

## Conservation of the Yellow-crested Cockatoo: A Trip to Komodo, Land of the Dragons

In late 2011 and early 2012 the Indonesian Parrot Project (IPP), Konservasi Kakatua Indonesia (KKI) and the World Parrot Trust (WPT) launched into a collaborative effort to save one of the world's rarest parrots – the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo. This important work was made possible because of the outstanding financial support provided by the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation (Hong Kong) and the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund.



Work to save this imperiled species focused primarily on conducting field research, intended to bring about a better understand the species' ecology and how it uses its environment, as well as rudimentary census work to gain a better understanding of the current number of birds remaining in the wild. Educational efforts to reach people in the local populations were undertaken to help them to understand the value of keeping these birds in the wild, as well as engaging in training and capacity building work to help our researchers and local park staff to better support the birds.

Several staff members from all three organizations contributed to this effort but most of the work in the wild has been carried out by Dudi Nandika and Dwi Agustina from KKI in Indonesia, as well as Mehd Halaouate, WPT Indonesian Program director.



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Most recently one of the principal investigators for the project, Dr. Jamie Gilardi, traveled to Indonesia to further these efforts and wrote to share his recent experiences:



*On 5 April 2012, the four of us flew from Bali to Flores*

*Island, met up with a guide Mehd has used before, bought supplies, and boarded a basic 25ft (7.6 meter) fishing boat and headed for Komodo Island in the early afternoon, arriving about 3 hours later in Liang Bay. It's a very steep island with impressive peaks, mostly grassy hillsides, with forest on some slopes, in canyons and along some coastal areas. We sorted out things with the park administration, guides, permissions, schedule, rooms, etc., loaded our gear into some simple but functional cabins, and headed out for the last couple hours of daylight.*

*We immediately encountered and photographed cockatoos, initially a pair, then a group of five, then several other groups, before returning at dusk to the park headquarters. The birds were all very active, vocal, not sitting still in any location for more than a minute or two; they seemed largely unconcerned about people, neither easily disturbed nor especially attracted to our activities. As with other cockatoos, and this species on other islands, the birds were noisy and their bright white plumage was apparent from a great distance, making them easy to detect and follow, even without binoculars.*

*The following morning we left at dawn using a different part of the trail system and encountered similar groups of birds, getting still and video images of their activities, mostly from a distance. Again a lot of movement although not much flocking and no evidence of communal roosting. Toward the end of the morning, around 10:30, a large group of cockatoos assembled briefly, likely 20-25 birds, and seemed very agitated by the presence of a Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*). This species and the White-bellied Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) were both present on the island, and along with Komodo dragons (*Varanus komodoensis*), which are arboreal in their early years, and are the most likely predators of cockatoos on the island. After about four hours of inactivity, the cockatoos became vocal and active again in the afternoon, showing similar movements and social patterns.*

For more on this and other updates visit WPT 3's News from the Field <http://www.parrots.org/wpt3/news.html>