



The Lizard King: The True Crimes and Passions of the World's Greatest Reptile Smugglers

Bryan Christy

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Imagine *The Sopranos*, with snakes! *The Lizard King* is a fascinating account of a father and son family business suspected of smuggling reptiles, and the federal agent who tried to take them down.

When Bryan Christy began to investigate the world of reptile smuggling, he had no idea what he would be in for. In the course of his research, he was bitten between the eyes by a blood python, chased by a mother alligator, and sprayed by a bird-eating tarantula. But perhaps more dangerous was coming face to face with Michael J. Van Nostrand, owner of Strictly Reptiles, a thriving family business in Hollywood, Florida. Van Nostrand imports as many as 300,000 iguanas each year (over half the total of America's most popular imported reptile), as well as hundreds of thousands of snakes, lizards, frogs, spiders, and scorpions.

Van Nostrand was suspected of being a reptile smuggler by Special Agent Chip Bepler of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who devoted years of his life in an obsessive quest to expose The Lizard King's cold-blooded crimes. How this cat-and-mouse game ended is engrossing and surprising.

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