

Indonesia foils illegal Facebook sale of komodo dragons

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Indonesia, home to the komodo dragon, has for years been a key source and transit point for animal trafficking

Indonesian authorities said Wednesday they had seized five komodo dragons and dozens of other animals being sold on Facebook, as the country battles to clamp down on the illegal wildlife trade.

The vast Southeast Asian archipelago nation's dense tropical rainforests boast some of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world and it has for years been a key source and transit point for animal trafficking.

Five smugglers, identified only by their initials, were arrested in Semarang and Surabaya on Java island for allegedly trafficking the komodos—the world's biggest lizard—along with bearcats, cockatoos and cassowary birds.

"The suspect VS sold the komodos online through Facebook," East Java police spokesman Frans Barung Mangera said in a statement.

The dragons, which can only be found in their [natural habitat](#) on a cluster of islands in eastern Indonesia, were sold for between 15 and 20 million rupiah (\$1,000-\$1,400), Mangera said.

In a separate case, three other people were arrested in East Java over the alleged online sale of otters, leopard cats and pangolin, Mangera said.

If convicted, the smugglers could face up to five years in prison and a 100-million-rupiah fine.

The haul of [komodo dragons](#) comes just a day after authorities seized more than 5,000 endangered pig-nosed turtles from smugglers in Indonesia's easternmost province Papua.

The pig-nosed turtle—which has a distinctive snout-like nose and webbed feet—is only found in Australia and New Guinea, an island shared between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, and is protected under Indonesian conservation laws.

Indonesia's illegal trade in wildlife along with habitat loss has driven numerous endangered species, from the Sumatran elephant to the

orangutan, to the brink of extinction.

Authorities in Bali, a popular holiday island, last week arrested a Russian tourist who attempted to smuggle a drugged orangutan out of Indonesia in his suitcase to keep as a pet.

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