

St. Petersburg Man Jailed for Rare Mammal Skull Theft

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Skulls of clouded leopards, orangutans, sloths and other mammal skulls of “high historical, scientific and commercial value” had gone missing from the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Zoological Institute.

Moscow Museum

A St. Petersburg man has been detained and charged for stealing 50 rare animal skulls from the Russian Academy of Sciences, Interfax [reported](#) Friday, citing an anonymous source.

The Russian Academy of Sciences’ Zoological Institute in St. Petersburg [said](#) Thursday that skulls of clouded leopards, orangutans, sloths and other mammal skulls of “high historical, scientific and commercial value” had gone missing from its laboratory.

The 50-year-old unnamed carpenter who worked at the Zoological Institute is accused of stealing 3.5 million rubles (\$471,800) worth of skulls between August 2020 and January 2021.

Law enforcement found 28 of the skulls in the man’s apartment and said he sold the rest to a 10th-grade student. St. Petersburg police reportedly questioned the high school student in front of his mother.

According to Interfax, the man has been criminally charged with large-scale theft. He had previously been convicted of malicious hooliganism and traffic rule violations causing grievous bodily harm.

It's still unclear why he stole the skulls — or how a 10th-grader would have the money to buy them. But not all mysteries can be solved.

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