



## A WORLD FIRST IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION Trust secures the release of captive Goffin's Cockatoos on Tanimbar, Indonesia.

The World Parrot Trust has recently received news that 319 Goffin's Cockatoos *Cacatua goffini* have been released back into the forest near Saumlaki, Tanimbar, Indonesia.

These birds had been in captivity for up to a year, and would have been sold on the international parrot market but for their being declared an endangered species by CITES during 1992. This made it illegal for them to be traded outside Indonesia, and as a result over 500 birds were simply held in cages on Tanimbar.

When the World Parrot Trust heard of their plight, they raised funds to help care for the endangered cockatoos and seek their release back into the wild. Scientific tests taken from the birds indicated that they were not carrying any disease or parasite that might be a threat to birds in the wild. Funds were sent to Tanimbar to pay for feeding the birds, but despite this some of them died.

Finally, on March 7th the Goffin's Cockatoos were released into the forest under the supervision of the local Indonesian authorities. The World Parrot Trust has received photographs of this event (see page 2), together with an official certificate confirming the release.

The World Parrot Trust is very pleased with this outcome, which

it believes to be a world first in practical wildlife conservation. In any case we would like to hear of any other occasions when a large number of birds in the hands of traders have been released back

into the wild, with official approval. The Trust would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for its wisdom and compassion in authorising this release. Thanks are also due to

'The Cook Report' TV programme which first discovered the birds' predicament, and to the Benelux branch of The World Parrot Trust which raised much of the funds required.



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It will of course consider articles or letters from any contributor on their merits.

The Trust hopes that the residents of the islands where Goffin's Cockatoo lives will in future regard this endangered bird as not worth catching, due to its CITES status preventing trade. The Trust is urgently preparing educational material to help achieve this objective.

When we first reported the plight of these captive cockatoos in our August 1992 issue of *PsittaScene*, we had only modest hopes of achieving the release of the birds. In the event, there are a number of unsatisfactory aspects. First, the birds were not marked in any way, so there is no prospect of monitoring their survival and dispersal from the release site. Second, no observations were made immediately after the release, when the ability of the birds to fend for themselves after a year in captivity could usefully have been studied. Third we hear from Saumlaki that once again this year Goffin's Cockatoos are being captured, so the message has apparently not yet got through to the local people that these birds are not worth catching, as there is no longer an international outlet for them.

Better news has just reached The World Parrot Trust from Birdlife International (the new name for ICBP - International Council for Bird Preservation). As reported previously in *PsittaScene*, we are part-funding a new Status Assessment of Goffin's Cockatoo and the Blue-streaked Lory on Tanimbar. The project staff have just completed three months of field work, and a letter just in from Paul Jepson, their Indonesia Programme Coordinator, reports as follows:-

"I am pleased to report that ICBP project officers Yusuf Cahyadin and Nick Brickle have returned to the Bogor programme office after successfully completing three months of field work in Tanimbar. They completed all the components of the survey plan which included two cross island transects and an evaluation of the impact of

*C. goffini* on village maize harvests, and have returned with extensive data sets which will be analyzed during the course of the next month. Both species were observed frequently on the forest transects and large numbers of *goffini* were observed in the agricultural areas. Yusuf and Nick were the first biologists to transect across the island and visit the west coast. They found a near pristine environment, people still hunting with bows and arrows and villages preparing for war! I believe this will be seen as a land mark survey and that there will be widespread interest in the results. I would like to thank WPT for supporting this

project and I will look forward to sending you the final report in due course."

We will keep our members informed on future developments on Tanimbar. What is certain is that the Trust will think very carefully before it allows itself to get involved in a similar situation in the future. From the parrot welfare point of view it was rewarding to have 319 cockatoos removed from miserable conditions and returned to the wild, but it has to be conceded that insufficient science was applied to the release.



Captive Goffin's Cockatoos, held in cages on a farm near Saumlaki, Tanimbar, Indonesia. Over 500 were kept there for one year.



Goffin's Cockatoos being released into the forest. The release was made under the supervision of the local Indonesian authorities.



The freed Goffin's Cockatoos begin to fly to freedom.



The Goffin's Cockatoos pick up food from the forest floor.