

New haul of exotic animals seized in Philippines

February 25 2014



Undated Department of Environment and Natural Resources handout photo released on February 16, 2014 shows an echidna, one of the 100 exotic animals seized by wildlife officers that had been smuggled into the Philippines

Wildlife authorities said Tuesday they had seized nearly 100 exotic animals that had been smuggled into the southern Philippines in the second such haul in just two weeks.

Among the creatures confiscated were 66 [wild birds](#) including a rare Pesquet's parrot as well as assorted reptiles and mammals such as a long-beaked echidna, a Malayan box turtle and 10 sugar gliders—squirrel-like animals that can glide from tree to tree.

A total of 93 animals from Indonesia and Australia were seized by maritime police in the waters off the southern island of Mindanao on Saturday and included vulnerable and [critically endangered species](#), said Ali Hajina, the regional chief of the government [wildlife](#) board.

Five Filipinos who were transporting the animals were arrested and will be charged with illegal possession and transport of these species, he told AFP.

The seizure came just a week after wildlife officers, also in the southern Philippines, found almost 100 similar animals from Australia and Indonesia, being transported by van to Manila.

"They (the two shipments) could be connected. They may have one source because the animals were almost the same types. They may have a large stock so they may have divided it into two," Hajina told AFP.



Undated Department of Environment and Natural Resources handout photo released on February 16, 2014 shows a sick parrot, one of 90 parrots seized by wildlife officers that had been smuggled into the Philippines

He said the animals were so rare even the wildlife officials could not identify them and had to ask Filipino hobbyists for help.

The head of the government's wildlife division Josefina de Leon said the shipments were suspected to have originated from the same international syndicate which sells the animals to local collectors.

She said the two large seizures in two weeks were a sign of improved training of wildlife authorities and better cooperation from the public.

"Enforcement is better because there are concerned citizens who are

now assisting us in catching the perpetrators," she said.

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