



**Australian Government**

**Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts**

## **ILLEGAL EXOTIC WILDLIFE SEIZED**

4 August 2009

Illegal exotic fish, toads and turtles have been seized by federal environment investigations officers during searches on properties in the Sydney suburbs of Mount Druitt and Concord.

The department's investigations spokesman, Luke Bond, said it was believed there were plans to sell the species over the internet.

He said the department was working with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and Customs and Border Protection to determine the circumstances around the seizures.

"We've seized more than 100 exotic specimens, including fire-bellied toads, red-eared slider turtles and a number of exotic fish species, including snake heads and freshwater sharks," Mr Bond said.

"Two men are now helping us with our inquiries.

"Under the national environment law, it's illegal to import these species into Australia.

"If they get into our waterways, they can pose a serious risk to our environment as they can compete with our native animals for food or habitat, or more seriously, introduce diseases.

"Some of the species seized can also pose a risk to humans—in particular, adult snakeheads can inflict a severe bite and fire-bellied toads can be toxic to children.

"People need to make sure that if they're going to buy exotic species, that they check first to see if they can be legally imported into the country."

Under the national environment law—the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*—the maximum penalty for these offences is a \$110,000 fine or 10 years jail.

If you have any information regarding trade in illegal wildlife please contact the department via email on [compliance@environment.gov.au](mailto:compliance@environment.gov.au)

If you have any information regarding smuggling of wildlife into or out of Australia, contact the Customs and Border Protection hotline on 1800 06 1800.

For more information about exotic species and the laws on importing them, visit [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/trade-use/exoticanimalguide/list.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/trade-use/exoticanimalguide/list.html)