

U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TWO PLEAD GUILTY TO IMPORTING AND PURCHASING
WHALE TEETH**

PHILADELPHIA – United States Attorney Pat Meehan today announced two guilty pleas in connection with an international ring that smuggled dead body parts of endangered species into the United States.¹ The endangered species was the marine mammal *Physeter macrocephalus*, commonly known as the Sperm whale. The dead body parts were teeth, each having the shape of a cone, pointed at one end, approximately eight inches high and six inches in diameter, and weighing between one and five pounds.

Martin Schneider, of Blue Bell, Pa., pleaded guilty to importing hundreds of Sperm whale teeth from England into the United States starting in approximately 1995.

“The teeth had been extracted from Sperm whales illegally hunted and killed by fishing fleets,” said Meehan. “The defendant deliberately violated statues designed to protect endangered species.” Illegally hunting and killing Sperm whales is in violation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, known as “CITES.” The United States entered into CITES on July 1, 1975.

Schneider is charged in a five-count information. The first three counts charge violations of statutes designed to protect endangered species: The Lacey Act, The Endangered Species Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The remaining two counts charge violations of the federal anti-smuggling statute.

Schneider illegally smuggled the whale teeth into the United States by concealing the dead body parts in and amongst other goods he imported. Schneider then re-sold the teeth to merchants who specialize in a design form known as “scrimshaw,” by which drawings are etched on bone. Schneider sold both individual whale teeth and so-called “lots” of whale teeth. On the illegal market, “lots” range from 20 to 50 pieces. The number and quality of teeth in a “lot” are inversely related. Schneider sold more than \$540,000 of whale teeth in the aggregate. In many cases, the merchants who acquired the whale teeth from Schneider commissioned etchings on raw or blank teeth to give the teeth the false and artificial appearance of antique art with a value many times the acquisition price.

¹ An indictment or information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Lewis Eisenberg, Schneider's customer, pleaded guilty to a three-count information stemming from his illegal purchase of Sperm whale teeth in violation of The Lacey Act, The Endangered Species Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Eisenberg is a former director of The Whalers Village Museum, located at 2435 Kaanapali Parkway, on the island of Maui, Hawaii.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANTS

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE
Martin Schneider	Saw Grass Drive Blue Bell, PA	59 years old
Lewis Eisenberg	North Cove Drive Oak Harbor, Washington	60 years old

If convicted, defendant Schneider faces a maximum possible sentence of 17 years imprisonment, a 3 year period of supervised release, a \$950,000 fine and a \$350 special assessment. Forfeiture of all proceeds from and all property involved in the offenses also may be ordered. Eisenberg faces a maximum statutory sentence of 7 years imprisonment, a 3 year period of supervised release, a \$450,000 fine and a \$150 special assessment.

The case was investigated by Special Agents from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security (ICE). The case has been assigned to Manisha Sheth.

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