

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Southern Appalachian Poaching

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

It seems this winter has seen a flurry of activity in the capture and prosecution of wildlife smugglers. In mid-December a German man was arrested for smuggling hundreds of live tarantulas, including protected species, into the United States through the U.S. mail. In late December two smugglers plead guilty to breaking federal law in connection to their attempt to smuggle Cuban pigeon eggs into the country, running the risk of bringing avian disease into the United States. A man who smuggled \$73,000 worth of elephant ivory into the U.S. through New York's Kennedy airport was recently sentenced to 33 months in prison and fined \$25,000. December started off with a Georgia piano company and its CEO pleading guilty to smuggling elephant ivory piano keys into the country.

Plant and wildlife poaching often brings to mind images of people clandestinely bringing exotic animals into or out of a country – jungle birds tucked under dresses or rare snakes moving through airports in cardboard boxes. However, it's worth remembering that unfortunately poaching and illegal smuggling is an issue we face all too often here in the Southern Appalachians. Our public land managers constantly have to deal with the poaching of ginseng, galax, and other plants that feed an international trade. Poaching and smuggling also threatens the mere existence of some of our rare species, like the bog turtle, which is caught up in an illegal pet trade, or rare pitcher plants which also fall victim to unscrupulous plant collectors.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.