

Wildlife Service, the US National Marine Fisheries Service, and Canadian and US border officials also contributed to the investigation that led to the seizures. It has been estimated that the meat of between 798 000 and 1.05 million individual conches was seized from the smuggling ring.

Proceedings are ongoing in Vancouver Provincial Court against others for their alleged role in the smuggling ring.

Environment Canada News Releases, 12 October/8 November 2007; www.ec.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=714D9AAE-1&news=E456290A-CB9E-4457-AE21-8F5FF7AD491F

CHILE

On 2 October 2007, following a full-scale investigation that began on 28 September 2007, personnel of the National Fish Service (VIII region) seized a container from a lorry which was found to contain 4.3 t of Chilean Abalones *Concholepas concholepas* (known as *loco*); the shipment was destined for Taiwan.

The case came to light when the permits accompanying a shipment claiming to contain mackerel appeared to have been altered. Customs alerted the National Fish Service and when the container was opened it was found to contain fish, including mackerel, and the abalones. The lorry driver was located and he directed the authorities to the factory in Coronel where the abalones had been processed. The premises were searched and abalone entrails were discovered.

This evidence was passed on to the office of the public prosecutor and in the following days, lawyers of the Customs authority and the National Fish Service laid charges against the company.

Servicio Nacional de Pesca: www.sernapesca.cl, Motorizado por Joomla! Generado, 17 January 2008

ECUADOR

On 13 June 2007, operatives of the Ecuadorian environmental police, with ngo support, seized over 19 000 shark fins and arrested four people. The initial seizure, at the immigration checkpoint between Guayaquil and Huaquillas on the Peruvian border, included four sacks with over 227 kg of shark fins that were hidden in a passenger bus travelling to Huaquillas. An Ecuadorian and two Peruvian men were arrested. A further two boxes of shark fins (44.5 kg) were found on a second passenger bus travelling from Guayaquil towards the Peruvian border. A Peruvian man was arrested.

This number of shark fins is reported to represent approximately 4500 sharks. Four species of shark were identified following forensic analysis of the fins: Bigeye Thresher Shark *Alopias superciliosus*, Pelagic Thresher Shark *Alopias pelagicus*, Scalloped Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna lewini* (listed as Lower Risk-Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List) and Sandbar Shark *Carcharhinus plumbeus* (listed as Lower Risk-Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List). The fins were incinerated to ensure that they do not re-enter the black market.

A law introduced for six months in July 2007 allowing the sale and exportation of shark fins from sharks caught incidentally in



FIJI BANDED IGUANA *BRACHYLOPHUS FASCIATUS*:
THREE SPECIMENS WERE CONCEALED IN THE FALSE LEG
OF A PERSON RETURNING TO THE USA FROM A NATURE
RESERVE IN FIJI.

Ecuador; has been extended (see page 98); the capture and sale of sharks in the waters of the Galapagos remains illegal.

Press Release: Sea Shepherd Conservation Society Sea Shepherd Galapagos sting results in seizure of over 18 000 shark fins, 25 June 2007; The Shark Trust: www.sharktrust.org/v.asp?level2=6365&depth=2&level3=6365&level2id=6365&rootid=6209&nextlevel=6365

USA

In April 2007, Hisayoshi Kojima, a kingpin in the world of illegal butterfly collecting, was sentenced to 21 months in prison and fined USD38 731 following an undercover operation by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that had taken place over many years. He pleaded guilty to 17 charges related to the sale and smuggling of endangered butterflies.

Kojima, a Japanese native who lived in Los Angeles and Kyoto, was initially placed under investigation in 2003 after an undercover USFWS agent, acting as a buyer, made contact with him at an insect fair in Los Angeles. There ensued intermittent contact where Kojima promised to send samples and US Customs were alerted. Some years were to elapse before Kojima could be apprehended with samples in his possession, however. On 31 July 2007, on arriving at Los Angeles Airport, he was searched as he came through Customs. In his possession was a wooden box containing the following species: *Dynastes Hercules* (beetle), *Dynastes satanus*, Golden Kaiserihind *Teinopalpus aureus* (CITES II), *Ornithoptera croesus* (CITES II); Homerus Swallowtail *Papilio homerus* (CITES I); Luzon Peacock Swallowtail *Papilio chikae* (CITES I); and Queen Alexandra's Birdwing *Ornithoptera alexandrae* (CITES I).

The seized specimens are in the care of the USFWS and were to be donated to a museum.

In June 2007, a Portland man pleaded guilty to unlawfully selling shavings from the horn of a Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* (CITES I). He was released pending sentencing.

The shavings were sold for purported "medicinal" use at a shop in Portland. The sale was a violation of the *Endangered Species Act*. Identification of the Black Rhinoceros shavings resulted from genetics laboratory analysis at the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics

Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon. This was the first instance in which a product offered as "rhino horn" did in fact contain shavings from a Black Rhinoceros. All previously sampled medicinal products claiming to contain Black Rhinoceros instead contained substitutes such as bone from more common species.

On 25 September 2007, at US District Court, Eastern District of Kentucky, Lucian Robinson, Jr, was placed on probation for 18 months and fined USD14 000 for engaging in the interstate commerce of unlawfully purchased wild American Ginseng *Panax quinquefolium*, in violation of the *Lacey Act*.

The *Lacey Act* makes it a federal violation to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce any fish, wildlife or plants, taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of any law or regulation of any State.

Robinson, a licensed ginseng dealer, admitted as part of a plea agreement that he unlawfully purchased, certified, and/or sold wild ginseng between November 2004 and August 2006. The investigation was conducted by the USFWS, Office of Law Enforcement, with the co-operation of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

Kentucky is the largest supplier of wild ginseng in the USA, averaging approximately 16 per cent of the national harvest annually. Seasons are established for harvesting to ensure that ginseng plants reach maturity each year and produce seeds prior to being harvested, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the wild ginseng population.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture implements the ginseng management programme in Kentucky, which is required by Federal regulations in order for Kentucky's ginseng to be eligible for export from the USA. A high percentage of Kentucky's ginseng is exported to South-east Asia where it is used in the medicinal trade.

A Californian man has been charged with using his false leg to smuggle three Fiji Banded Iguanas *Brachylophus fasciatus* (CITES I) from a nature reserve in Fiji to the USA. Officials began investigating the suspect after receiving a tip-off that he was in possession of several specimens. Prosecutors say that he stole the reptiles while on a visit to the South Pacific island in 2002. He is alleged to have constructed a special compartment inside his prosthetic limb to move the reptiles.

Having been informed that the suspect had several specimens at his home, the USFWS launched an undercover investigation into his activities. When his house was searched in July 2007, agents are said to have found a further four Fiji Banded Iguanas. Officials say they think the suspect was breeding the animals for sale. It was reported that the iguanas would now be placed in a breeding programme in the USA.

www.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/2007-08-18-butterfly-smuggler_N.htm; US Fish and Wildlife Service News Releases, 26 June/25 September 2007; TRAFFIC International; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7007942.stm, 22 September 2007