

Ontario man sentenced to jail for illegal importation of endangered reptiles

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FREDERICTON, June 8, 2017 /CNW/ - Illegal trafficking of wildlife is not acceptable in Canada. Unlawfully exploiting species for profit will not be tolerated.

Grigori Zaharov, from Thornhill, Ontario, has been sentenced in Fredericton Provincial Court to concurrently serve two three-month jail terms after pleading guilty to one count of importing an animal, without the necessary permits, and to one count of exporting an animal from Cuba, without the proper authorization. Both acts were in contravention of the *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act*.

On September 17, 2016, Mr. Zaharov and a companion were intercepted by Canada Border Services Agency officers after returning on a flight from Cuba with two iguanas and failing to declare the animals when completing their Canada Border Services Agency declaration card. Environment and Climate Change Canada enforcement officers identified the animals to be two Cuban rock iguanas (*Cyclura nubila*). The species is listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Mr. Zaharov did not present permits to the officers for the export from Cuba or for the import into Canada.

Environment and Climate Change Canada enforces federal laws that conserve and protect wildlife, and it works closely with other federal, provincial, territorial, and international agencies (in this case, the Canada Border Services Agency and Cuban authorities) to detect violations and take enforcement action.

Quick facts

- In Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada is the lead department responsible for implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international agreement between governments, which aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. The *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* is the legislation used to implement the Convention.
- Appendix I of the Convention lists species that are the most endangered among the listed animals and plants. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. An import permit is required and may be issued only if the specimen is not to be used for commercial purposes primarily and if the import is intended for purposes that will not threaten the survival of the species.
- Listed wildlife that is imported into or exported from Canada, or attempted to be exported without the required permits, may be seized. Those responsible may be prosecuted and, if convicted, may be liable to fines of up to \$150,000 and/or to up to five years in jail.
- The Cuban rock iguana is one of the world's largest iguanas. Adult males sometimes reach lengths of 1.25 to 1.5 metres and weights of nearly 7 kilograms. As its name implies, the Cuban rock iguana is found in Cuba and its surrounding islands. This species as well as the other members of the *Cyclura* family are vulnerable due, in part, to habitat transformation and human disturbance, especially on Cuba's main island.

Associated links

[Wild Animal and Plant Trade Regulations](#)

[Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#)

Environment and Climate Change Canada has created a [free subscription service](#) to help Canadians stay current with what the Government of Canada is doing to protect our natural environment.

[Environment and Climate Change Canada's Twitter page](#)

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For further information: Media Relations, Environment and Climate Change Canada, 819-938-3338 or 1-844-836-7799 (toll free)

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