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Edmonton man fined for illegally exporting endangered fish to United States

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EDMONTON (CP) - An Edmonton man has been fined \$60,000 for illegally exporting an endangered ornamental fish to the United States.

Joe Lian Ho Luah pleaded guilty in provincial court to four counts of illegally exporting the fish - called the **Asian Arowana** - following a 22-month investigation by Environment Canada, RCMP, United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California State Fish and Game Department.

Luah legally imported 72 **Asian Arowanas**, valued at between \$1,000 and \$5,000, to Canada and then illegally drove or flew them to individuals or distributors in the U.S., said Larry Ottman, an investigator with Environment Canada.

The exports violated Canada's Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Not all of the fish have been recovered. Three prosecutions have taken place in Texas, California and Oregon, said Ottman.

There is a thriving black-market trade in the ornamental fish in the U.S., said Ottman.

They are an ancient fish that are highly prized in some Asian cultures because they emulate the dragon. They're a symbol of good luck and fortune.

"In the eyes of some, they are very beautiful," said Ottman.

A portion of the fines will be donated to the Calgary Zoo for its planned conservation and endangered species exhibit.

(Edmonton Sun)

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