over 8,000 pig-nosed turtles rescued in Indonesia

January 10 2014



A customs official is seen holding two baby pig-nosed turtles, in Tangerang, Banten province, on January 9, 2014

Indonesian officials said on Friday they have rescued more than 8,000 baby pig-nosed turtles hidden in suitcases and thought to be destined for China and Singapore.

A total of 2,968 were discovered in four suitcases at the airport serving

the capital Jakarta after arriving from the remote eastern Papua region, said Zaenal Abidi, quarantine official.

"The suitcases were full of plastic boxes holding 15 to 20 turtles each. Sadly, 14 of them were dead on arrival," he said.

Airport officials were asked Thursday to be on the look-out for pig-nosed turtles—classified as vulnerable—after 5,400 of the creatures were discovered in seven suitcases in Papua, he said.

Abidi said that pig-nosed turtles smuggled through Jakarta are usually sent to Singapore or China, where they are sold as exotic pets and sometimes end up in [food markets](#).

All the turtles would be returned to their [natural habitat](#) in Papua, Abidi said.

He added that police knew who had checked in the luggage but their whereabouts were now unknown.

The pig-nosed turtle is only found in Australia and New Guinea, an island shared between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, and is protected under Indonesian conservation laws.

It has a distinctive snout-like nose and webbed feet.



A baby pig-nosed turtle is pictured in Hong Kong, on October 4, 2011

The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the pig-nosed turtle as vulnerable and trade of the species is restricted.

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