

July 30, 2010

Court proceedings concluded on illegal trafficking of wildlife across Canada and the U.S.

Penalties total almost \$120,000

Edmonton... Seven individuals from Alberta have been found guilty of 41 counts under the province's *Wildlife Act* for illegal trafficking big game, birds of prey and illegal guiding. The extensive investigation spanned Alberta, Ontario and Washington State.

In 2003, enforcement staff in southern and central Alberta received tips from the public about big game and birds of prey being illegally harvested and sold. Undercover operations exposed a network of individuals killing and selling birds of prey, along with elk, moose and deer. In addition, one individual was guiding without authorization.

Fish and Wildlife officers conducted their investigation throughout Alberta, Ontario and Washington State. Court proceedings began on May 31, 2005, with the last of the seven accused men sentenced on May 28, 2010. On July 21, the final penalty of the forfeiture of a truck was confirmed in Lethbridge Court. In total, the seven men were fined \$119,700. One of the men was prohibited from possessing birds of prey parts for 10 years, and the court imposed an order to report certain hunting activities and possession of wildlife to Sustainable Resource Development for 10 years.

The unlawful commercialization of wildlife poses a major threat to management strategies. For example, eagles are classed as sensitive species requiring special management and the illegal hunting and sale of eagles is a risk to their populations. Public assistance in investigations is crucial in efforts to address poaching.

Albertans who are aware of or suspect fish and wildlife abuses in Alberta are encouraged to call the Report A Poacher hotline at 1-800-642-3800 or their local Fish and Wildlife office.

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