

**W**ITHIN five minutes of us arriving at Indonesia's largest bird market we were being offered a monkey for sale.

After we feigned interest, the man then directed us down the noisy and chaotic alleys of Jakarta's Pramuka market to a little corner at the back, to show us said monkey – a tiny and sad-looking little fellow who, we were told, was about eight-months-old and from Kalimantan.

He was for sale to us for 2.5 million rupiah, or about \$A270.

The poor little fellow looked so pitiful in the tiny cage – obviously afraid, timid and starved of fellow monkey company. With blondish fur around his sorrowful eyes, the seller couldn't tell us exactly what kind of monkey this was. I opted not to accept his offer to nurse the little one and still don't know if he is one of a large number of protected primates which it is highly illegal to sell or trade, or whether he was one of the more common monkeys frequently used as street performers in Jakarta.

I'm more inclined, given his unusual appearance, to think his capture and sale is not legal and that he is protected. He looked nothing like the more common macaque monkey.

## Cindy Wockner

IN JAKARTA



It's an open secret that at Pramuka and Jakarta's two other major bird markets, and at the bird market in every major city of Indonesia, you can source and buy wildlife which it is illegal to trade, especially those that are endangered.

Whereas before, these animals – like the gorgeous slow loris monkey, the leopard cat and even orang-utan – were displayed openly in markets, they are now still for sale but are kept away from the public and law enforcement gaze. Mostly they are kept at the houses of the market stallholders, who live in houses nearby and at the back of the markets.

For the right price and the right amount of interest you can be taken to them, through the maze of alleyways, lined with cages overflowing with birds of all varieties, some looking sadly worse for wear, cages of white mice, boxes of grubs and grasshoppers that will later that day become someone's dinner.

To ensure potential buyers are indeed legitimate and not undercover

police or wildlife officers, the sellers tell us that they will only take us to look at the expensive animals after we have agreed on the price.

One dealer tells us that he has a slow loris at his home which we can get for 650,000 rupiah or about \$A70. The slow loris, a nocturnal primate, is on the list of endangered species of primates and is completely protected in Indonesia. Trade in them is illegal.

The Jakarta Animal Aid Network says the slow loris is often treated cruelly and the dealers pull their teeth out with pliers or cut off the sharp ends of their teeth because their bite is venomous.

Trade in leopard cats is illegal too but the dealer tells us he has three of them at his home. They are for sale for 700,000 rupiah each or \$A76 and we can score a discount if we take a pair. Again, he doesn't want us to see them until we have agreed on the price and paid some of the money.

Despite my blonde hair and obvious Western appearance, the dealers at Pramuka market appear to have no reticence in approaching me and offering illegal wildlife to me for sale. "You want a miniature monkey?" one man says. "From Sulawesi. One million for you."

Another dealer shows us snakes, geckoes, lizards and owls.

It's a massive status symbol to have a protected animal at home as a pet

Pramudya Harzani, one of the passionate founders of the Jakarta Animal Aid Network, warns us before we go to Pramuka to be careful and not to brandish our camera around and make it obvious we are looking for the illegal wildlife trade. He tells us that the illegal traders are protected by a kind of mafia of thugs and that we could find ourselves on the receiving end of their violence if they suspect we are anything but legitimate and interested buyers.

He and his network conduct regular undercover monitoring at the markets and compile figures on the number of illegal trades. The most commonly traded of the protected species is the slow loris, then the leaf monkey and then the gibbon. Pramudya says the trade in orang-utan has moved more and more underground. They sell for thousands of dollars.

As with many things in Indonesian society, ownership of protected wildlife as pets is about status. That's why it is the middle and upper classes which generally buy them and are willing to pay handsomely. As

Pramudya says, it's a massive status symbol to have a protected animal at home as a pet so you can display it to friends and guests. Showing off your sumatran tiger or orang-utan is all about status.

In one case last year, Pramudya's friend was doing a gas supply job at the home of a rich businessman when he heard what he thought was the distinct roar of a tiger. So he called Pramudya, who came with the police. Behind a four metre-high fence, in a cage, were four sumatran tigers – a mother and her three cubs.

They were rescued and two of them are now with Annette Pipe, who runs the Animal Sanctuary Trust Indonesia, mostly on a voluntary basis and with little funding.

Pipe, a Canadian citizen, has lived in Indonesia for 17 years and has opened her heart to helping animals like the rescued tigers.

But it's an uphill battle. As Pramudya says, corruption pervades the system meant to protect the animals and while the law is there – five years in jail – the people who break it are wealthy enough to pay massive bribes to ensure they are not caught in the first place.

Cindy Wockner is The Courier-Mail's Jakarta correspondent.



**ILLEGAL TRADE:** (Above, from left) a vendor selling a lemur locally known as 'kukang'; birds for sale at the market; a small monkey for sale; and (main) Jakarta's Pramuka Market.