

## Captured Cockatoos Released

**History is made with the first “soft release” of illegally trapped Moluccan cockatoos.**

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On the island of Seram in eastern Indonesia, history was made with the first-ever “soft release” of illegally trapped Moluccan cockatoos March 24, 2006, according to Bonnie Zimmermann associate director of Project Bird Watch/The Indonesian Parrot Project.

A soft release is a multi-step process that includes testing for disease (avian influenza, psittacine beak and feather, etc.), behavioral observation and preparation for return to the wild. In the past, due to a lack of coordination between groups, seized birds were simply returned to the forest without any prior observation, said Zimmermann.

When the latch to their release cage was undone, the birds did not hesitate. Within 15 minutes, all the birds had flown the coop.

The three cockatoos, which were confiscated from local trappers by forestry officers in September 2004, were cared for by Yayasan Wallacea, a conservation-minded NGO in Ambon, and Project Bird Watch at the Kembali Bebas Avian Rehabilitation Center on north Seram Island. To ensure their safety and minimize the risk to the environment, the birds were observed in their “socialization cage” for 18 months before the release was approved. They demonstrated excellent flying ability and maintained a range of wild behaviors, Zimmermann noted.

The birds were fitted with an open stainless-steel leg band, tagged with a microchip and the tail feathers were marked with an indelible ink for short-term, post-release monitoring. Long-term monitoring of the threesome will continue indefinitely, according to Zimmermann. An unconfirmed sighting of two of the birds was reported in a nearby village eight days after the cockatoos release.