

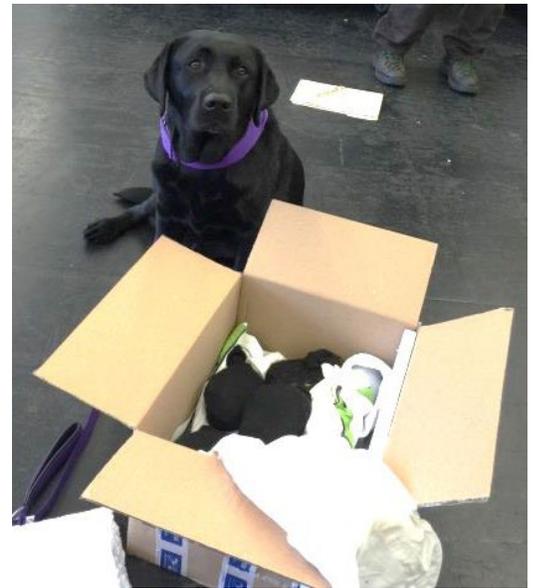
Wildlife Detector Dogs at Work

In 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement created wildlife inspector canine teams in response to the toll that wildlife trafficking is taking on protected species worldwide. Wildlife inspector handlers, and their canine partner, work together to “sniff out” and interdict illegal wildlife products at the several U.S. ports of entry.

These professionally trained teams graduate from a comprehensive training where they develop skills to detect wildlife product scents and are exposed to work environments such as air cargo warehouses, ocean containers, international mail facilities, and U.S. border crossings. In addition, the dogs are individually trained to detect the most common wildlife trafficked items, which are commonly seized at their duty station.

What have they found? Here are just a few examples:

- A cargo shipment of live birds, including CITES-listed species.
- A commercial shipment of shark cartilage powder imported from South America.
- Numerous boxes of illegal python skin shoes that were concealed between layers of shoes made from legal domestic leathers.
- Fifty pounds of CITES-listed giant clam meat.
- Fifteen, live eastern box turtles that were being smuggled to Asia and falsely declared as “make-up” and “cosmetics.”
- Forty-seven, live yellow-spotted turtles that were individually wrapped in socks and declared as “baby food.”
- Poached native American ginseng was seized before being exported from the U.S.
- Thirteen taxidermied sharks were seized - representing four separate, protected species.



K-9 Lockett discovered 12 live box turtles concealed in socks and destined for Asia.

Other facts about the USFWS wildlife inspector canine teams:

- The use of dogs to sniff out hidden wildlife products expands the Service’s inspection capabilities.
- The teams complete a 13-week training course at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Detector Dog Training Center in Newnan, Georgia, before reporting for duty and recertify yearly.
- Most of the OLE’s canines are “recruited” from shelters.
- All are Labrador retrievers or Lab mixes.
- For detector work, the “ideal” dog is between one and three years of age; has a high food drive; and is energetic, nonaggressive, and outgoing.
- A detector dog’s career typically lasts until they are nine-years-old; however, they can continue to work as long as they are healthy and productive.