

Indonesia traffickers sold crocs, pythons on social media: police

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The case is the latest example of how social media platforms have become a key online market for animal traffickers

A group of suspected animal traffickers have been arrested in Indonesia for selling crocodiles, pythons and other protected species through Facebook and the messaging service WhatsApp, police said Wednesday.

The case is the latest example of how [social media](#) has become a key online market place for animal traffickers as conservationists warn that tech giants have not done enough to halt the trade on their platforms.

The seven suspects, who were arrested at separate locations in and around Jakarta last week, bought the [animals](#) for just 300,000 rupiah (\$22) each before re-selling them online for between two million and five million rupiah, authorities said.

"The suspects put the animals up for sale on a Facebook page or via WhatsApp," said Jakarta [police](#) spokesman Argo Yuwono.

"Interested buyers were asked to meet and the animals were handed over to them," he added.

The suspects have been charged under Indonesia's environment law which carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

The for-sale animals, including some rare species endemic to Indonesia, were brought to the capital Jakarta from the jungles of Java and Sumatra islands, Yuwono said.

During their raids, police said they confiscated two crocodiles, two reticulated pythons, six jungle cats, a pair of gibbons, two Javan lutungs, a Javan surili, two owls, a brahminy kite eagle, and a slow loris.

The animals were handed over to Jakarta's conservation agency.

Earlier this month conservation watchdog TRAFFIC warned that Facebook had emerged as the top site for wildlife trafficking in the Philippines with thousands of endangered crocodiles, snakes and turtles illegally traded in just three months.

Indonesia is one of the world's most biodiverse countries making it a lucrative market for the illegal trade in wildlife, which has brought some endangered species to the brink of extinction, activists say.

In November, Indonesian police arrested several smugglers who stuffed more than 120 exotic birds into drain pipes.

TRAFFIC has also warned that the illicit sale of pangolins has seen thousands of the critically endangered animals smuggled out of Indonesia every year.

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