



Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug
District of Oregon

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CONTACT: PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

PHONE: (503) 727-1000

USAOR.PUBLICAFFAIRS@USDOJ.GOV

PORTLAND WOMAN SENTENCED FOR SELLING PANGOLIN SCALES ILLEGALLY IMPORTED INTO THE U.S.

PORTLAND, Ore.—A Portland resident and purveyor of Chinese homeopathic remedies pleaded guilty and was sentenced today for selling pangolin scales illegally imported into the U.S., announced Acting U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug.

Agnes Yu, 53, was sentenced to three years' federal probation and a \$5,000 fine.

“Illegal trafficking poses a grave and persistent threat to wildlife populations across the globe. The purchase or sale of these animals is a serious crime and priority for federal law enforcement,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Asphaug.

“We commend the Department of Justice and all other agencies that played a role in aiding this investigation and prosecution,” said James Ashburner, a Special Agent in Charge for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement. “Trafficking of pangolins, and other protected species, is a huge part of global illegal wildlife trade. The Service will continue to use every tool at its disposal to fight wildlife trafficking and bring to justice the individuals who are depriving our planet of these magnificent creatures for their own profit.”

According to court documents, Yu and her husband operated Wing Ming Herbs, a store selling Chinese homeopathic remedies and other merchandise in Southeast Portland. On December 7, 2003, U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel screened Yu and her husband at the U.S.-Canada border. The inspection recovered 10 dried sea snakes and 49 dried big-toothed sea snakes. As a result of this encounter, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sent the Yus a letter informing them about federal laws and regulations governing the import and export of wildlife into and out of the U.S, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES lists each of the wildlife species whose trafficking it regulates under one of three appendices, with the most endangered and protected listed in Appendix I.

On November 14, 2017, an undercover Postal Inspector with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service went to Wing Ming and spoke with Yu in Chinese. The inspector covertly recorded and videotaped the meeting. In the course of their transaction, Yu sold the inspector thirty grams of pangolin scales for approximately \$165. Personnel at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory later confirmed the scales had been taken from a pangolin, a species of scaled anteater-like mammals endemic to Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

All species of pangolins (which form the genus *Manis*) are listed in CITES Appendix I, meaning that all commercial trafficking in pangolins is prohibited by the Convention.

Yu was aware of U.S. and foreign restrictions on the import, export, and sale of CITES-listed plants and wildlife but did not comply with those restrictions. Yu repeatedly exported American ginseng to customers in China in 2017 and 2018. American ginseng is listed on CITES appendix II, requiring exporters to obtain and ship such ginseng with a valid CITES certificate. Neither Yu nor Wing Ming Herbs procured such certificates.

On July 24, 2018, an undercover agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service went to Wing Ming Herbs and purchased giant sea horses, which are protected by CITES appendix II and fourteen shark fins, four of which originated from scalloped hammerhead sharks, which are protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). On the same date, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted a search warrant at Wing Ming Herbs and seized additional pangolin scales, ground Asian elephant ivory which is protected by CITES Appendix I and ESA, eleven penises and fifteen gall bladders of red deer which are protected by ESA, and giant devil ray which is protected by CITES Appendix II. Yu agreed to abandon all the wildlife seized in the search warrant, which included thousands of additional wildlife items.

On March 22, 2021, Yu was charged by criminal information with recklessly selling pangolin illegally imported into the U.S. in violation of CITES.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement with assistance from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Plant Protection Quarantine, and the Oregon State Police. It was prosecuted by Ryan W. Bounds, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for protecting America's wildlife from poaching, illegal commercialization, and other kinds of wildlife crime. If you have information related to a wildlife crime, please call 1-844-FWS-TIPS (1-844-397-8477) or email fws_tips@fws.gov.

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