

Alabama Department of
Conservation & Natural Resources
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 9, 2007

CONTACT: Chief Allan Andress
334-242-3467

Enforcement Officers Conduct Sting Operation Lee County Man Nabbed for Selling Illegal Rattlesnakes

William Gornto, 47, of Phenix City, Alabama was arrested in Lee County by Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division conservation enforcement officers on 57 counts of possession of non-indigenous (non-native) venomous reptiles. The arrest was made on Oct. 3, 2007 after officers obtained a search warrant for Gornto's premises.

Tips from concerned citizens led to the discovery and arrest of Gornto who was illegally selling the snakes on the Internet. ADCNR regulations make it illegal to sell, offer for sale or to possess non-indigenous venomous reptiles without a permit. If convicted, Gornto faces a maximum fine of \$500 per count and six months in jail.

The non-indigenous venomous reptiles confiscated included 35 Western Diamondback, 19 Prairie and three Black Tail rattlesnakes.

"If these non-indigenous highly poisonous snakes had escaped and began to breed, it could pose a serious threat to native wildlife," said ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division Enforcement Chief Allan Andress. "More importantly, these types of snakes pose a severe threat to people, especially in populated areas." Currently the confiscated snakes are safely contained at an undisclosed location.

Anyone having information regarding non-indigenous venomous reptiles being held in captivity is asked to please call the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division Law Enforcement Office at 334-242-3467 or 1-800-272-4263.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources promotes wise stewardship, management and enjoyment of Alabama's natural resources through five divisions: Marine Police, Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. To learn more about ADCNR, visit www.outdooralabama.com.

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