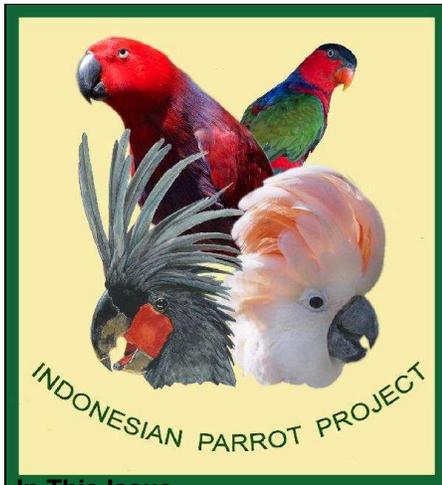

Notes From the Field - May 2012



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OUR MEDIA GALLERY



Male Eclectus in Flight - Batanta
Island - photo by Mehd Halaoute

NEWS ABOUT THE STATUS OF SALMON-CRESTED COCKATOOS ON SERAM ISLAND, INDONESIA

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

by

Stewart Metz, M.D.

Director, Indonesian Parrot Project

THE GOOD

KEMBALI BEBAS REHAB & RELEASE CENTER

REMAINS SUCCESSFUL!



New Video!

IPP Project Abbotti - Conservation - Awareness- Pride Program -

[PLEASE HELP - DONATE NOW!](#)



Cockatoo flying in large cage at Kembali Bebas - photo by Stewart Metz



Triton Cockatoo in Flight - photo by Kevin Sharp



Video

A Visit to two Indonesian Wildlife Rescue Centers - 2004 & 2005

The facility is located near Masihulan village, which is on the fringe of Manusela National Park at the Rehabilitation and Release Center (Kembali Bebas) which we built in 2004 and ran until 2009. Vinno has replaced Ceisar Riupassa as Manager, a long-awaited change. Despite the fact that the governmental Office of Conservation and Natural Resources now runs the facility— and the funding from the Government is grossly insufficient, the ex-trappers still contribute a half-day of work daily. Kai Bansner (who has visited Kembali Bebas twice, including this year) reports that food and enrichment are insufficient ... compatible with the poor funding. However, cockatoos and other parrots seem to have adapted well—perhaps not surprising since they have survived the abysmal conditions of the smugglers.

Thus far, a total of ~170 Seram cockatoos have been released back into their forest homes. Kai reported to me that only TWO remain at the facility. (I suspect that the remaining two cannot be released due to any of several factors: most often, trauma inflicted by the trapper or smuggler). The remaining cockatoos look healthy in photographs with the exception of a Lesser Sulphur-crested cockatoo, who seems to have some feather-plucking.



Beautiful Seram Cockatoo at KB - photo by Stewart Metz



Eclectus in Flight - photo Kevin Sharp



Triton Cockatoo - photo by Kevin Sharp

In addition, Vinno reports that the former trappers continue to follow our strict protocols for "soft releases" ([View our 5 year Report on Kembali Bebas](#) for a discussion of Soft Releases and other aspects of our Seram Program). They have also released Purple-naped lorries and "Seram Eclectus" (*Eclectus roratus roratus*) back into the Seram forest. Vinno also reports that there is clear evidence that many of the released cockatoos have integrated into wild flocks, and many seem to be breeding and producing fledglings. Both of these are critical signs of a successful release. He also reports that the men are beginning to release a few parrots in the homes (provenance) where they were initially trapped, for example, a Black-capped lory captured in Papua! Perhaps most critical of all, Vinno reports that the trapping of parrots in the Sawai district has stopped!

I consider this to be a rather impressive success for IPP, especially considering the very difficult logistics. The Center is within a National Park, and does not even have electricity from a generator. These findings seem to indicate that Kembali Bebas may continue to rehabilitate and/or release cockatoos and parrots on Seram well into the future. By then, we hope that our Conservation-Awareness-Pride Program, which we introduced to schoolchildren on Seram, will successfully transmit this "paradigm shift" to the next generation.

So, IPP continues to look after the cockatoos of Indonesia, even after our physical presence has stopped!

THE BAD

TRAPPING OF COCKATOOS NEAR A VILLAGE IN THE CENTER OF THE NATIONAL PARK

There is a tiny village (pop.~330) inside the wild center of Manuseula National Park. The news is not so good in that region, an area where IPP has never worked. When Kai Bansner recently visited Seram, he met Masatoshi Sasaoka. He is a post-doctoral fellow (currently with the Center for International Research) who has been studying the relationship between protected and endangered animals and humans, and to consider a conservation model compatible with local livelihood on Seram Island. Although Salmon-crested cockatoos are not the primary focus of his work, human-animal interactions form an important part of his research, with the cockatoo being a central "animal" in that equation. He reported to me (unpublished manuscript submitted for review) some unique and important data, and he was generous enough to share with us some his unpublished findings.

Some of them are rather upsetting - so, warning: Do not read the

next paragraph if you do not wish to read some disturbing observations . But others are more sanguine.

THE UGLY

The villagers of this village do still trap the cockatoos on occasion to sell for income. Masatoshi describes this as follows:

"the economic importance of the Salmon-crested (Seram) cockatoo [is] a supplementary remedial source of income for remote mountain villagers on Seram Island."

Thus, the trapping and selling of very small numbers of cockatoos is predicated on the development of emergency situations since the village is deep within the center of the National Park, and thus their economy is totally different from the fishing-oriented economy of Sawai village. They must therefore subsist mostly on forest 'products', which includes to 1-2 cockatoos/per household per year, which in turn amounts to only 2% of their economy. I think that we all must accept that in the real word, complete conservation may not be achievable in remote areas where "conservation" would amount to "starvation".

Much more distressing to us is the use of air-gun hunting.

Some of the cockatoos which are killed in that manner are sold, others are actually eaten. The average number of cockatoos shot per year = 27 cockatoos. As distressing and repulsive this practice may be to us, their tiny 'economy' would collapse without this practice.

Currently, for dietary protein, they hunt mostly cuscus, timor deer, and a number of bird species. In order to keep track of hunting rights, the village has divided their forest into over 250 lots. When a lot is hunted out, they impose *seli kaitahuor*, a moratorium on hunting in the lot to allow wildlife populations to bounce back. Unfortunately, the moratorium is 'enforced' not by park rangers or police officers, but by forest spirits. Any person who hunts in a prohibited lot faces punishment from supernatural forces.

However, Dr. Sasaoka is hopeful that some or all air-gun hunting can be abolished by instituting a "*sasi*". A *sasi* is a decree by an appropriate leader which forbids the collection of particular forest-derived 'products' for a limited period of time. It is enforced by the villagers, not forest spirits. Some of these *sasi* on other Moluccan islands have included "*sasi laut*" (fishing) or "*sasi hutan*" (chopping down trees and seizing other forest products). Hopefully, a "*sasi kakatua*" approach will be followed in the future to protect cockatoo populations.

We are very grateful to Masatoshi for sharing his unique and important findings with us prior to publication.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Emily Heenan

FLIGHT

***"Can the magic of flight ever be carried by words?
I think not."***

Michael Parfit, 'Smithsonian' magazine, May 2000.

Humans have long been amazed and delighted by the ability of birds to fly. Over the next few issues of Notes From the Field, I plan to write about parrots and flight. I'll start with describing a few of the physical aspects of flight.

Almost every part of a parrot's anatomy has evolved to enable flight.

Their wings and feathers, their bones and their respiratory and circulatory systems are perfectly suited for flight.

Parrot anatomy has adapted to reduce weight and overcome air resistance - the lighter you are, the easier it is to fly. Compared to mammals, parrots have fewer organs, i.e. one ovary instead of two, no teeth, and no large jaw bone needed to support teeth. The parrot skeleton, highly adapted for flight, consists of air filled bones which

decreases their weight. These bones are also connected to air sacs to increase respiration. The fusing of wing and leg bones both decreases weight and increases skeletal strength. Parrots' feathers are light, strong and efficient and make up only about 7% of their total body weight.

Active flapping flight requires a huge amount of energy to maintain. The avian respiratory system is approximately 10 times more efficient at oxygen exchange than that of mammals to support the high oxygen demand needed for flight. Their huge pectorals, which power wings, make up 15-25% of a flighted parrot's body weight. These muscles are attached to a greatly enlarged sternum or keel, which is missing in certain flightless birds such as the emu and the ostrich.

Their hearts are five times as large as ours as a percentage of their body weight. They have an extraordinarily high metabolic rate corresponding to the immense energy demands of flight.

Digestive tracts are adapted for rapid processing of high energy fuel-providing foods.

Those are just a few of the noteworthy facts about parrot anatomy specific to flight. We hope these pictures will help with the "magic".



Abbotti Cockatoo in Flight - photo Dudi Nandika



Female Eclectus in Flight on Gam Island - photo by Kevin Sharp



Wild Seram Cuckoo Nest Hunting - photo by
Kevin Sharp