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Thirteen endangered iguanas seized at Heathrow

Rare iguanas that had been stuffed into socks were seized after officers stopped two Romanian women arriving from Bahamas

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The 13 San Salvador rock iguanas had been stuffed into socks. Photograph: Border Force/PA

Thirteen incredibly rare iguanas that had been stuffed into socks by smugglers have been seized by customs at Heathrow airport.

The endangered lizards were found in a suitcase on Monday at Terminal 5 of the London airport when officers stopped two Romanian women who had arrived from the Bahamas.

They were due to take the San Salvador rock iguanas – which are native to the Bahamas and classed as being under threat of extinction – on to Düsseldorf in Germany.

Each one of the creatures was wrapped in a sock; 12 survived the journey, while one died.

Grant Miller, from the Border Force's endangered species team said: "This particular species of iguana is incredibly rare – only a few hundred are believed to be left in existence – so this was a remarkable and very important seizure."



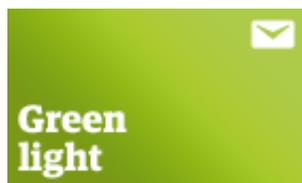
One of the 13

endangered iguanas seized by Border Force officers at Heathrow. Twelve survived the journey. Photograph: Border Force/PA

He added: "Given the circumstances we found them in it seems incredible that all but one survived such a long flight.

"The surviving animals were dehydrated and are now under the supervision of a specialist vet. We are also working with experts to find the best way to protect and safeguard these endangered creatures longer term."

The two women, aged 24 and 26, were arrested on suspicion of importation offences.



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