

Wildlife

Scarlet Macaw to red iguana: Chennai Revenue Intelligence busts wildlife smugglers

The operation took place in conjunction with the officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence in Aizawl, Guwahati and Kolkata.

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The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Chennai, has busted an international syndicate of exotic wildlife smugglers and seized around 100 different species of foreign birds and animals. According to a statement released by the Department on Monday, the officers of the DRI conducted a coordinated swoop on the syndicate that was involved in smuggling exotic wildlife species of birds and animals.

The DRI officials conducted searches at two locations in Chennai - one at a residential property in the city and the other at a farmhouse on the outskirts. The searches resulted in the seizure of 70 species of wildlife comprising birds such as Scarlet Macaw, Harlequin Macaw, Blue Gold Macaw, varieties of Conure and Cockatoos. The swoop also led to the seizure of wildlife animals such as Squirrel Monkey, Callithrix Monkey and a pair of Red Iguana.

One key member of the syndicate has been apprehended by the DRI. The operation took place in conjunction with the officers of the DRI in Aizawl, Guwahati and Kolkata.

According to the intelligence agency, officers of DRI at Aizawl and Kolkata intercepted a consignment of assorted wildlife of foreign origin consisting of 35 birds of various species. This included a baby marmoset and one Bengal cat that was discovered at the Kolkata airport. The DRI states that these were smuggled through the porous Indo-Myanmar border.

The Aizawl, Mizoram DRI nabbed the mastermind who organised the illicit cross-border transportation of this exotic wildlife. The accused then confessed to his role in the smuggling. He has also named the persons for whom he was organising the smuggling activity. They were based out of Mumbai, Pune and Chennai.

The DRI states that further investigation is underway.

According to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the import, export and re-export of any live animal or plant of a species listed in the CITES Appendices (or of any part or derivative of such animal or plant) require a permit or certificate.

International trade in all wild fauna and flora in general, and the species covered under CITES in particular, are regulated jointly through the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Foreign Trade (Development Regulation) Act, 1992, and the Foreign Trade Policy of Government of India and Customs Act, 1962.

Per Customs Act, 1962, the offences are punishable with imprisonment for a term that may extend to seven years and with fine.

Thousands of other animals, including exotic birds and rare monkeys, are trapped to meet the growing demand for exotic pets in India, the DRI added.