

Traveller jailed for smuggling Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtles (with photo)

A traveller who smuggled Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtles and was convicted earlier for violating the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance was sentenced to imprisonment today (May 7).

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said that the 43-year-old male passenger arrived in Hong Kong on October 26, 2018 from Tokyo, Japan. Sixty Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtles were found in his baggage by Customs officers.

Subsequent to follow-up investigations, the AFCD charged the man with the illegal import of a species listed in Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). He was convicted at the District Court on May 3 this year. With 21 months' imprisonment as the starting point for sentencing, the defendant was sentenced to 12 months behind bars today after reduction due to his family status and because he pleaded guilty.

The Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtle is listed in Appendix II to the CITES and regulated under the Ordinance in Hong Kong. The penalties under the Ordinance have been amended and increased since May 1 last year. Any person importing, exporting or possessing specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Ordinance is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years. The specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction. Members of the public are urged not to break the law.

To enquire about the control of endangered species or to report suspected irregularities, the public can call the AFCD on 1823 or visit the website www.cites.hk.

