

Department of Justice Dismisses All Charges Against Charlie Sammut

FEBRUARY 21, 2023

The US Department of Justice dismissed all criminal charges against Charlie Sammut in Case No. 4:22-cr-00580-JD (*United States of America vs. Antle, et al.*), filed in the District of South Carolina. The charges were dismissed from an indictment filed on June 29, 2022. The Court entered the dismissal order today.

The charges incorrectly alleged that Mr. Sammut was involved in a “commercial” transaction involving two red ruffed lemurs in June 2018. In fact, the lemurs were legally donated to Monterey Zoological Society. Mr. Sammut has never illegally purchased any endangered species. Monterey Zoo complies with all permitting and regulatory requirements for all animals residing at the zoo.

Upon hearing the news of the dismissal, Mr. Sammut said: “I am gratified by the government’s dismissal of all charges against me. My life’s work is to support wildlife conservation and education. Today’s dismissal means I can get back to that critical work at Monterey Zoo.”

“Today’s dismissal confirms there was no basis for the charges brought against Mr. Sammut. The charges should never have been filed in the first place, but justice has finally been done,” remarked Davina Pujari, lead counsel for Mr. Sammut.

Mr. Sammut established Monterey Zoological Society as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization for the purposes of animal conservation and education. For more than a decade, Monterey Zoo has provided homes to animals who were rescued, abandoned, donated, or otherwise in need of a safe, enriching place to live.

Monterey Zoo offers a welcome sanctuary to its resident animals, and provides educational opportunities to underserved populations of Monterey County. The habitats at Monterey Zoo are large and aesthetically pleasing, and provide watering holes, climbing structures, and other features depending on the species of animal residing in the habitat. Monterey Zoo strives to house at least two of each species to provide companionship for the animals.

Monterey Zoo is accredited by the Zoological Association of America (ZAA), and Mr. Sammut previously served as the Chair of the Legislative Committee for ZAA. Mr. Sammut’s stellar animal stewardship is also apparent through his United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

inspection reports (which have never found a violation) and his collaborative relationship with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

For example, CDFW frequently contacts Mr. Sammut when the agency confiscates animals and seeks Mr. Sammut's assistance in either housing the animals at Monterey Zoo or finding other suitable homes. Mr. Sammut and CDFW partnered to introduce signage at Monterey Zoo educating visitors not to collect apparently orphaned wild animals, reminding visitors that possessing wild animals is illegal without a license, and providing resources for individuals who encounter an apparently orphaned animal in the wild.

Mr. Sammut and Monterey Zoo have a long history of philanthropy and conservation. Guests of Monterey Zoo are invited to donate a portion of their admission ticket price to a conservation organization of their choice. In 2022, Monterey Zoo donated over \$7,400 to conservation organizations.

Mr. Sammut is represented by [Davina Pujari](#), [Christopher Rheinheimer](#), and [Tessa Opalach](#) of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP and Matthew Hubbell and Wilson Daniel of Duffy & Young, LLC.