



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, JAN. 11, 2023:

NMDGF conservation officers transfer tiger cub to ABQ BioPark

ALBUQUERQUE – New Mexico Department of Game and Fish conservation officers took possession of a young Bengal tiger confiscated by the Albuquerque Police Department on Tuesday. You can learn more about this case by visiting [APD's News Page](#). Conservation officers transferred the tiger to the ABQ BioPark, where it was examined by veterinarians and determined to be in good health. The tiger will reside in its temporary home at the BioPark until an investigation is completed and a permanent facility is located.



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish conservation officers took possession of this young Bengal tiger confiscated by APD on Tuesday.

“The Department of Game and Fish suspects that the tiger confiscated Tuesday is not the same tiger sought during the August 2022 search,” Field Operations Division Col. Tim Cimbal said. The tiger from August is believed to be more than 1 year old and likely weighs 50-90 pounds at this time. The tiger confiscated Tuesday is only a few months old and weighed only 20 pounds.



The tiger cub, weighing approximately 20 pounds and just a few months old, was transferred to the ABQ BioPark.

On Aug. 12, 2022, conservation officers and partner law enforcement served search warrants on two residences in Albuquerque's South Valley in response to intelligence that a tiger was being illegally held at one of the residences. The tiger in that search was not located, but law enforcement officers seized an illegally possessed, 3-foot alligator along with illicit drugs, large quantities of cash and numerous, illegal firearms; details of this case are also available on [APD's News Page](#) and from the [Department of Game and Fish's Enforcement News Page](#). The

alligator was transported to a permitted zoo facility. The tiger was not located.

Throughout history, individuals have sought to possess exotic wildlife often as a novelty or out of personal interest. In recent years the Department of Game and Fish has noted a substantial increase in inquiries about permits to import or possess tigers associated with the practice on popular television shows. There has also been a noted increase in captive tigers being held among groups involved in activities like those in the August 2022 case. On a national level, in December 2022, the "Captive Wildlife Safety Act"—also known as the "Big Cat Public Safety Act"—was amended into the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981, effectively banning future movement, sale or possession of prohibited wildlife species, especially large cats, as a response to these issues. In New Mexico, it has long been illegal to import or possess most wildlife and exotic species without a proper permit. As a Group IV prohibited species, tigers may only be possessed by a permitted zoo in New Mexico. The general public is prohibited from possessing a tiger and most other exotic species for any reason. State regulations can be found [on our website](#) under "Importation Permits"—"Information."

Cimbal noted that the possession of large carnivores by unqualified individuals can present a clear danger to the general public. These animals are also often kept in poor conditions with improper care. Given the rise in exotic pet cases, the Department of Game and Fish is requesting the public's help to locate individuals who illegally possess exotic pets. The department's director, Michael Sloane, has authorized rewards of up to \$1,000 through the Department's [Operation Game Thief](#) program for anyone providing information about individuals illegally possessing tigers and other endangered species that lead to charges



being filed in court. This is the largest reward opportunity ever offered through the program. “We feel that it is important to take exceptional action in response to exceptional circumstances that threaten public safety and the welfare of these animals,” Sloane said. Similar rewards are available for reporting poaching or other wildlife-related illegal activities. Those with information should immediately **call Operation Game Thief at 800-432-4263** or file a report [online](#). All information can be reported anonymously while remaining eligible for a possible reward.

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