

Yellow-crested Cockatoo Suffers Huge Declines

BirdLife International

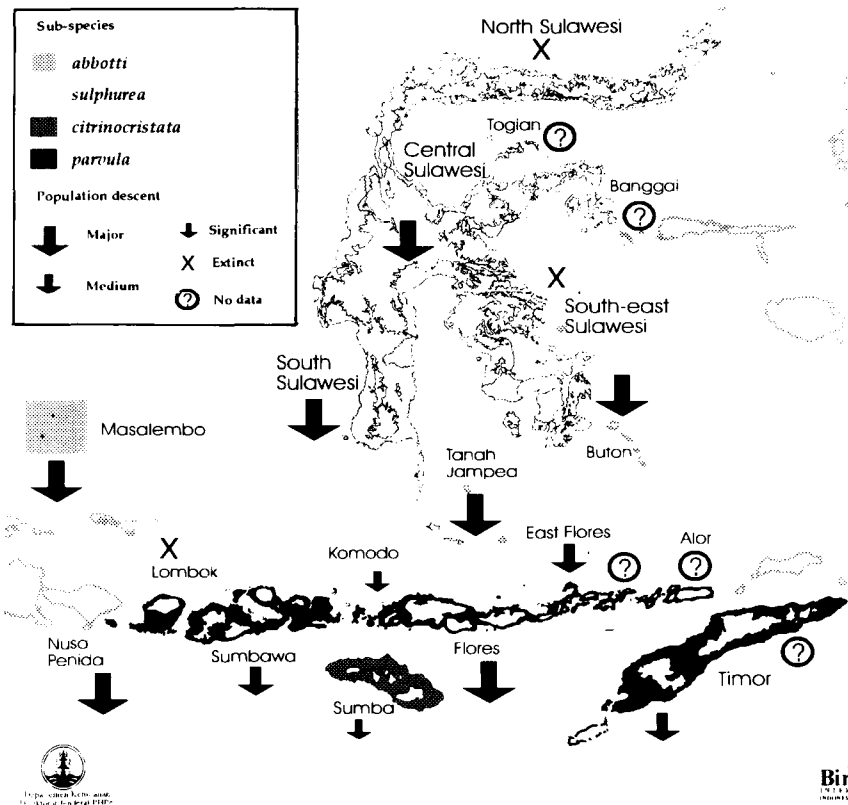
Populations of the Yellow-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua sulphurea* have crashed since the 1970s, according to a recently completed status assessment by BirdLife International and the Indonesian Department of Nature Conservation (PHPA).

Results of the surveys across the species' former range in Sulawesi and the Lesser Sunda islands, Indonesia, have been compiled into a draft species recovery plan, soon to be published by BirdLife/PHPA.

The survey teams covered large areas, quickly reaching remote areas using motorcycles, and conducting direct searches and semi-structured interviews with rural people. Only people resident in an area for over 30 years were interviewed, and their responses have demonstrated the rapidity of the species' decline. Iwan Setiawan, Species Officer with BirdLife International Indonesia Program commented "In many places we were told the same story, 20 years ago flocks of Cockatoos in the hundreds were not unusual, but by 1990 the birds had disappeared."


Over-harvesting of the cockatoo populations for the wild bird trade has

Distribution and current situation of Yellow-crested Cockatoo



been the main factor contributing to this massive decline, highly organized groups of trappers being able to capture entire flocks of up to 100 birds in traditional roosting trees. This has led to a rolling series of local extinctions, such that only eight individuals of the *abbotti* sub-species survive on the Masalembu islands in the Java Sea, the *sulphurea* sub-species has vanished from many parts of Sulawesi and only small numbers of the *parvula* sub-species can now be found in the Lesser Sunda islands.

As well as ascertaining the species' status, the survey work has facilitated positive conservation action in some areas. The sub-species *citrinocristata*, endemic to the island of Sumba and believed by some to be a separate species, has received special attention from the people of the island. Yusup Cahyadin, BirdLife Indonesia's Parrot Officer explains "The regents of Sumba have issued a decree forbidding all capture and trade in the species in their districts, and East Sumba has selected the cockatoo as its district faunal symbol. By facilitating such actions and working with local people in the future, BirdLife hopes to ensure the preservation of the Yellow-crested Cockatoo in the wild."

Now that the status of this highly threatened bird, and the reasons for its decline are better understood, the focus of the program will shift to developing an active network of local conservation groups, public awareness campaigns and extension of local decrees protecting the species in other parts of its range. BirdLife received sponsorship for the survey work from Dr. Hans Strunden. 

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