

## Mexican who tried to smuggle iguanas out of Galapagos gets 2 years in prison

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A Mexican man who tried to smuggle 11 iguanas out of Ecuador's Galapagos Islands has been sentenced by a judge to serve two years in prison and pay a fine of \$20,000, Galapagos National Park said in a Twitter post Sunday.

Gustavo Eduardo Toledo Albarran was arrested last year when he tried to smuggle the marine and land iguanas out of Santa Cruz Island.

"The judge from the multi-jurisdiction unit in the district of Santa Cruz sentenced the citizen of Mexican nationality, Gustavo Eduardo Toledo Albarran, to two years in prison at the Guayaquil-Varones Social Rehabilitation Center ... where he is being held," the national park said.

Toledo was arrested on Sept. 6, 2015, in Puerto Ayora "while carrying 11 native iguanas, including nine marine iguanas (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) and two land iguanas (*Conolophus subcristatus*), unique species in the world, in a backpack that belonged to him," the national park said.

The Mexican citizen was charged with wildlife trafficking under Article 247 of the Ecuadorian Criminal Code.

Wildlife trafficking is the third most profitable illegal activity in the world, trailing only drug and arms trafficking, the Ecuadorian Environment Ministry said last year.

The crime is punishable by up to three years in prison in Ecuador.

The Galapagos Islands are located about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) west of the coast of continental Ecuador and were declared a World Natural Heritage Site in 1978.

Some 95 percent of the territory's 8,000 sq. kilometers (a little over 3,000 sq. miles) constitutes a protected area that is home to more than 50 species of animals and birds found nowhere else on the planet.

The islands were made famous by 19th-century British naturalist Charles Darwin, whose observations of life on the islands contributed greatly to his theory of the evolution of species. EFE