

Alligator Owner Unlikely To Face Charges

(KAIR)--Charges are not expected to be filed against the owner of an alligator found, and rescued, last week from the Atchison County Lake.

Atchison County Sheriff Jack Laurie says he's confident that owner Waylon Saxton, who lives near the lake, was not responsible for the release of the animal.

Instead, Laurie says it's likely the alligator was freed from its captive habitat by members of a group of party-goers at a recent gathering held at the lake.

According to Laurie, Saxton has kept, and properly cared for alligators for the past 15-years, and has, on occasion, had visits from Horton area school students who observe his exotic animals. There is no law that prohibits the keeping of alligators as pets.

Originally, Laurie had said it was possible the owner of the animal, prior to Saxton being identified, could face animal cruelty charges for releasing the animal into the lake area, where it would likely die during the winter months.

Instead, the investigation now turns to focus on who is responsible for the illegal release of Saxton's 3 to 3 ½ foot pet named "Cledus."

Shortly after the alligator was rescued Monday, during a joint effort by Atchison County Deputies and members of the Humane Society of Atchison, it was discovered it had been shot between the eyes.

53-year-old Atchison County Lake caretaker Dennis Statler has been issued a summons to appear in court on a charge of animal cruelty in connection with the shooting.

The alligator, transported to Greenwood, Missouri's Monkey Island animal sanctuary, was, at last check, recovering from the wound.

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