

# Fishing cat, six monkeys seized in raid handed over to zoo

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Karachi

A fishing cat and six monkeys, which were among several animals seized by the provincial wildlife department officials in a raid at the Empress Market a day earlier, were handed over to the Karachi Zoo on Saturday.

The raid at the Empress Market's birds market was conducted by wildlife department game warden Rasheed Ahmed Khan and other officials.

They confiscated several illegally-kept endangered animals and birds.

Besides the fishing cat, which was classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 2008, grey and black partridges, chukars, monkeys, eagles and falcons were also seized.

The birds market at Empress Market in Saddar is infamous for the sale and purchase of rare, endangered species of birds and animals and it is claimed that any rare, sought-after bird or animal can be bought there.

Wildlife officials often raid the shops there where animals and birds are kept in extremely miserable conditions.

Five shopkeepers were arrested for possessing endangered species and they were fined up to Rs35,000, the game warden told The News.

He said a fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is a medium-sized wild cat of Southeast

Asia. “Fishing cats are twice the size of domestic cats and hunt fish,” he said. “The possession and sale of this rare cat is illegal.”

The wildlife official said they had also confiscated six monkeys. “The fishing cat and the monkeys have been handed over to the Karachi Zoo.”

The birds confiscated in the raid included 18 falcons and two eagles. “These birds will be released in the wild on Sunday,” Khan added.

#### Falcons released

Separately, Pakistan Coast Guards and the wildlife department officials released seven falcons that were confiscated by the former a day earlier.

A PCG official said the falcons, which were seized while they were being smuggled from Karachi to Gwadar and then to Iran, were released at a ceremony organised at Hawkesbay beach. They were confiscated by PCG while searching a bus at the Mochko check-post.