

Guangdong police crackdown on illegal online wild animal trade

Police in south China's Guangdong Province have seized more than 10,000 wild animals and nearly 1,000 kilograms of products derived from wild animals, they announced Monday.

The provincial police department launched a crackdown on the illegal online trading of wild animals in April after police in the capital Guangzhou received a report that rare wild animals were being sold via WeChat, a popular messaging app in China.

Over the past three months, police have monitored major social media platforms, including messaging apps WeChat and QQ, Twitter-like Weibo, and some live broadcasting websites, said Li Wenjiang, deputy director of the provincial forest police bureau.

Li said they found a total of 5,380 messages related to illegal animal trading during the crackdown.

In one case, police used WeChat messages to locate and arrest three suspects. They seized 146 wild animals including rhesus monkeys, gold pythons, and African spurred tortoises in a rented house in Zengcheng District, Guangzhou.

Police also seized the remains of 120 dead state-protected animals in another house in the city of Huizhou.

Police in Shaoguan seized 74 cobras and a Tibetan macaque after they received a report of video showing suspects poaching the animals on a live broadcasting platform.

In another case, police seized a vehicle, 32 cobras and more than 1,000 other live wild animals in a market in Guangzhou.

Chinese law on the protection of wild animals bans the hunting, sale, purchase, and use of state-protected animals or derived products.

Guangdong police said they will continue tough measures to combat the illegal poaching, trading, purchasing, transporting and storing of wild animals.