

Endangered Beauty

*High above the canopy, I soar through the sky. As I playfully dance among the treetops, I am happily unaware of impending danger. In a second, I suddenly find myself ensnared by the actions of a human hand. I desperately unfold my wings for another flight to escape, but I am swiftly captured and confined within a plastic bottle. Those unscrupulous animal traders have tried to capture me before, but each time I escaped successfully. Tragically, many of my relatives and friends were caught right in front of me never to return. Now, inside this bottle, I desperately think that this may be the end of my life. So few of us are left; I am only one of the handful left on Komodo Island. Unfortunately, this is the fate of most Yellow-Crested Cockatoos. “In the past 40 years the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo has suffered massive population declines estimated at more than 80%” (“Yellow-Crested Cockatoo *Cacatua Sulphurea*”). Their population in the wild is believed to be fewer than 1,000, and they are critically endangered. The Yellow-Crested Cockatoos’ popularity has exposed them to the threat of capture by avaricious hunters who earn thousands of dollars per bird, emphasizing the need for protection and conservation efforts.*

The Yellow-Crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua Sulphurea*) inhabits diverse habitats across the Indonesian archipelago, showcasing its adaptability to various environments. This captivating species, adorned with vibrant yellow plumage on its crest and underparts, is native to islands such as Java and Bali. They live in tropical moist places, forest edges, woodlands, farmlands, semi-arid areas, and forests up to 3936 feet (“Yellow-Crested Cockatoo *Cacatua Sulphurea*”). Their choice of habitat reflects their versatility in adapting to different ecosystems. Coastal areas provide access to mangrove forests, while lowland rainforests offer diversity of plant life and food sources. These birds are often observed in wooded areas, where they utilize tree hollows for nesting. The Yellow-Crested Cockatoo habitat preferences highlight its ecological role in

maintaining the balance of these ecosystems and emphasize the importance of preserving their diverse and multifaceted surroundings to ensure their continued survival.

The life cycle of the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo unfolds in a series of stages, marked by intricate behaviors and adaptations. It begins with the formation of monogamous pairs during the breeding season. These pairs engage in elaborate courtship displays, strengthening their bond. Nesting typically occurs in tree hollows, where the female lays two eggs. Males and females share taking care of the eggs for about 28 days, and the young are ready to leave the nest after about 75 days (“Yellow-Crested Cockatoo”). Once the eggs hatch, the parents diligently care for and feed the chicks. The fledgling period follows, during which the young cockatoos develop their distinctive plumage and gradually learn to fly. As they mature, the Yellow-Crested Cockatoos contribute to their ecosystem by engaging in activities such as foraging for fruits and nuts. This life cycle underscores the social nature of these birds, the importance of pair bonds in their reproductive success, and their vital role in the ecological balance of their habitats. However, external threats increasingly challenge their survival, emphasizing the need for conservation measures to protect each stage of their life cycle.

If the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo disappears, the environment loses the benefits these beautiful yet functional birds provide. They impact the environment positively, predominantly plants, in seed dispersal. They consume fruits and spread seeds through their droppings, which aids in regenerating plant species in various ecosystems. Cockatoos also contribute to pollination by transferring pollen from one plant to another while feeding on nectar (“Northern Territory”). If the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo disappears from the environment, this loss may affect the food chain and the interactions between different organisms in the ecosystem.

The Yellow-Crested Cockatoos' impact on other animals is mainly due to their behavior and presence. Competition occurs everywhere and nesting competition most commonly occurs between bird species. Cockatoos compete with native cavity-nesting birds for nesting sites in tree hollows. This competition for suitable nesting places can impact the breeding success of native bird species. In addition, cockatoos also face threats from natural predators. Eagles, owls, snakes, and cats are the most common wild predators of the cockatoo species.

The Cockatoo faces multiple environmental challenges. Climate change significantly threatens the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo, impacting their habitat and overall well-being. Changing temperature and precipitation patterns can lead to habitat loss, affecting nesting sites and foraging areas crucial for the species. Changes in the availability of food sources due to shifts in plant distribution further challenge their survival. Additionally, the increased frequency of extreme weather events, such as storms and hurricanes, poses a direct risk by destroying nests and reducing food availability. Climate change can also influence migration patterns and contribute to the spread of diseases, exacerbating the challenges the cockatoo population faces. Conservation efforts focusing on habitat protection, sustainable practices, and raising awareness about the impacts of climate change are essential to safeguard the future of these vulnerable birds.

Human expansion and habitat destruction have brought these birds into closer contact with humans and have negative consequences. This interaction may lead to conflicts, such as birds nesting in urban areas, causing noise disturbances or damaging properties. The Yellow-Crested Cockatoo faces several threats from human activities that jeopardize its survival. Hunters put cockatoos into plastic bottles to illegally transport them to black markets. This action causes the decline of the entire Yellow-Crested Cockatoo population. "In fact, there are an

estimated 1200-2000 individuals remaining in the wild, and their population is sadly still decreasing” (“18 of the World’s”). Unfortunately, illegal hunting persists, leading to the disappearance of hundreds of Yellow-Crested Cockatoos each year, posing a significant threat to their already critically endangered status. Hunters are often driven solely by financial gain, displaying little concern for the endangered status of this species. Many individuals view these birds as lucrative items, disregarding the consequences of their actions on the species’ survival. Rather than appreciating the birds in their natural habitat, some people opt to capture them, believing they would make desirable pets. These human interactions hinder the birds’ freedom to soar in the sky and pose a great threat to their overall survival.

There are several ways to save the species, and people can help by joining a volunteer group, donating money or signing a petition. First, people need to know of the possible extinction of the Yellow-Crested Cockatoos. I created a website (<https://save-the-yellow-crested-cockatoo7.webnode.page/>) to spread awareness of the plight of this species which lists things individuals can do. Also, consider joining a local volunteer group like Parrot Haven, a rescue organization in New York that specializes in providing care and shelter to parrots in need. They offer a safe haven for these birds, often rescuing them from situations of neglect or abandonment, with a dedicated team committed to their rehabilitation and eventual adoption into loving homes. If no local community opportunity exists, consider a larger group like Tri-State Bird Research & Rescue Volunteering organizations, which offers a unique opportunity for individuals to engage in conservation efforts actively. Volunteers can contribute to hands-on activities such as animal care by joining volunteer groups, fostering a deeper connection to the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo. Individuals also have the option to contribute financial support to agencies like the Kakatua Bulu Cockatoo Sanctuary & Rescue. This

organization allows people to make monetary donations, empowering them to choose specific cockatoos they want to support. These donations are vital in sustaining the sanctuary's operations, including the care, rehabilitation, and conservation efforts to safeguard these magnificent birds. I started sponsoring cockatoos at Kakatua Bulu Cockatoo Sanctuary & Rescue, and the endeavor was met with enthusiastic support. Inspired by my actions, I encouraged my family members to join me, and they each selected a bird to sponsor. Overall, it was a profoundly fulfilling experience for everyone involved. Both volunteering and donating offer valuable ways to protect these lovely birds, supporting a collective effort towards their preservation and well-being.

The Yellow-Crested Cockatoos are in danger of disappearing forever because people are hunting them and destroying their homes. We need to tell more people about this and help organizations that protect animals to save them. We must act now to make sure these birds will still be around in the future. Let us all work together to protect the Yellow-Crested Cockatoo and other animals that are in danger of disappearing. You can help by signing a petition (<https://www.change.org/p/department-of-environment-stop-trapping-wild-parrots-for-pets-839edd67-d43a-48d6-b07e-7bd21c2bcb87>), sponsoring a bird, visiting our website, and doing other things to support them. Support the cockatoos so they have the freedom to soar in the sky and prevent them from being confined in bottles again.

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