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THE TRAFFICKING OF KUKANGS OR SLOW LORISES (*Nycticebus coucang*) IN INDONESIA

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1. Introduction:

Slow lorises (*Nycticebus coucang*), otherwise known as kukang in Indonesia, are arboreal primates. Considered cute exotic pets, they are highly in demand,.

The slow loris family group, also known in Indonesia as malu-malu or 'the shy one', consists of 8 genus from 14 species. The distribution is quite wide, from southern Africa, Sahara desert, India, Srilanka, Southern Asia, Eastern Asia to South East Asia. Of 8 genus, only 1 is found in Indonesia, this is *Nycticebus*, which consists of the following 4 species:

1. *Nycticebus coucang* - found in Malaya, Sumatera and Kalimantan including the nearby islands.
2. *Nycticebus pygmaeus* - found in Indo China, Laos and Cambodia
3. *Nycticebus bengalensis* - found in India until Thailand.
4. *Nycticebus javanicus*, only found in Java (Jawa), Indonesia



Highly sought after" exotic pets" - *Nycticebus coucang*

Slow lorises or kukang, are primates which live in the tropical forest, preferring primary and secondary forests, in the bush and amongst bamboo forests. The distribution of the species in Indonesia can be found in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Jawa. So far there is no accurate data on their current population in the wild. However the shrinkage of the habitat forest and the high levels of poaching and trafficking can be used as an indicator that the slow loris wild population has decreased.

1.1. Protection of slow lorises or kukangs:

Slow lorises have been protected since 1973 by Indonesian law through the Agriculture Ministerial decree of 14 February 1973, no. 66/Kpts/Um2/1973, which was strengthened by the Indonesian government legislation no. 7 of 1999 in respect of the preservation of Fauna and Flora, in which slow lorises are listed as a protected species.

According to the Indonesian State's legislation no. 5 of 1990 concerning the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems (article 21, no 2), the trade and the possession of protected animals including slow lorises are forbidden. The perpetrator will receive a jail sentence of 5 years and Rp 100 Million (US\$11,000) fine.

Slow lorises are thus legally protected by the Indonesian State's legislation and law. Their status according to IUCN is vulnerable, which means it is threatened by 10% rate of extinction in 10 years time. Meanwhile CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora) has included kukangs in the Appendix II.

2. Trapping or poaching of slow lorises from the wild

According to the survey conducted by ProFauna Indonesia from 2000 to 2006, all slow lorises which are traded freely in several bird markets are caught from the wild, not from captive breeding.

The main poaching locations in Indonesia are:

- *Kabupaten Sumedang(Sumedang Regency), West Jawa:*

One of the poaching locations is Kareumbi forest in Sumedang regency, west Jawa. The traditional poaching technique used is to catch slow lorises directly from the bamboo trees. Poaching has been intensified since 1985.

A poacher could catch between 6 - 7 animals per day. Poached animals were sold to the whole sellers or wildlife traders, who supply them to various bird markets in the cities of Bandung, Jakarta, Semarang or Surabaya.

- *Sukabumi, West Jawa:*

It is becoming more difficult to catch slow loris in Sukabumi. Prior to 2000 Sukabumi was one of the suppliers of slow lorises in Indonesia. It is likely that the slow lorises wild population has decreased much which makes it more difficult to find.

- *Bengkulu, Sumater:*

At least 40 slow lorises are poached and trafficked each month in Bengkulu (data 2004 - 2006). Most of the animals were poached from the Bukit Barisan National Park.

The traders value each loris at Rp 10,000 to Rp 15,000 (US\$11 - \$16). At the bird markets a slow loris is sold for between Rp 100,000 - Rp 150,000 (US\$110 - \$ 160).

2.1. Teeth extraction of slow lorises:

To give the false impression to prospective buyers that slow lorises are tame, cute and do not bite, wildlife traders extract the animals' teeth using pliers without pain killers. The extraction process often causes fracture and breakage to the teeth in addition to mouth injuries.

After the teeth extraction, the animals are hung upside down by holding the legs and are then swung in a circle, in the belief that it would stop the bleeding. Many animals suffer infection following the teeth extraction, some even die from the process.

3. The trafficking of slow lorises

Evidence from nine bird markets in Jawa and Bali held under observation by ProFauna Indonesia show that slow lorises are highly sought after wild animals.

Table 1.

The trade of slow lorises in Jawa and Bali bird markets 2000 - 2006:

Year	Number of animal
2000	80
2001	8
2002	262
2004	39
2005	348
2006	157
Total 2000-2006	894

The above recorded data in table 1 is based on the visible open trade in the bird markets. The number on other illicit trade, where animals are concealed and traded discreetly would probably be much higher.

ProFauna observed in 2002, at least 5,000 slow lorises were smuggled from Sumatera to Jawa via Lampung. This causes an impact on the wild population of slow lorises in Sumatera.

Slow lorises are also traded in other cities outside Jawa Island. On 9th June 2004, it was recorded that 12 slow lorises were seen in Bintang bird market on the day in Medan, North Sumatra. Each animal was sold at Rp 150,000 (US\$160) each. Slow lorises are also sold in the following areas:

- Banjarmasin city, South Kalimantan at, Ahad Market (J. A. Yani) and in Sudi Mampir market (near Plaza Metro City).
- Palembang city in South Sumatra, where large number of animals are sold at Enambelas Ilir Market. Each month approximately between 40 - 60 animals are sold at Rp 100,000 - Rp 200,000 (US\$ 110 - \$210) each.

- In addition to the bird markets, slow lorises are also openly sold in shopping malls. On 3rd July 2004, in front of the square of Malang Mall, 2 slow lorises were offered for sale at Rp 175,000 (US\$190) each.
- In Bandung city, West Java, at Indah Plaza (BIP) each day there are 3 - 5 slow lorises on display for sale at a price of Rp 150,000 - Rp 200,000 (US\$160 - US\$ 210) each.

3.1. The use of slow lorises as bushmeat and in “traditional medicine”

Beside being traded as exotic pets, slow lorises are also killed for bush meat and “traditional medicine”. It is believed that the meat of slow loris increase male power and acts as an aphrodisiac. The bone of the slow loris is also believed to have the magical power to avert danger or is used as a lucky charm to give peace in the household.

3.2. Trafficking of slow lorises to overseas:

Apart from the domestic trade, slow lorises are smuggled overseas. In January 2003, the Indonesian police confiscated 91 slow lorises from a Kuwaiti citizen at the Jakarta Soekarno-Hatta airport. The animals were destined for Kuwait. Unfortunately this smuggling case became blurred, possibly dropped by the authorities without any clear outcome.

On 27th June 2004, an attempt to smuggle 3 slow lorises via Jakarta Soekarno-Hatta airport was intercepted. The animals were destined for Japan and Korea.

4. Law enforcement:

Slow lorises are legally protected by law in Indonesia; the trafficking is therefore illegal and is a crime. Despite the efforts by the Forestry Police to enforce the law and confiscate traded animals, they are still widely available for sale. From records in 2003, ProFauna Indonesia has assisted the forestry police to confiscate 49 slow lorises in Jakarta and the surrounding areas. Other recorded law enforcement efforts include:

- The wildlife rescue centres (PPS) in East Jawa and Yogyakarta recorded 15 slow lorises rescued in 2006 as a result of confiscation by the forestry police from traffickers.
- On 3rd July 2004, BKSDA DKI (Bureau of Conservation and Natural Resources Jakarta) confiscated a baby slow loris amongst Javan langurs (*Trachypithecus auratus*) and jungle cats (*Felis bengalensis*), from a trader in Barito bird market in South of Jakarta.
- On 25th June 2003 an elderly female wildlife trafficker was found in an attempt to smuggle various wild animals including slow lorises in Lampung, Sumatera. Unfortunately, the case was dropped due to consideration of her age.
- Positive results were recorded by ProFauna Indonesia in Malang bird market, East Jawa, showing an absent of slow loris since 2004, compared to the last record of 38 slow lorises sold in this market in 1999. The lack of visible slow loris trade in Malang bird market was mainly due to regular inspections made by the Bureau of Conservation and Natural Resources East Java II.

5. Slow lorises are threatened with extinction:

Based on the investigation and monitoring conducted by ProFauna from 2002 to 2006, there are approximately 6000 to 7000 slow lorises caught each year from the wild in Indonesia, a completely unsustainable figure. This poses a serious threat to the preservation of slow lorises, particularly in view of the slow birth rate of the species, with a maximum of one offspring every one and a half years.

Another factor is the lack of scientific data about their population in the wild. It is becoming hard to find these nocturnal and slow moving animals, although practiced and cunning poachers seem to have no difficulty in catching them.

6. To increase slow lorises protection:

Indonesian law enforcement must be further tightened to ensure slow loris protection nationally. Current protection can be enhanced by including slow lorises under Appendix I of CITES to preserve the remaining population.

Because slow lorises are already protected by Indonesian state law, it is natural to expect the Indonesian government to support the motion in increasing their level of protection by listing them in Appendix I CITES, in order to reduce the poaching from the wild and the trafficking at national and international level.

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