

Nearly 150 trafficked animals flown to Amazon freedom

March 18 2015



A cougar is rehabilitated at the state environmental agency Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca on March 17, 2015, in Palmira, Colombia, before being returned to the wild in the Amazon

A Colombian Air Force plane whose cargo hold looked more like the hull of Noah's Ark delivered nearly 150 trafficked animals back to the Amazon on Tuesday following months of rehabilitation.

The 149 animals—83 reptiles, 53 birds and 13 mammals, including wild

cats and Capuchin monkeys—underwent 10 months of preparation that included surgery to recover skin and plumage, the Valle del Cauca department environmental authority said.

Before being released into the wild, the animals went through thorough medical examinations to make sure they would not spread disease back to their [natural populations](#), and were isolated with other members of their species in conditions similar to the jungle.

"We selected individual animals that could defend themselves in their environment, who weren't too far along in adulthood so they wouldn't fall easy prey," said Lorena Gomez, a biologist with Valle del Cauca authority.

Following a two-hour flight in crates from the western city of Palmira to the municipality of Solano, the animals will travel by boat on a five-hour ride into the Amazonian jungle, before being released.

Around 55,000 wild animal and plant specimens were seized in Colombia during the past two years, often to finance criminal gangs, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development said.



Employees of the state environmental agency Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca load caged wild animals onto an Air Force plane to send them back to the wild on March 17, 2015, in Palmira, Colombia



Capuchin monkeys sit in a cage at the state environmental agency Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca on March 17, 2015, in Palmira, Colombia, before being returned to the wild in the Amazon

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