



Department of Justice

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Northern District of California

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**PACIFICA MAN GOES TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR TRAFFICKING ENDANGERED SPECIES ON THE
INTERNET**

Species included endangered big cats, bears and other protected species

SAN FRANCISCO - James Dickson was sentenced yesterday to six months in prison and ordered to pay \$2,200 in restitution to the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, as a result of his participation in the illegal trade of protected wildlife, United States Attorney Melinda Haag announced. Dickson was also ordered to forfeit numerous taxidermy mounts of wildlife worth tens of thousands of dollars.

Dickson, 57, of Pacifica, Calif., pleaded guilty on April 12, 2011, to knowingly selling numerous endangered and otherwise protected species on the Internet for tens of thousands of dollars – including a juvenile bald eagle that he sold to an undercover agent for \$2,200. Other protected big game animals that Dickson illegally sold or offered to sell on Craigslist included taxidermy mounts of a Siberian tiger for \$15,000, a polar bear for \$6,500, a kodiak bear for \$14,000, a black bear for \$3,800, the summer coat of a grizzly bear for \$4,500, the shoulder mount of a grizzly bear for \$2,500, a cheetah rug for \$900, and a black panther for \$4,500. Dickson admitted both in the plea agreement and during the undercover operation that he knew it was illegal to sell these protected wildlife and that he could face jail time if caught.

This case is part of a larger effort on behalf of the federal government to crack down on the illegal trade of endangered and protected species on the Internet. The demand for endangered species, whether live or dead, has created a worldwide illegal trade in endangered animals now worth an estimated \$10 - \$20 billion per year. According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, illegal wildlife traffickers are relying more heavily on the Internet to offer their goods for sale. This increased traffic can create new markets for wildlife trade, thus increasing the demand for endangered species worldwide. Undercover operations, such as the one seen here, have helped to ferret out the sale of endangered species through Internet websites, such as Craigslist.

The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Court Judge William Alsup following a guilty plea to one felony count of violating the Lacey Act, Title 16, United States Code, Sections 3372(a)(1) and (a)(4) – Illegal Trade of Protected Wildlife. Judge Alsup also sentenced Dickson to a three-year period of supervised release. Dickson will begin serving the sentence on Aug. 29, 2011.

Stacey Geis is the Assistant U.S. Attorney who prosecuted the case with the assistance of Rania Ghawi. The prosecution is the result of a one-year investigation by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service. The California Department of Fish & Game initially referred the matter to the Service after seeing one of the illegal postings on Craigslist.

Further Information:

Case #: CR 11-0135 WHA

A copy of this press release may be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at www.usdoj.gov/usao/can.

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at www.cand.uscourts.gov.

All press inquiries to the U.S. Attorney's Office should be directed to Jack Gillund at (415) 436-6599 or by e-mail at Jack.Gillund@usdoj.gov.