

Galapagos smuggler had NZ history

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Ecuadorian authorities say a man charged with smuggling iguanas from the Galapagos Islands had committed a similar crime in New Zealand.

The Mexican man was stopped in the town of Puerto Ayora on the Galapagos island of Santa Cruz over the weekend and allegedly had 11 iguanas in his luggage, Ecuador's environment ministry says.

The arrest was the result of a three-month international investigation into wildlife trafficking where investigators were alerted to a shipment headed for Uganda, the ministry said.

The alleged offender was not identified but the ministry said he had been sentenced to 18 weeks' jail in New Zealand in 2010 for wildlife trafficking.

Five years ago, Mexican chef Gustavo Eduardo Toledo-Albarran, then 28, was jailed for 18 weeks, along with Swiss stockbroker Thomas Price, for trying to smuggle 16 jewelled geckos from the Otago Peninsula.

Co-accused Manfred Walter Bachmann a resident of Uganda was jailed for 15 weeks.

The maximum jail term then was six months but has since been increased to five years.

The Galapagos Islands, 1500km off the coast of Ecuador, have been classified a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1979 and are home to a large number of endemic species, animals that are only found there.

Under Ecuadorian law, anyone found guilty of illegally smuggling animals from the archipelago can face between one and three years' jail.

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