

the fishermen and were not reset during the remaining two weeks of observation. At the least, this operation will at least serve to deter this activity. Information was also received of turtle netting taking place at night in waters of and around Culebra NWR. This matter is being investigated with the cooperation of NMFS Special Agents in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and Refuge Manager John Taylor. Similar reports have also been received from Vieques and Mona Islands. It is also felt that the taking of turtles by commercial fishermen is shifting from netting to the use of spearguns.

Efforts to investigate the taking of turtles in southeast Florida consisted of coordination by SA English, with the assistance of SA Medina, Florida Marine Patrol, and Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Several nights were spent on the beaches with officers from the combined agencies. No arrests of major dealers were made. Intelligence indicates that the commercial take of turtle eggs has declined somewhat. This is undoubtedly due to the publicity received from apprehensions made in previous years.

SA Shourot completed an investigation involving the unlawful transportation in interstate commerce, for commercial purposes, of two live cheetahs. The cheetahs had been placed on a breeding loan, by a wild animal park in Oregon, with an individual in South Florida. Investigation revealed that the animals were almost immediately sold to a prominent animal dealer in Miami, as his personal pets, and without the knowledge of the original owner in Oregon. A search warrant was obtained and the animals seized. They were found to be in very poor physical condition. After treatment at the University of Florida Vet School, they were returned to the park in Oregon pending resolution of the case. The matter has been referred to the Solicitor for administrative forfeiture.

Alligator problems continue to plague the southern states. Numerous nuisance complaints have been received and referred to the states. Civil cases are pending on several investigations involving illegal taking.

SA Bennett investigated an after-the-fact case involving the illegal shooting of an alligator in Duplin County, North Carolina. Following lengthy pursuit of leads and witness interviews, SA Bennett gathered sufficient evidence to prosecute one subject. Trial is pending in Eastern District Court of North Carolina.

SAs Bazemore and Hines are investigating six cases involving the unlawful taking and/or possession of alligators in South Carolina. All cases are pending.

There were three alligator investigations made in Arkansas without any apprehensions.