



# Department of Justice

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Northern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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December 15, 2011  
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## **HAYWARD MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR SMUGGLING MORE THAN 50 EXOTIC FISH FROM REMOTE CLIPPERTON ISLAND**

***Buyers would pay up to \$10,000 for rare Clipperton Angelfish***

SAN FRANCISCO - Steven Robinson was sentenced yesterday to a month and a half in prison for his illegal importation of fifty-two Clipperton Angelfish, U.S. Attorney Melinda Haag announced.

The Clipperton Angelfish (*Holacanthus limbaughii*) is a rare species of fish found only in the waters of Clipperton Island, an uninhabited atoll under French authority. Fishing for the Clipperton Angelfish in the Clipperton atoll requires permission from the French government. Because the fish is so rare, each live fish can command several thousand dollars in the U.S. markets and up to \$10,000 in the Asian markets.

Robinson, 58, of Hayward, Calif., a tropical fish dealer, pleaded guilty on Aug. 17, 2011, before United States Magistrate Judge Nathaniel Cousins to a Class A misdemeanor for his role in unlawfully collecting the rare and unique species of fish and then importing the fish into the United States for commercial purposes under a false declaration. In pleading guilty, Robinson admitted that in late April 2009, he took a four-day voyage to the Clipperton atoll for the purposes of finding and collecting Clipperton Angelfish without a permit. Robinson further admitted that on May 4, 2009, through his company Cortez Marine International, he imported 52 Clipperton Angelfish but labeled the fish as a different and more common species of angelfish known as *Holacanthus passer* or "Blue passer," which are found in Mexican waters where Robinson was permitted to fish. Robinson further admitted that once the fish were brought into the United States, he deceived federal wildlife authorities for several days by continuing to claim the fish were Blue passer when he knew the fish were Clipperton Angelfish.

The sentence was handed down by U.S. Magistrate Judge Cousins. Judge Cousins also sentenced the defendant to a \$2,000 fine and a one-year period of supervised release. The defendant is scheduled to begin serving the sentence on Jan. 30, 2012.

Stacey Geis is the Assistant U.S. Attorney who prosecuted the case with the assistance of Rania Ghawi. The prosecution is the result of a one-year investigation by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service.

**Further Information:**

Case #: CR 11- 0513 MAG

A copy of this press release may be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/can](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/can).

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at [www.cand.uscourts.gov](http://www.cand.uscourts.gov).

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