

FREEDOM: CONFISCATED PARROTS GO BACK TO THE WILD ON MOROTAI

By Mehd Halaouate, WPT Indonesia Program Manager

FIGHTING THE WILDLIFE TRADE in Indonesia is an ongoing and complex effort, one that the World Parrot Trust is committed to for the long term.

Our in-country staff has been working with North Maluku's forestry office and rescue centre for a few years now, trying to lessen the effects of trade on parrots in the region. Overall we're hopeful about being able to help more of these distressed birds, as we've been providing parrot care and husbandry training for the rangers making the confiscations, teaching them about the differences in subspecies so that recovered birds can be released back to their proper islands, and showing them how to recognise sick birds and provide treatment for them. We've also been providing funding to help in the day-to-day care of the birds in many confiscation cases.

In September of 2019, 49 Chattering Lorries (*Lorius garrulus*), 15 White Cockatoos (*Cacatua alba*), 11 Moluccan Eclectus (*Eclectus roratus*) and 10 Violet-necked Lorries (*Eos squamata*) were seized by officials. A month later, after we visited the centre where the birds were being kept and held discussions with the head of Forestry, we decided that larger enclosures were needed, and more of them. In the end, the cages were designed

so they could be dismantled and be used again at the different locations where the birds would finally be released. It was also important to separate any new arrivals from the recovering birds, and subspecies from each other, so that they could be observed and screened for disease.

After the required health checks were done we were relieved to see that 30 of the Chattering Lorries (*ssp. morotaianus*) and six of the Eclectus (*ssp. vosmaeri*) were cleared for release into the wild on Morotai Island in North Maluku. The World Parrot Trust worked closely with local authorities to plan for the event, which occurred on February 4, 2020.

A plan was developed to monitor the forest patch where the birds were set free, in an effort to deter trapping. In an encouraging show of support to protect the parrots and other wildlife that still thrive on the island, the release was attended by villagers and dignitaries from the area. The remaining birds from the confiscation continue to do well, with the hope they will be released to their appropriate areas soon. 📍



Chattering Lorries and Moluccan Eclectus wing their way to freedom. © BKSDA Ternate