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JAPANESE MAN ARRESTED ON FEDERAL CHARGES OF SMUGGLING PROTECTED AND ENDANGERED BUTTERFLIES

A man from Kyoto, Japan has been arrested on federal charges of trafficking in rare and protected butterfly species in violation of United States laws and an international treaty that protects endangered species.

Hisayoshi Kojima, 55, was arrested without incident Monday afternoon at Los Angeles International Airport after arriving from Japan with several butterfly specimens in his possession. Kojima is expected to make his initial court appearance this afternoon in United States District Court in Los Angeles.

During a three-year undercover investigation by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Kojima allegedly sold and smuggled numerous endangered butterfly species to the United States.

A federal grand jury indicted Kojima on July 26, charging him with 17 violations of environmental and customs laws. For example, the indictment alleges that Kojima smuggled into the United States a pair of Queen Alexandra's birdwings, an endangered species that is the largest butterfly in the world (see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Alexandra's_Birdwing and http://home.att.net/~Bret71/O_alexandriae.htm). Two weeks ago, Kojima allegedly smuggled one pair of *Ornithoptera alexandrae* butterflies into the United States by means of fraudulent documents. Specifically, Kojima submitted a fraudulent Express Mail Service customs declaration that described a shipment as a gift of

“dry butterfly” worth \$30, when in fact it consisted of two Queen Alexandra’s birdwings that had been sold for \$8,500.

Twice in recent months, Kojima allegedly offered for sale the endangered Giant Swallowtail butterfly, an endangered species from Jamaica. The Giant Swallowtail butterfly, *Papilio homerus*, is the largest butterfly in the western hemisphere and is depicted on the \$1,000 Jamaican banknote (See: <http://www.jsdnp.org.jm/papilioho.htm> and http://home.att.net/~Bret71/P_homerus.htm).

The indictment accuses Kojima of smuggling other protected and endangered butterfly species into the United States. All of the species discussed in the indictment are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and most are protected by the federal Endangered Species Act.

Kojima is charged with various counts of illegally offering to sell endangered species, importing wildlife contrary to law, smuggling wildlife, and illegally importing endangered species.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in court.

This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement.

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