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1,800 monitor lizards seized by Thailand customs



The 3ft (1m)-long lizards were tied up and stuffed into bags

Customs officials in Thailand have seized 1,800 protected lizards said to be destined to be sold as food.

The Bengal monitor lizards, stuffed into blue mesh bags and hidden behind fruit, were found in southern Thailand near the Malaysian border.

Lizard meat is valuable and seen as a delicacy in parts of Asia.

Global trade in the monitor lizards is banned and they are protected by law in Thailand and Malaysia.

The Bengal monitors are related to other members of the monitor family, including the world's largest lizard, the Komodo dragon, which can grow to 3m (10ft) long.

One Thai customs official said this batch of monitor lizards was a record haul and suggested they were destined for Chinese kitchens.

"They are from Malaysia and transported through southern Thailand and north-eastern Laos to China for eating," Seree Thaijongrak told the AFP news agency.

"We knew there was a monitor lizard racket... this time it's the largest seizure ever," he said.

Trade in the lizards is banned by the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#).