

PRESS RELEASE

22 December 2004



LARGE SEIZURE OF ILLEGAL PETS FROM A PRIVATE OWNER

SINGAPORE 22 DECEMBER – Following a tip-off received by the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres), officers from the Acres Wildlife Rescue Team and the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) raided a house in the Serangoon area on 20 December 2004.

A total of eleven illegal pets (seven species) were found and confiscated. The animals included a bearded dragon, a leopard gecko, tarantulas, scorpions, a rainbow boa, a carpet python and a green tree python.

All the animals were probably illegally imported into Singapore and at least four out of the seven species are listed on Appendix II on the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) of which Singapore is a party to.

Globally, the illegal trading in wildlife, timber and other natural resources is now surpassed only by the trafficking in drugs and weapons. The ongoing illegal pet trade has severe consequences for the survival of every species involved. More than half of the smuggled animals die, and the surviving animals mostly end up living in bad conditions or are mistreated. These animals also rarely survive for long in captivity.

Most wild animals are prohibited as pets in Singapore. The list of prohibited species includes primates, amphibians, reptiles (except the red-eared slider) many species of birds and some types of fish. Anyone caught importing or exporting animals which fall under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act without a permit can be fined up to \$5,000 (\$10,000 for repeat offenders) per species and/or jailed for up to one year. For keeping wildlife without a license, offenders can be charged under the Wild Animals and Birds Act and fined up to \$1,000 per animal.

Acres will be providing the informant with a cash reward of an undisclosed amount.

“Part of the reason for keeping these exotic animals is to boast about it, that one has these animals which their friends do not have and that they are above the law. Acres will continue to provide rewards for tip-offs, to tempt people to tell on their friends. We are sending out a strong message that if you keep illegal pets, it will be a matter of time before they will be confiscated. We further urge the public not to keep these exotic animals as pets” said Louis Ng, President and Executive Director of Acres.

Anyone with information on anyone who trades or possess illegal pets can call the 24 hours Acres Wildlife Crime Hotline at: 9783 7782.

Photos of the animals confiscated are available on request.

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Notes to editors

1. To date, Acres has responded to 13 cases of illegal pets in Singapore which led to a confiscation of 33 animals.
2. The Acres Wildlife Crime Hotline provides an avenue for those who know of anyone who buys, owns or trades in exotic animals, to blow the whistle on these wildlife traders and buyers.
3. Founded by a group of Singaporeans in 2001, Acres is a non-profit organisation aimed at fostering respect and compassion for all animals. Acres’s approach to raising animal welfare issue is to focus on education and back up our advocacy with scientific clarity accrued through research. Using our findings, we will inform the public and work towards synergistic partnerships with the authorities and related parties to improve animal welfare.