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TWO German nationals are appearing in court for catching and trading in protected lizards, geckos and tortoises in Northern Cape. File Picture

German nationals arrested for catching and trading in protected lizards, geckos and tortoises

By [Jonisayi Maromo](#)  1h ago



PRETORIA – Two German nationals are appearing in court on Monday, after being arrested near Askham, Northern Cape for the illegal trade and possession of reptiles and controlled substances.

“The men were arrested (on Friday) as a result of a multi-agency reptile undercover operation comprising the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment’s Green Scorpions and the Hawks, assisted by the Environmental Enforcement Fusion Centre, the police, SANParks environmental crime inspectors, the Northern Cape department of environmental affairs and the private sector,” said spokesperson Albi Modise.

The men were nabbed while illegally catching and trading in reptiles, including Armadillo girdled lizards which are a threatened and protected species, geckos and tortoises in the Northern Cape “with the intention to smuggle them” out of South Africa into the lucrative international exotic pet trade.

“All South African tortoises and some of the lizards are listed by the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora which regulates the international trade in these species,” Modise said.

He said dagga and other drugs were also confiscated during the arrest.

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“The collaboration by all members of the multi-disciplinary team is to be commended. Without the dedication of the Green Scorpions, members of the security establishment, provincial officials and the private sector, we will not be able to win the war against wildlife crime,” Modise said.

In August, a Vietnamese national was arrested in connection with the illegal trade in wildlife and illegal possession of a firearm following raids on properties in Bela-Bela and Pretoria.

The arrest of the man came after a four-month investigation involving analysts and wildlife investigators, Modise said.

“The integrated team involved in the raid comprised the Green Scorpions from the department of forestry, fisheries and the environment, the Limpopo department of economic development, environment and tourism, the Gauteng department of agriculture and rural development and SANParks, as well as members of the South African Police Service,” said Modise.

He said search-and-seizure warrants were executed simultaneously at a Vietnamese-owned farm near Bela-Bela in Limpopo and at two storage units in Pretoria.

The joint investigation team seized 4.19kg of lion teeth, 680g of lion claws and more than 60kg of processed animal products believed to be lion gelatine. An illegal firearm was also confiscated.

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