

Exotic birds in 21 cages seized during raid at Crawford Market, flamingo rescued in suburbs

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MUMBAI: Officials of the directorate of revenue intelligence (DRI) carried out multiple raids in the city on Saturday, seizing hundreds of caged exotic birds being illegally smuggled and traded. State forest officials, along with the wildlife crime control bureau, assisted the DRI in these raids.

“Several exotic bird species like sulphur-crested cockatoos, African and Burmese parrots, Galah cockatoos, love birds among others were seized by the raiding teams at Crawford Market in south Mumbai, Kurla, Govandi and Santacruz. This is one of the big seizures dealing with illegal trading of caged birds,” said an official who was part of the raids.

From Crawford Market alone, exotic bird species kept in 21 cages were seized.

Sources said that similar raids were held in other parts of the state, leading to several arrests as well by the DRI.

Surprisingly, there was also a flamingo among the birds seized from one of the raids in suburban Mumbai, indicating that the traders could also have poached the wetland birds currently seen in large numbers along different coasts in and around Mumbai.

“Some other bird species noticed during the raids include various cockatiels, ducks among others, which fuels suspicion that

exotic birds may also be bred in captivity in India and are then sold at high prices to eager buyers. Often, the birds are smuggled in by sea, air and also by road for this illegal business,” said an official.

City-based activists also pointed out that Indian bird species are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and so their trading or poaching can lead to jail terms by the wildlife authorities. However, since exotic or foreign birds are not covered by the Wildlife Protection Act, many bird breeders and smugglers run this racket.

“In India, we have drafted import-export policy and rules which prevent trade of exotic bird and animal species. But fascination for foreign breed birds, which may also be endangered species, leads to their smuggling and captivity and therefore this illegal trade,” said an animal rights activist.