

Department of Justice

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ONTARIO FISH DEALER SENTENCED FOR VIOLATING THE LACEY ACT

BUFFALO, N.Y.—U.S. Attorney Williams J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Jim Ip, a/k/a Muk Leung Ip, 50, of Toronto, Canada, was who was convicted of trafficking in prohibited wildlife, was sentenced to a criminal fine of \$5,000 and \$3,000 in restitution by U.S. Magistrate Judge H. Kenneth Schroeder, Jr.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Aaron J. Mango, who handled the case, stated that between May 5, 2011 and July 12, 2011, the defendant arranged for the export, transport, and sale of Giant Snakehead fish from Ontario, Canada to the United States. The Giant Snakehead fish (*Channa micropeltes*) is a predatory freshwater fish that is native to Southeast Asia and can grow to over 3 feet in length. It feeds voraciously, primarily on other fish, but it also eats frogs and other aquatic insects. Giant Snakeheads have sharp teeth, and due to their ability to breath air through their gills, they can live in a variety of lakes and streams. Giant Snakeheads are highly invasive and have the potential to disrupt recreational and commercial fishing in the Great Lakes should they get released into the wild.

On July 12, 2011, the defendant sent a shipment containing 26 Giant Snakehead fish from Ontario to Amherst to a Special Agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who was working in an undercover capacity. The Complaint further states that on December 4, 2011, the defendant sold 154 Giant Snakehead fish to the undercover agent, knowing that the fish were to be smuggled into the United States.

In addition to the federal conviction, the defendant was also convicted under New York State law of illegal commercialization of snakehead fish, and under Canadian law for the illegal sale of snakehead fish. In New York State Court, Ip was sentenced to a \$5,000 fine, and in Canada, the defendant was sentenced to 60 days jail and \$10,000 fine.

The sentencing is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service under the direction of Neil Mendelsohn, Acting Special Agent in Charge, Environmental Conservation Officers of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, under the direction of Acting Captain Frank Lauricella, and officers from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Canada.

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