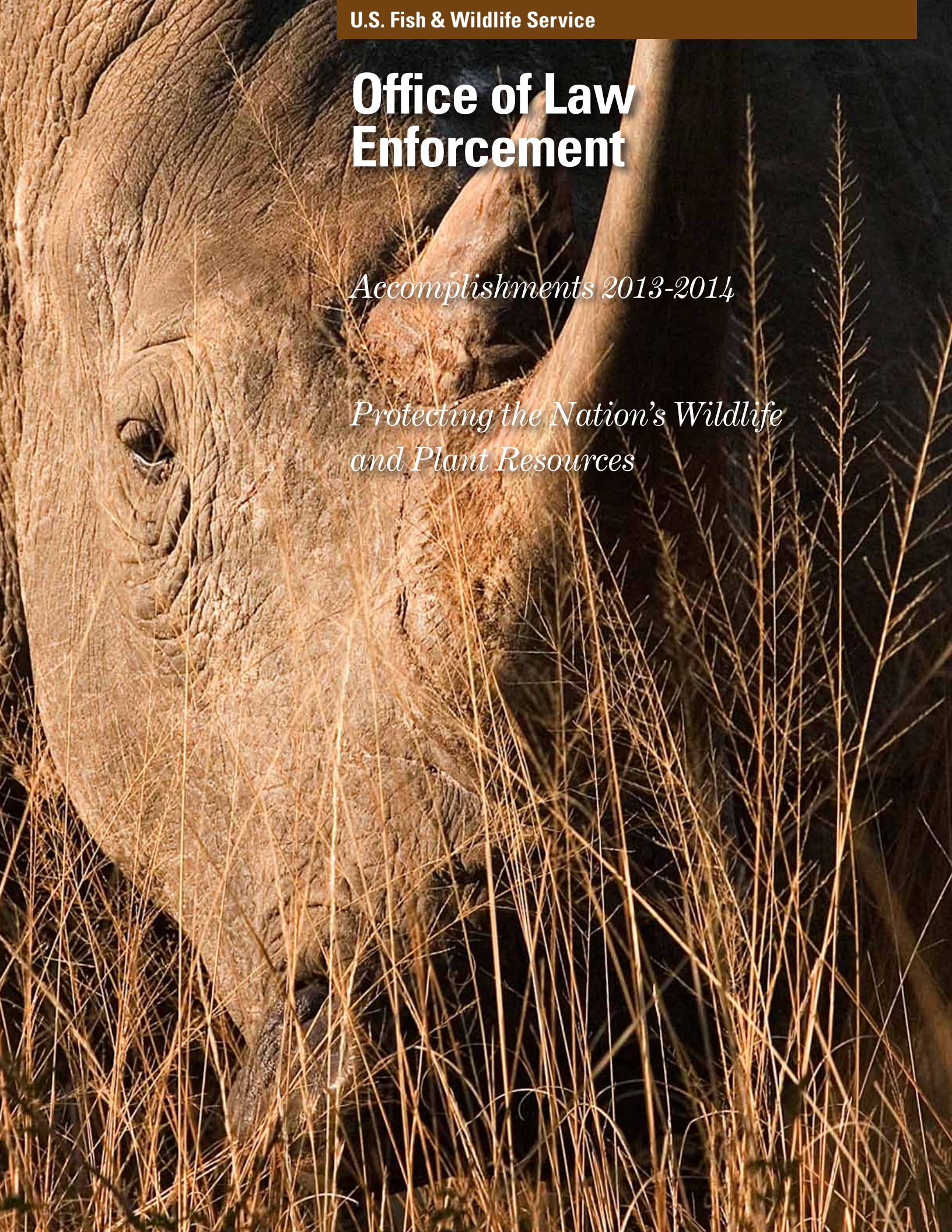


# Office of Law Enforcement

*Accomplishments 2013-2014*

*Protecting the Nation's Wildlife  
and Plant Resources*



*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, working with others, conserves, protects, and enhances fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. As part of this mission, the Service – through the Office of Law Enforcement – is responsible for enforcing U.S. and international laws, regulations, and treaties that protect wildlife and plant resources.*

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# Message from the Chief

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) continues our hard work in the protection of our valued fish, wildlife and plant resources. Our focus remains on devastating threats to these resources--illegal trade, unlawful commercial exploitation, injurious species, habitat destruction and degradation, environmental contaminants, and industrial hazards.

In this publication you will read about a few of the wildlife crimes we've investigated. Investigations into such issues as multiple rhino horn and ivory trafficking schemes to China; complex eagle poisonings; reptiles being smuggled to China; an illegal big cat maim-and-kill scheme; illegal guiding and hunting; black bear gallbladder smuggling to China; theft and trafficking of saguaro cacti; trafficking in black coral; and the interstate sale of illegally harvested striped bass. You'll read about frontline work of our wildlife inspectors--like intercepted shipments of corals, live giant clams, Asian arowana fish and Siamese fighting fish from Vietnam; pangolin scales from Hong Kong; endangered Asian bonytongue and catfish from Thailand; and, products made from seahorses, seal, and turtle shell from China.

In 2013 and 2014, we pursued over 21,000 wildlife crime investigations resulting in over \$30 million in fines, over \$4.4 million in civil penalties and over 150 years in prison time; we inspected more than 365,000 shipments of wildlife and wildlife products entering or leaving the United States; examined over 5,200 pieces of evidence; and trained hundreds of other Federal, State, Tribal and international agencies.

With the recognition that wildlife trafficking is no longer merely a crime of opportunity, rather an organized network and a global crisis, our role continues to expand. We are working with our partners to implement a national strategy for combating wildlife trafficking. We are placing special agents in regional areas around the globe to assist those areas with training, coordinating enforcement, expanding capacity, and consultation on the illegal wildlife trade. We have placed a special agent in Thailand, and soon will have personnel in Tanzania, Botswana, Peru and China.

I want to thank the State and Tribal Game Wardens, Conservation Officers and Game Rangers, federal and international enforcement partners, and the numerous County, State and Federal prosecutors who work closely with us to prevent the illegal trade in fish, wildlife and plants in the United States and in other countries. But my biggest and continued thanks goes to the men and women of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement. It is truly rewarding to work with a group of professionals and friends who exhibit such dedication and passion to our mission, and a solid commitment to the protection of our wildlife resources.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Woody'.

William C. Woody  
Chief, Office of Law Enforcement



# Spotlight 2013-2014

In 2013-2014, the United States and other nations around the world identified wildlife trafficking as a threat not only to conservation of species, but to global prosperity and peace. A vow was made to work together more effectively to address this transnational organized crime. 2013 alone, however, witnessed the slaughter of at least 24,000 elephants in Africa while the rhino death toll in South Africa alone exceeded 1,000.

In response to the global poaching crisis, the Office of Law Enforcement stepped up its efforts to support wildlife conservation worldwide and prevent the illegal exploitation of species already on the brink of extinction. Accomplishments included casework in the United States; investigative coordination overseas; and capacity building.

## Operation Crash

Special agents with the Service's Special Investigations Unit continued their work on Operation Crash – a comprehensive ongoing nationwide investigation of trafficking in rhino horn that, by the close of 2014, had secured the arrests of more than two dozen individuals and a dozen prosecutions, and the disruption of two large-scale smuggling networks.

In May 2013, the two Los Angeles businessmen who ran one of these networks were sentenced to serve 42 months and 46 months in prison and pay \$20,000 in criminal fines and a \$185,000 tax penalty and assessment after having each pled guilty to five felony counts. Between January 2010 and February 2012 (when they were arrested), these men bought up rhino horns valued at as much as \$2.5 million from suppliers across the country so they could export them overseas. Both made payments to Vietnamese customs officials to ensure clearance of the horns sent to that country.

These defendants abandoned their interest in \$2 million worth of rhino horns and two seized vehicles. The judge also ordered that some \$800,000 in cash, gold,



*Rhino horn libation cup – one of the many rhino horn products seized as a result of Operation Crash. USFWS*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Elephant tusks await destruction at the U.S. Ivory Crush. USFWS*

jewelry, and precious stones (all profits from rhino horn trafficking) be turned over to the Service's Multinational Species Conservation Fund for use in protecting rhinos in Africa. A company run by one of these individuals also pled guilty to smuggling and wildlife violations and was sentenced to pay \$100,000 in criminal fines.

A New York City antiques dealer, who had also been arrested in February 2012, was sentenced on charges of obstruction of justice and creating false records. Penalties included six months in prison; the forfeiture of \$28,000 in cash; and payment of a \$10,000 criminal fine and \$18,000 in restitution.

New arrests and indictments in 2013 included a group of Chinese and U.S. antiques dealers operating a rhino horn and elephant ivory smuggling network. One of these defendants, a New York businessman who pled guilty to conspiring to smuggle rhino horn

and elephant ivory to Hong Kong, was sentenced to serve 37 months in Federal prison.

Another – the owner of an antiques business in China – pled guilty in December 2013 to 11 felony counts in connection with having orchestrated the smuggling of more than \$4.5 million worth of rhino horn and elephant ivory out of the United States. This defendant was the “boss” of three United States antiques dealers (including the New York man mentioned above) who made purchases at his direction and shipped the items to him via Hong Kong. In 2014, he was sentenced to 70 months in prison for heading this illegal wildlife smuggling conspiracy. The sentence was one of the longest ever imposed in the United States for a wildlife smuggling offense. The defendant admitted that he sold 30 smuggled, raw rhinoceros horns worth approximately \$3 million – approximately \$17,500 per pound – to factories in China where raw rhinoceros horns are carved



*An industrial rock crusher destroyed the U.S. elephant ivory stockpile in November 2013. USFWS*

into fake antiques. In addition to prison, the defendant was ordered to serve two years of supervised release and to forfeit \$3.5 million in proceeds of his criminal activity as well as several Asian artifacts. Various ivory objects seized by the USFWS as part of the investigation have also been surrendered.

In 2013, Service special agents working on Operation Crash also arrested an Irish national at Liberty International Airport in Newark, New Jersey, as he was boarding a flight to London. This man, known to be a member of a crime organization operating out of Ireland, pled guilty to conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act in connection with rhino horn trafficking. In 2014, this Irish national was sentenced to serve 14 months in prison by a Federal judge in Brooklyn, New York. The defendant was also ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine and forfeit \$50,000 in illegal proceeds. In his plea agreement, he admitted that he and others traveled throughout the United States buying and selling rhino horn.

In October 2014, the owners of a safari outfitting company were charged with selling illegal rhino hunts to unsuspecting American hunters. The defendants allegedly failed to get required permits and later sold rhino horns on the black market. [Demand for rhino horn is soaring: In 2007, 13 rhinos were poached in South Africa. In 2013, poachers killed more than 1,000.]



*A Service special agent helps African officers complete a training exercise at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana. USFWS*

### **U.S. Ivory Crush**

As part of its efforts to combat wildlife trafficking, the Office of Law Enforcement destroyed the six-ton U.S. ivory stockpile on November 13, 2013, focusing global attention on the slaughter of elephants in Africa. The thousands of tusks, carvings, and other objects that were pulverized by an industrial rock crusher at the National Wildlife Property Repository near Denver, Colorado, had been seized by Service special agents and wildlife inspectors in connection with violations of Federal wildlife laws over the past 25 years.

The Ivory Crush was witnessed by representatives of African nations and other countries, dozens of leading conservationists, several celebrity/advocates from the entertainment world, and many reporters and camera crews from U.S. and international media outlets. Speakers at the event included Service Director Dan Ashe; officials from the U.S. Departments of Justice and State; globally known African conservationist Paula Kahumbu; and representatives from the World Wildlife Fund and International Fund for Animal Welfare.

The Crush was the single most reported-on public event in Service history, securing coverage in more than 1,700 media outlets worldwide. With this action, the United States joined three other nations that had already destroyed elephant ivory (the Philippines, Gabon, and Kenya) while prompting at least five other countries (including China, France, Chad, Hong Kong, and Belgium) to relegate ivory stockpiles to a similar fate.

### International Training and Attachés

In response to the wildlife poaching crisis in Africa and Southeast Asia, the Service presented a comprehensive criminal investigations training program in 2013 and 2014 at the U.S. State Department's International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana and Thailand. A total of 97 officers from 10 sub-Saharan African nations (Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) and from Southeast Asia (China, Thailand, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam) completed the intensive two-week course, which included both classroom studies and a mock investigation.

Efforts to build wildlife law enforcement capacity overseas also included training for forensic specialists from Southeast Asia and Australia and participation in the conference of the Central American Dominican Republic Wildlife Enforcement Network in Costa Rica. Service officers helped conduct an anti-smuggling training program hosted by the Department of Homeland Security in Bangkok, Thailand, providing courses on Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (CITES), surveillance, controlled deliveries, and crime scene processing to 40 participants from Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. Also, in January 2014, a Service special agent met with United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) representatives in Stuttgart, Germany. The trip was necessary to conduct in-person classified briefings on wildlife trafficking intelligence and establish protocols and persons which would disseminate and receive intelligence intercepts.

Enforcement staff completed a three-month detail in Bangkok focused on investigative coordination; spent three weeks in Togo providing investigative assistance to authorities there on ivory trafficking; and made multiple trips to the

Philippines to help that nation develop a wildlife law enforcement database. They also represented the United States at conferences on timber trafficking in Brussels and London; a global meeting on corruption and wildlife trafficking in Thailand; the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force meeting in Kenya; the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group also in Kenya; and the 12th African Wildlife Consultative Forum in Zambia.

The Service worked successfully with the Department of State to establish a new wildlife special agent/international attaché program, coordinating and creating the first-ever position of this type in Bangkok, Thailand. The agent selected for this post began work early in 2014 in support of regional efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. Positions have also been established in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Gaborone, Botswana; and Lima, Peru thus far. It is expected that these special agents will be in place by early to mid-2015. The Service and the Department of State are still trying to secure another location in Asia for a fifth attaché position.

### State Chiefs Leadership Academy

The first-ever class of the National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy (NCLELA) graduated in September 2014 (see photo) at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The 35 participants represented 20 states and Canada. The National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement collaborated in 2012 to create this leadership academy specifically tailored to wildlife law enforcement program leaders. Together we are working to create a stream of leadership that understands the world as it's going to be tomorrow. The goal of the NCLELA is to prepare new conservation law enforcement executives to effectively carry out their job responsibilities adaptively in a rapidly changing world. The focus is to provide the practical skills and knowledge needed by those in executive-level conservation law enforcement leadership roles in state or federal agencies.

The program is an unprecedented forum for the managers of wildlife law enforcement programs and is student-centered with a high degree of student involvement. The NCLELA fellows are engaged in such topics as adaptive

## 2013-2014 Investigative Statistics

### Investigative Caseload \*

Statute	2013	2014
African Elephant	51	58
Conspiracy	61	61
Eagle Protection	263	265
Endangered		
Species	7,267	6,336
False Statements	26	23
Lacey	2,208	1,919
Marine Mammal		
Protection	211	243
Migratory Bird Stamp	61	27
Migratory Bird Treaty	911	638
Other Federal Laws	181	158
Rhino Tiger Labeling	31	38
Smuggling	86	78
State Laws	184	135
Wild Bird		
Conservation	57	53
Total	11,598	9,982

\* This table reflects investigative cases worked by Service special agents and wildlife inspectors during FY 2013 and FY 2014.

### Annual Penalty Statistics \*

Fines	\$20.4M	\$9.6M
Prison (years)	46	108
Probation (years)	490	356
Civil Penalties	\$3 M	\$1.4M

M = million

\* This table summarizes the results of criminal and civil prosecutions based on the enforcement efforts of Service special agents and wildlife inspectors.



leadership, leading change, resource management, personnel management, shaping organizational culture, strategic planning, surviving and succeeding as an executive, liability, establishing a leadership legacy, and more.

Four graduates of the first NCLELA class have since been promoted. We want to congratulate Thomas Grohol, the new Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Bureau of Wildlife Protection; David Bess, the new Chief of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division;

Jon Cornish, promoted to Colonel of the Maine Marine Patrol; and, the new Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Colonel Curtis Brown.

The second annual academy is planned for April and September 2015.

*First graduating class of the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs academy at the National Conservation Training Center-September 2014 NACLEC*

**Front Row (L to R):** Jeffrey Samorajczyk (CT); Curtis Brown (FL); Dean Harre (MO); Randy Stark (NACLEC Exec. Director & Chief, WI - Ret.); Daniel Menard (ME); Thomas Strother, III (MO); Pete Flores (Colonel, TX - Ret.); Marcie Marquardt (Leadership Academy Staff); William Woody (USFWS Law Enforcement Chief)

**Second Row (L to R):** Thomas Grohol (PA);





*Nathan Erdman (OK); Gene Elms (Chief, AZ); Jay Slack (NCTC Director)*

**Third Row (L to R):** *Rodmen Smith (MN); Jeffrey Weaver (GA); Richard King (WY); Kevin Davis (TX); Doug Shugart (OR); Robert Fleenor (Colonel, OK); Kurt Blanchard (Deputy Chief, RI);*

**Fourth Row (L to R):** *BJ Thurman (KS); Randy Shoup (PA); Rick Olson (UT); Jonathan Cornish (ME); Steven Hall (AK); Larry Yamnitz (Chief, MO)*

**Fifth Row (L to R):** *Travis McLain (MO); Glen Ehler (Nova Scotia, Canada)*

**Sixth Row (L to R):** *David Bess (CA); Andrew Alban (SD); Mark Walker (OK); Cody Jones (TX); Bernard Chastain (AK); Kyle Overturf (Colonel, CT)*

**Seventh Row (L to R):** *Frank Floor (RI); Randy Doman (MO); Casey Krueger (WI); Jack Daugherty (FL); Walter Rabon (GA); Karl Brooks (WI)*

**Eighth Row (L to R):** *Dan Hoenke (ND); Harold Guse (MT); Scott Jurk (TX); Justin Shirley (UT)*

*Flanked By: Pennsylvania Game Commission Ceremonial Unit*



# Pacific Region

Special agents and wildlife inspectors in the Pacific Region are responsible for Federal wildlife law enforcement in the States of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Hawaii as well as American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and other Pacific Island territories that spread across 5 million square miles of ocean. The Region features tremendous ecosystem diversity, supports over 400 threatened and endangered species, and encompasses some 270 million acres of land, water, coral reefs, and ocean floor on 67 National Wildlife Refuges along with other large areas of wildlife habitat.

Challenges for wildlife law enforcement range from travel distances and invasive species in the Pacific to the rapid growth of “green” energy and complex tribal relations in the Pacific Northwest. Species at risk include the only gray wolves that remain federally protected; the Northern spotted owl and western snowy plover; threatened grizzlies and the endangered Selkirk caribou; and some 317 animals and plants native only to the islands of Hawaii that are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Strengthening State and other enforcement partnerships is a priority in the Region as is intercepting trans-Pacific wildlife smuggling and monitoring wildlife trade at three designated ports (Honolulu, Seattle, and Portland) and two other locations (Agana, Guam, and Blaine, Washington). Service officers also focus on resolving conflicts and promoting compliance with conservation laws with respect and appreciation for widely varying cultural and resource values across the Region.

## Accomplishments

A Senator representing Rota in the legislature of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands pled guilty to charges that he conspired with his legislative assistant to import dead Mariana fruit bats from Rota to



*Agents completed multiple investigations involving the trafficking of live Asian arowanas – a highly valuable endangered fish. Fang Hong/Wikimedia Commons*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Threatened Mariana fruit bat.*  
Melissa White/U.S. Air Force

Saipan in 2010 on a commercial airline flight. After the bats were discovered, the defendant tried to obstruct the investigation by asking that assistant to lie to the grand jury. Already indicted for attempting to smuggle the federally threatened bats, the Senator was subsequently arrested on charges of tampering with witnesses and attempting to destroy evidence; he faces a possible multi-year prison term at sentencing. The legislative assistant pled guilty to one count of false declaration and one count of conspiracy to violate the Endangered Species Act.

A former Rota customs officer and a former Division of Fish and Wildlife staffer pled guilty in Federal court to charges of conspiring to poach a breeding colony of threatened Mariana fruit bats in 2008. These defendants were indicted in 2011 with another

now retired police lieutenant over the same poaching incident. The latter was found guilty of unlawful receipt of threatened wildlife and was sentenced to 90 days in Federal prison. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit upheld the conviction and sentence, which also included a \$1,000 fine, six months of probation, and 100 hours of community service.

Agents in this region wrapped up three investigations involving trafficking in endangered Asian arowanas. In one case, the owners of an aquarium business in Washington State were convicted of smuggling and were ordered to forfeit assets valued at over \$150,000 and spend three months in home confinement and one year on probation. The property forfeited included four of the highly prized and valuable fish, aquarium tanks, a



*In October 2012, Gary L. Young became the Special Agent in Charge for the Service's Pacific Region. He began his career in wildlife law enforcement in 1984 as a State game warden in Texas. In 1993, he joined the Service as a special agent with a first assignment in Wichita, Kansas. He soon moved on to staff a new one-agent office in Cedar City, Utah, where he worked cooperatively with landowners and developers on endangered species issues. In 1998, Young was selected as the Resident Agent in Charge (RAC) in Fairbanks, Alaska, where he worked closely with the Alaskan Native community. In 2000, he returned to Texas as the RAC for south and west Texas in San Antonio, Texas. In 2009, Young returned to Alaska as Assistant Special Agent in Charge until departing in 2012 for the Region 1 SAC position. Young has a B.S. degree in criminal justice from Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas.*



*U.S. species being smuggled to Hong Kong by a reptile dealer in Washington State and five co-conspirators included ornate box turtles.*

Patrick Feller/Wikimedia Commons

vehicle, 300 live marijuana plants, and commercial-scale drug production and processing equipment.

In another case, a man was indicted on eight counts of smuggling and violating the Lacey Act. After pleading guilty to one felony count, he was sentenced to six months of electronic home monitoring, two years of probation, a \$5,000 fine, and 100 hours of community service.

In a third investigation, a defendant pled guilty to one Lacey Act felony count and was sentenced to one year of probation, 60 days of electronic location monitoring, 100 hours of community service, and a \$1,000 fine.

A foreign national from Canada who lives in Washington State was sentenced to 12 months in prison for felony obstruction of justice and wildlife trafficking. The defendant, who attempted to destroy his cell phone (and the incriminating evidence it contained) by throwing it into a swimming pool while being questioned by Service special agents, illegally purchased 18 black bear gallbladders and smuggled them to China for sale in that country for their alleged medicinal properties. During his sentencing hearing, he lied about his crimes, claiming that his transactions involved no profit and were motivated by a desire to help sick relatives. His statements prompted the judge to increase his proposed prison sentence from 10 months to a full year. This defendant was also fined \$8,000 and ordered to spend five years on probation.

A man who orchestrated a wide-ranging conspiracy to illegally traffic protected reptile species was sentenced to 12 months in prison and 3 years of supervised release. This individual, together with five co-defendants, conspired to smuggle domestic species out of the United States to Hong Kong and illegally import Asian species into the United States. One of the co-defendants, a Hong Kong citizen residing in the United States, was sentenced to six months in prison and two years of supervised release. A third co-defendant was sentenced to five months in prison. Most of the illegally trafficked species were protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Endangered Species Act; their estimated market value was between \$120,000 and \$200,000.

Species smuggled included Eastern box turtles, North American wood turtles, ornate box turtles, Gila monsters, Gulf Coast box turtles, and three-toed box turtles as well as such foreign CITES-protected reptiles as black-breasted leaf turtles, Chinese striped-necked turtles, big-headed turtles, Fly River turtles, and an Arakan forest turtle. The Arakan forest turtle is critically endangered, having once been thought to be extinct. As part of their sentences, the defendant and his co-defendants forfeited their interest in the wildlife and were ordered to cover the cost of caring for the seized animals – about \$28,500.

Service officers in Hawaii seized 89



*Investigations involving giant clam (a CITES Appendix II species) dealt with both unlawful harvest and meat smuggling.* Nick Hobgood/Wikimedia Commons

dead CITES-protected corals and giant clams that had been unlawfully harvested from waters surrounding the Marshall Islands. The wildlife was recovered from two U.S. Navy vessels manned by contractors that were returning to Hawaii after conducting missile launch operations in Kwajalein. An investigation resulted in the indictment of the Captain on smuggling and Endangered Species Act charges. The investigation was worked jointly with special agents from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

A joint investigation with agents from Homeland Security Investigations secured the indictment of a man in Hawaii on smuggling and Endangered Species Act charges in connection with the illegal importation of approximately 100 pounds of protected giant clam meat via passenger baggage

at Honolulu International Airport. Service and Customs inspectors seized the meat on several separate occasions. Investigators learned that the man served as a ring leader, directing family members and associates to smuggle the wildlife on his behalf.

Service agents concluded an investigation involving six subjects (three from Idaho and three from North Dakota) involved in the illegal take of mountain lions in Idaho. All six pled guilty and were convicted of violations of the Lacey Act. Fines ranged from \$500 - \$3500 and all individuals were required to perform community service hours ranging from 25 - 50 hours. All six were placed on probation for a period ranging from one year to five years during which time they are not allowed to hunt. Three mountain lions were seized

during the investigation and restitution in the amount of \$3,855 was paid. The case was cooperatively worked between Service agents with assistance provided by Idaho Fish and Game and North Dakota Game and Fish.

A Service agent concluded an investigation into the unlawful taking of a mule deer in Oregon. After being unlawfully taken, the deer was transported across state lines from Oregon to the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington State where it was sold to a drug dealer. The subject who illegally took and transported the mule deer was convicted of a violation of the Lacey Act, paid a \$1000 fine and received three years' probation including no hunting during that time period. The Spokane Tribe tribal officers assisted with the investigation.

Prompt action by Service special agents in Washington State facilitated the recovery and transport of seven poisoned bald eagles to wild bird rescue facilities. The birds, which had fed on the carcasses of two euthanized horses that were allowed to rot in an open field, were in critical condition when retrieved by the agents but ultimately survived. The rancher responsible cooperated with investigators and paid a \$1,500 fine.



*Agents in Washington State helped rescue seven bald eagles.* Eric Fromm/Wikimedia Commons



# Southwest Region

The Southwest Region covers the States of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma and shares over 1,650 miles of border with Mexico. The Region contains diverse fish and wildlife resources, including over 250 species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act. It encompasses habitats that range from lowland deserts and seemingly endless plains to Gulf Coast beaches and towering mountain peaks.

Wildlife law enforcement efforts are coordinated with State game and fish agencies and with Federal counterparts. Special agents and wildlife inspectors in the Region provide law enforcement support to more than 40 National Wildlife Refuges, 27 National Parks, 20 National Forests, over 30 million square miles of other Federal and State lands, over 100 distinct Native American tribal areas, and 24 Customs ports of entry.

Challenges in the Region range from protecting endangered Mexican wolves to foiling interstate trafficking of wildlife ranging from freshwater fish to big game species. Enforcement work includes promoting compliance under Federal wildlife laws by oil and gas producers and other industries whose activities affect protected birds; inspecting wildlife imports and exports at two designated ports (Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston) and four border crossings (Nogales, Arizona, and Brownsville, El Paso, and Laredo in Texas); and partnering with Service biologists to address issues affecting protected species and their habitat.

## Accomplishments

An Arizona man pled guilty to stealing government property and violating international trade provisions of the Endangered Species Act by removing saguaro cacti from Federal land and selling them for about \$2,000 each to buyers as far away as Austria. He was sentenced to pay \$32,000 in restitution and serve five years supervised probation and eight months of weekend incarceration.



*The Service secured a guilty plea from a Texas hunter who shot and killed one of only 34 juvenile whooping cranes that migrated from Canada in the fall of 2012.*  
Bill Gates/USFWS

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:  
*Saguaro cactus.* George Gentry/USFWS

A hunter from Dallas, Texas, who killed a juvenile whooping crane in January 2013 in an area designated as critical habitat for this endangered species, pled guilty to violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and was ordered to pay a \$5,000 criminal fine and a \$10,000 community service payment. The bird killed was one of only 34 juveniles that made the 2,500-mile migration from Canada to the Port Aransas area in the fall of 2012. The whooping cranes that winter in Texas each year constitute the species' only self-sustaining wild population.

The key defendant in an undercover Service investigation of the unlawful harvest and interstate sale of paddlefish caviar was indicted by a Federal grand jury in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for three Lacey Act felonies and one count of conspiracy. This individual, who was buying the black market caviar in Oklahoma and selling the roe in Missouri, pled guilty to one felony count of violating the Lacey Act and was sentenced to serve six months in prison, six months in home confinement,

and three years on probation; he was also fined \$500. His four suppliers and co-conspirators also pled guilty to Lacey Act violations.

A Texas resident was sentenced to pay a \$1,000 fine, \$3,797.97 restitution payment, and a \$25.00 special assessment sentenced for killing an American Alligator in an illegal alligator hunt on the Trinity River in violation of the Endangered Species Act. The defendant admitted in court that he shot the alligator during closed season, on public water, with a rim-fire rifle (.22). The alligator measured 13 feet in length and weighed over 800 pounds and is believed to have been the largest taken from the Trinity River in the past 50 years. He had repeatedly lied to state and federal officers about how and where he shot the alligator prior to pleading guilty in federal court.

Service special agents in Houston secured the arrest of a would-be smuggler in Los Angeles after the swim bladders of 22 endangered totoaba fish



*Special Agent in Charge Nicholas Chavez has managed Service law enforcement operations in the Southwest Region for the past seven years. He started with the agency as a cooperative education student in 1988 and worked as a wildlife inspector in Boston, Massachusetts, and El Paso, Texas. He became a special agent in 1993 and conducted criminal investigations of wildlife crimes in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and El Paso and Brownsville, Texas. After a stint at Law Enforcement headquarters, he became the Assistant Special Agent in Charge in the Midwest Region, a position he held until moving to his current position. Chavez holds a B.S. degree in wildlife science with a minor in criminal justice from New Mexico State University; he earned an M.S. in wildlife science from that same institution.*



*Agents investigated two Texas hunting guides for illegal take of American alligators.*  
Gareth Rasberry/Wikimedia Commons

had been seized from her at Houston International Airport. The woman, a Chinese national, was on her way from Costa Rica to China with connecting flights in Houston and Los Angeles.

In Texas, a Chinese national pled guilty to one count of false labeling in connection with his foiled attempt to smuggle elephant ivory carvings out of the United States.

An ecotourism guide from Texas who arrived at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport with 16 live snakes in four plastic cases hidden in the lining of his jacket pled guilty to wildlife trafficking and was ordered to pay a \$2,300 fine and spend three years on probation. The snakes – all smuggled out of Peru – included venomous species. Their travel itinerary began with a flight from Lima, Peru to Miami followed by a second flight from Miami to Dallas.

The last defendant in Operation Silverboy (an investigation of eagle trafficking) pled guilty in Texas to selling golden eagles and other birds for the parts trade. He was sentenced to spend three years on probation and to pay \$6,000 in fines and \$24,000 in restitution.

A former tribal police officer from Washington State was sentenced in Arizona for selling golden eagle tail feathers. The man was ordered to pay \$10,000 in restitution and serve 90 days in prison followed by 90 days home confinement and one year on supervised release.

An Arizona man investigated by Service agents in coordination with Navajo wildlife officers was fined \$2,000 and sentenced to 30 days in prison, five



*A number of investigations in the Southwest involved individuals selling golden eagle feathers and parts.* Peter Kaminski/Wikimedia Commons

months home confinement, and one year of supervised release for selling golden eagle and migratory bird parts.

A Service investigation sent an individual in Arizona to Federal prison for two years after he was convicted of Federal felony counts of violating the Lacey Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act for trafficking in protected bird feathers and parts.

A man in Texas who captured a juvenile bald eagle with the intention of training it for use in falconry was fined \$15,000 after being convicted at trial.

A Kansas construction company responsible for the intentional destruction of at least 800 cliff swallow eggs and over 2,000 cliff swallow nests at





*Agents secured \$375,750 in remediation from a construction company that destroyed at least 800 cliff swallow eggs.*  
 Ingrid Taylar/Wikimedia Commons

a bridge repair project site in Oklahoma agreed to pay \$375,750 in remediation to avoid prosecution for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

An oil and gas producer in Oklahoma whose facilities were responsible for the deaths of migratory birds forfeited \$1,375 in collateral and invested more than \$23,000 in site remediation measures to prevent future violations. An oil company in New Mexico agreed to pay a \$5,000 forfeiture of collateral and inspect and remediate all of its oil storage tanks to ensure that they do not represent a hazard to migratory birds.

A Louisiana resident with a financial stake in an east Texas deer “ranch” pled guilty to violating the Lacey Act in connection with his unlawful “import” from Missouri of 14 deer valued at over \$5,600. Texas and other States strictly regulate the transport of deer across State lines because of disease risks. The plea agreement in this case called for the defendant to pay over \$14,000 in restitution to Texas Parks and Wildlife.

An Oklahoma resident pled guilty to two counts of violating the Lacey Act for transporting unlawfully taken and possessed elk and black-tailed deer in interstate commerce. He was sentenced and ordered to pay \$2,500 to the Lacey Act Reward Account, a \$500 fine, and serve one year probation. He was also required to forfeit wildlife seized in the investigation.



*A Service/State investigation of a Texas deer ranch that unlawfully “imported” deer from Missouri resulted in a guilty plea from a major stakeholder in the business.*  
 Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

An American energy company was issued a Violation Notice in the amount of \$50,000 for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In addition, the company developed and will implement a compliance plan for the prevention of future migratory bird deaths. The company agreed to pay \$200,000 in remediation per the plea agreement reached in this investigation.

A hunting and fishing guide in Texas has been sentenced for transporting an alligator that he knew had been shot in violation of state and federal wildlife laws. The defendant pled guilty to the felony offense of transporting wildlife taken in violation of federal law and was sentenced to three years’ probation and ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine.

A petroleum company was sentenced in Texas for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and Clean Water Act. The company was ordered to pay a fine of \$500,000 on each of the Federal Clean Air

Act counts of conviction for a total fine of \$1 million dollars; a Special Assessment of \$400 (total of \$800); \$15,000 on each of the three misdemeanor MBTA counts of conviction (total of \$45,000); and a Special Assessment of \$50 on each of the MBTA counts (total of \$150). This case was investigated jointly by the Service, EPA, FBI, and Texas Environmental Control and Quality.

The Texas defendant – a worldwide dealer of exotic animals – in a wildlife trafficking and smuggling case had pled guilty, in Abstencia, to a Misdemeanor Charge of the Lacey Act and paid a \$15,000 penalty.

A New Mexico resident was sentenced to 13 days of confinement to be served in concurrence with the 8 months in custody of his parole revocation. The defendant had pled guilty to selling eagle feathers which came from a full eagle carcass he received from the Service’s wildlife repository.



# Midwest Region

The Midwest Region consists of eight States: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. This part of the country is known for its Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Erie) and “big rivers,” including large portions of both the Missouri and Mississippi. The Region is home to scores of federally protected species, including 41 listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Close coordination on natural resource law enforcement issues occurs with all eight States. Service officers in the Region also work with multiple Federal agencies (such as the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service), and the law enforcement program has a strong relationship with 20 tribal conservation agencies and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. Special agents provide investigative assistance to officers at the 54 National Wildlife Refuges managed by the Region and on other public lands in the Midwest. The Region’s wildlife inspectors (stationed in Chicago, Detroit, and Port Huron) address wildlife trade issues at 39 Customs ports of entry.

Investigations conducted in the Region vary greatly. Agents work with State officers and other partners to expose individuals or companies whose illegal commercial activities threaten the viability of fish, wildlife, and plant resources in the Midwest. They investigate the take of eagles, freshwater fish, and other protected species; police migratory game bird hunting; and investigate interstate trafficking in illegally taken big game species.

## Accomplishments

Seven men involved in the black market interstate or international sale of paddlefish roe were arrested by Service special agents on Federal felony charges in a multi-State “takedown” of a joint Service/Missouri Department of Conservation undercover investigation. An eighth Federal defendant, also indicted on felony charges, turned



*Agents arrested seven individuals for trafficking in caviar from illegally taken American paddlefish. Missouri Department of Conservation*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Caviar*: Jacopo Werther/Wikimedia Commons

himself in. During the takedown, officers from the Service, Missouri, and eight other States contacted more than 100 suspects.

The Federal defendants were charged under four different indictments with violating the Lacey Act predicated on violations of Missouri State laws that prohibit the purchase, sale, and transport of paddlefish eggs. The group focused its activities on an area known to be a “hot spot” for sport-fishing of paddlefish (a sport closely regulated by the State to prevent overexploitation) and transported unlawfully obtained paddlefish eggs to markets in Illinois, Kansas, New Jersey, Colorado, and other States. This case and its defendants continue to be prosecuted in Federal court and additional significant sentences are expected to be imposed over the next year.

A 2½-year joint undercover investigation by the Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources resulted in the Federal grand jury indictment of 10 individuals on felony

Lacey Act charges. The investigation exposed the unlawful take and black market sales of walleye and other game fish from lakes on the Red Lake and Leech Lake Indian reservations. The undercover portion of the case culminated in July 2011 with the execution of eight Federal search warrants, two State search warrants, one arrest, and interviews of dozens of persons suspected of illegally netting and selling game fish. State charges were filed against more than 20 individuals. This case is currently under appeal in the Federal Courts of the District of Minnesota.

A man in Iowa who cut down and removed 32 mature black walnut trees (a source of highly valued wood and veneers) from the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and property managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was sentenced to serve 15 months in prison and pay more than \$56,000 in restitution. The defendant, a convicted felon, cut down the valuable trees late at night with a chain saw and hauled out logs one by one in his pickup truck. He



*Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Greg Jackson has managed Service law enforcement operations in the Midwest Region since 2007.*

*A native of Minnesota, he started his Federal law enforcement career with the U.S. Customs Service in that State in 1991. He joined the Service as a special agent in 1995 and worked for six years as a criminal investigator in Jefferson City, Missouri, and Madison, Wisconsin. In 2001, he became a senior special agent in the program's headquarters office, where he was promoted to serve as SAC of the Branch of Investigations in 2003 and Division Chief for Law Enforcement Operations in 2005. Jackson holds an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from Bemidji State University in Bemidji, Minnesota.*



*An Iowa man who cut down black walnut trees in a national wildlife refuge to sell the wood was sent to prison for 15 months. Jamie Dyer/Wikimedia Commons*

pled guilty to one of five felony counts of theft of government property.

An Ohio man who attempted to export a falsely labeled package of elephant ivory to a buyer in China was fined \$8,000 and placed on probation for two years after pleading guilty to Federal charges. As part of his plea agreement, he forfeited his \$250,000 collection of elephant ivory along with 18 pieces of sea turtle shell. The investigation started when wildlife inspectors at the international mail facility in Chicago intercepted an outbound package headed to China that contained elephant ivory instead of wood items as labeled.

A Michigan resident pled guilty to felony conspiracy charges in connection with his orchestration of a scheme to illegally import and sell live injurious snakehead fish. He and a co-conspirator (the owner of a pet store who held a wildlife import/export license) smuggled several hundred of the prohibited fish into the country, eventually selling some to undercover agents.

Two Indiana men who confessed to shooting an endangered whooping crane in January 2012 were sentenced to serve three years of probation, perform 120 hours of community service, and pay a total of \$10,000 to the International Crane Foundation. In a second investigation, agents secured a confession from a Wisconsin man who killed a

whooping crane and left its carcass in a field; the man claimed that he thought the bird was a rare "albino" sandhill crane.

A Missouri man who tried to remove a juvenile bald eagle from the wild for use in falconry was fined \$15,000, put on probation for three years, and ordered to perform 150 hours of community service.

A knife maker and dealer based in St. Louis, Missouri, forfeited \$5,000 in collateral in connection with his production and interstate and international sale of knives with parts made from sea turtle shell.

The main defendant in Operation Treed – a 3-year Service/State investigation of the illegal killing of bears and other wildlife by houndsmen in Wisconsin and other States – was sentenced after pleading guilty to making false statements and violating the Lacey Act in connection with his commercial guiding activities. He was ordered to serve six months in prison, pay \$10,000 in fines and restitution, lose his hunting privileges throughout North America for 15 years, and forfeit a truck, five hunting dogs, guns, and other items.



*Elephant ivory seized by Service agents in Ohio. USFWS*

Service agents and State officers documented illegal hunts in Wisconsin, Michigan, Montana, and Wyoming over the course of this investigation. Three other defendants, including a retired police officer, were prosecuted in Federal court; all pled guilty to misdemeanor violations and were placed on probation for either five or three years while banned from hunting, fishing or trapping in North America. The trio also made \$9,000 in court-ordered "contributions," split between the Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Additional subjects were cited by the State for wildlife violations. An Iowa guide and outfitter who pled guilty to Lacey Act violations in connection with providing illegal hunts

to out-of-state clients was sentenced to six months in prison and ordered to pay \$13,000 in fines and restitution. The investigation showed that the guide instructed his clients to buy non-resident doe tags (even though their hunts were for trophy buck whitetail deer) to authorize their presence in the field and supplied them landowner tags for the bucks they killed.

Another guide was arrested by Service special agents after he was indicted by a Federal grand jury in Iowa on three felony Lacey Act counts and one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm. This individual owned and operated an outfitting company based in Greencastle, Missouri, which sold guided deer hunts in southern Iowa and northern Missouri to dozens of hunters from Pennsylvania and New Jersey.



*Two investigations in Iowa focused on guides providing illegal deer hunts to out-of-state clients.*

N. & M.J. Mishler/USFWS

In a civil case, a Wisconsin company forfeited a 319-pound ginseng shipment and paid a \$10,000 civil penalty; the company had tried to export wild ginseng without the required State license. Three defendants received significant sentences in 2014 for illegally trafficking in American ginseng. This Lacey Act investigation originated in Indiana and spread to Illinois, New York, and other locations and focused on the illegal harvest of ginseng and the subsequent interstate sale and ultimate export in foreign commerce. The defendants purchased over \$150,000 worth of illegal ginseng between 2008 and 2010. The defendants received fines totaling \$23,000 and were ordered to pay restitution in the combined amount of \$115,000 and received a total of five years of probation and 180 hours of community service.

A Pennsylvania man – previously indicted on 16 felony Lacey act violations – was sentenced in Iowa for big game guiding violations. The guide sold trophy



*An unlicensed Wisconsin company was fined for trying to export wild American ginseng.*

Dan Petillo/USFWS

whitetail hunts in Iowa and instructed clients to purchase antlerless deer licenses knowing they wished to pursue trophy buck deer. The guide then sold resident buck tags – purchased and issued to the guide’s friends and family – to those clients who successfully killed trophy buck deer. These trophy buck deer, which were killed without valid tags and licenses, were then transported in interstate commerce in violation of the Lacey Act. The guide was ultimately sentenced to three years of probation stipulating no hunting or fishing or guiding during the term of probation, a \$7,000 fine, \$1802.50 restitution and a \$1,100 special assessment.

A Minnesota man pled guilty to a misdemeanor violation of the Lacey Act for transporting wildlife unlawfully taken in a closed area of a National Wildlife Refuge located in Minnesota. Pursuant to a plea agreement, the man abandoned four white-tailed deer mounts, the antlers of numerous other deer, a Remington shotgun, five deer hunting stands, and other hunting equipment. He was sentenced to a five year ban from the National Wildlife Refuge, a five year ban on big game hunting in the U.S., a two year ban on small game hunting/trapping in the U.S., two years of probation, and 100 hours of community service.

A father and son team operating an 8,000 acre Wisconsin potato farm was sentenced for the poisoning of an

American bald eagle. Both men pled guilty to the illegal possession of a bald eagle. The father received a \$30,000 fine; a seven-year revocation of his hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges; \$100,000 in restitution; and one year of probation and four months of home confinement. The son received a \$10,000 fine; a five-year revocation on his hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges; \$100,000 in restitution; and one year of probation. The men unlawfully placed Carbofuran on their farm to kill predatory wildlife on the property for the purposes of improving deer populations and penned raised pheasant populations. The illegal use of the chemical killed numerous species of birds and mammals, including bald eagles, songbirds, crows, ravens, blue jays, hawks, vultures and a black bear; bobcats, coyotes, weasels, and other small mammals.

A Missouri area fur dealer reached a civil settlement agreement pertaining to a federal investigation where it was shown that the dealer and his company had illegally exported multiple shipments of fur from the United States. These exports were done without properly marking and declaring the wildlife and having it inspected. As a result of the settlement, the dealer was required to pay a \$30,000 penalty, surrender the company’s export license, and apply for an import only license. The dealer abandoned three fur coats seized by the Service.

A southwestern Wisconsin fur and ginseng dealer was sentenced for trafficking and false records violation of the Lacey Act. The charges stem from the company’s involvement in the unlawful interstate and international movement of ginseng that was taken, transported, and sold in violation of Wisconsin law. The investigation documented numerous violations relating to the trafficking of ginseng purchased by the dealer from unlicensed harvesters. This ginseng was then comingled with lawfully purchased ginseng root and certified as being lawfully harvested. The ginseng was transported out of Wisconsin and subsequently exported to Asia. The dealer was sentenced to pay a \$50,000 fine, \$50,000 in restitution, and was placed on two years of probation during which time the dealer is prohibited from dealing in ginseng.



# Southeast Region

The Southeast Region extends from the Appalachian Mountains south to the Caribbean and west to the Ozarks and includes the southern half of the Mississippi River basin. Special agents conduct investigations in 10 States (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Region contains 29 percent of the endangered and threatened species in the United States; 26 percent of the U.S. coastline; 22 percent of U.S. hunting and fishing license holders; and 25 percent of the Nation's population.

The Office of Law Enforcement in the Southeast maintains relationships and coordinates enforcement activities with State counterparts as well as with Federal officers at 128 National Wildlife Refuges, 69 National Parks, and 39 National Forests. Wildlife inspectors monitor wildlife trade and intercept smuggled wildlife at five designated ports: Miami, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Louisville, Kentucky; and Memphis, Tennessee. (The latter two are hubs for major international express delivery companies.) Service inspectors also work out of Tampa, Florida, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Investigations prioritize crimes involving violations of the Endangered Species Act, Lacey Act, and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Work with States includes cooperative enforcement of migratory game bird hunting regulations and investigations of large-scale wildlife trafficking. Rapid population growth, which is predicted for the Region over the next two decades, represents a major challenge for both the enforcement program and for wildlife conservation.

## Accomplishments

Service special agents and officers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration secured multiple convictions in connection with Operation Rock Bottom – an ongoing probe of the illegal harvest and trafficking of marine



*Service work on the two-year investigation of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon well blowout and oil spill secured criminal penalties for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and other Federal laws. U.S. Coast Guard*

## PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

*Special agents working on Operation Rock Bottom documented the illegal harvest and sale of nurse sharks and other marine species. Jeff Kobina/Wikimedia Commons*

life from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and other Florida waters.

In one sentencing, two Florida businessmen were ordered to spend 24 and 12 months in Federal prison; pay \$16,000 in fines; and forfeit a 25-foot vessel. They had pleaded guilty to conspiring to sell unlawfully harvested live rock, sea fans, and bonnethead, lemon, and nurse sharks to wholesalers throughout the United States and overseas.

In another sentencing, two former officials with the Idaho Aquarium received prison terms of one year and four months for conspiring to harvest, transport, and sell spotted eagle rays and lemon sharks. Another Idaho resident (the nephew of one of these officials) pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice. At his uncle's

request, this individual called a Florida business involved in this trafficking and asked the owners to erase text messages and emails and destroy other evidence.

A third group of defendants included two Michigan residents (one of whom owned an aquarium store) and a Florida marine life dealer who were indicted on conspiracy charges for trafficking in unlawfully harvested sea fans, juvenile nurse sharks, angelfish, and American alligators. All three pleaded guilty; the Florida company was fined \$3,000, placed on probation for three years, and ordered to surrender all State and Federal licenses and permits. Work on Operation Rock Bottom also led to the successful prosecution of a California marine life dealer for trafficking in sharks from both that State and Florida.



*Luis Santiago became the Special Agent in Charge for law enforcement operations in the Southeast in 2011 after serving four years as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) in that Region. Originally from Puerto Rico, Santiago joined the Service as a wildlife inspector in 1986, working in both Miami and Honolulu. He became a special agent in 1995 and conducted criminal investigations for the Service in Miami. After a stint as a senior special agent in the program's headquarters office, he became the Resident Agent in Charge for central and northern Florida. He served in this supervisory position until being promoted to ASAC. Santiago holds a B.S. degree in biology from the University of Puerto Rico and completed the Senior Executive Fellows program at Harvard University in 2011.*

The former president and CEO of a Virgin Islands-based company was ordered to pay a criminal fine of \$918,950 and provide more than \$200,000 to fund coral conservation research for his role in the large-scale smuggling of CITES-protected black coral. The Service's investigation of this trafficking scheme sent his two Taiwanese trading partners to prison and secured one of the largest penalties ever in a wildlife trafficking case from the defendant's company, which used the contraband coral to make high-end jewelry and decorative sculptures.

10 individuals from North Carolina and Georgia were indicted on Federal felony charges in connection with Operation Something Bruin – a Service/State undercover investigation of the unlawful take, purchase, sale, and transport of black bears. The subjects had previously been arrested during the “takedown” of this four-year investigation that infiltrated poaching circles in North Carolina and Georgia and documented more than 900 violations involving black bear and other big game species.

Service special agents and Federal and Commonwealth enforcement partners arrested eight people in Arroyo and Patillas, Puerto Rico, on felony and misdemeanor charges for the illegal take, possession, and sale of endangered sea turtles and their parts for human consumption. Illegal trade in sea turtle meat documented in this Service-led investigation included the take of at least

15 hawksbill sea turtles and seven green sea turtles.

A Miami customs broker pleaded guilty to a felony violation of the Lacey Act in connection with the illegal importation of 12 shipments of cosmetics made from Siberian sturgeon caviar. The shipments arrived in the United States without the required CITES permits and were not declared as wildlife. Another company involved in these transactions agreed to pay a \$97,836 civil penalty so as to avoid criminal charges.

Two individuals were sentenced for the separate shooting deaths of two threatened Louisiana black bears. In



*Service and State officers “took down” a four-year undercover investigation that exposed widespread unlawful commercial hunting of black bears in North Carolina and Georgia. Hans Stieglitz/Wikimedia Commons*



*Species involved in Operation Rock Bottom included spotted eagle rays, sea fans, and angelfish as well as sharks, Steve Dunleavy/Wikimedia Commons*





*Crimes in the Southeast involving endangered species included the killing of an endangered wood stork.*



*The Service documented the illegal take and trafficking of protected green and hawksbill sea turtles in Puerto Rico.*  
NASA

A South Carolina man investigated by Service and State officers pleaded guilty in State court to killing an endangered wood stork and was ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution.

A commercial fisherman in Arkansas pleaded guilty to a Lacey Act charge in connection with his illegal harvest of endangered pallid sturgeon from the Mississippi River. He was sentenced to spend one year on probation and perform 100 hours community service.

In Operation Longneck (an ongoing probe of trafficking in native turtles), a Florida turtle farmer, who pleaded guilty to exporting turtles in violation of the Lacey Act, was fined \$1,000 and ordered to forfeit a \$47,000 refrigerator truck, spend a year on probation, and perform 150 hours of community service.

A Louisiana paper plant whose negligent discharge of a pollutant caused the

deaths of 28 protected gulf sturgeon and other fish in the Pearl River (including at least 1,000 on the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge) was sentenced to pay \$3.3 million in fines and restitution for violations of the Clean Water Act and Refuge Administration Act.

The town of Burnside, North Carolina, entered into a civil settlement agreement in connection with the 2008 take of at least 58 endangered Appalachian elktoe mussels caused by the overflow of sewage into the Cane River from the town's sewage treatment plant. Under the agreement, the town will pay \$15,000 to the State for use in conserving elktoe mussels. The town previously paid more than \$13,000 in civil penalties to the State.

Louisiana, a defendant prosecuted in State court was ordered to pay \$10,000 in restitution and a \$900 fine. In Mississippi, a Federal defendant was fined \$10,000 and ordered to pay another \$10,000 in restitution to a non-profit conservation organization.



# Northeast Region

The Northeast Region stretches up the eastern seaboard from the mid-Atlantic to New England, encompassing 13 States: Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia. More than 72 million people, about a quarter of the Nation's population, live within this area, which is also "home" to 92 federally protected endangered species and wildlife habitats ranging from northern forest, rolling mountains, and coastal plains to freshwater marshes, barrier beaches, and coastal islands.

Service special agents work with investigative partners in State fish and game agencies and with Federal officers who police the Region's 535,000 acres of wildlife refuges and other public lands. Wildlife inspectors are stationed at seven Customs ports of entry in the Region, including New York and Newark, which together process nearly a third of all U.S. wildlife trade. Inspection services are also provided at the designated ports of Boston and Baltimore, three locations on the Canadian border (Buffalo and Champlain, New York, and Calais, Maine), and at Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C. Service law enforcement in the Northeast focuses on investigations of large-scale illegal commercialization of Federal and State protected species. Some of this work involves foreign or U.S. species moving in the global black market wildlife trade. Challenges also include interstate trafficking in wildlife, injurious species, and habitat modification.

## Accomplishments

A three-year investigation into the mislabeling and smuggling of rare CITES-protected stony corals resulted in the successful prosecution of a co-owner of one of the largest live coral import businesses in the United States. The defendant, who pled guilty to one felony count of smuggling, was sent to Federal prison for one year and was barred from possessing CITES species for three years following completion of that sentence.



*U.S. and Canadian investigators broke up a smuggling ring dealing in narwhal tusks. © Sue Flood*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:  
*Smuggled coral. USFWS*

He was also fined \$6,000 and ordered to forfeit \$523,835 in illegal proceeds from coral trafficking. This investigation, which started when a wildlife inspector discovered corals hidden in a routine tropical fish shipment arriving at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City, documented extensive coral smuggling over a seven-year period.

A cooperative Service/NOAA/Environment Canada investigation of the illegal importation and trafficking of narwhal tusks secured Federal felony indictments against three U.S. residents and their Canadian supplier; charges included conspiracy and money laundering as well as smuggling. The Canadian defendant, who was arrested in the province of New Brunswick, on an extradition warrant requested by the United States, was successfully prosecuted in Canada for smuggling hundreds of narwhal tusks across the border to U.S. buyers. Convicted on seven counts, he was fined \$385,000 (Canadian) and given an eight-month conditional sentence. Two of the U.S. defendants negotiated plea agreements

while the third elected to stand trial in Maine and was convicted of smuggling and related money laundering crimes. A 28-year-old New York woman who over a two-year period smuggled over 18,000 protected reptiles (many of them species requiring CITES permits) from the United States to Canada for the pet trade was sentenced to spend 18 months in prison after pleading guilty to felony Lacey Act and conspiracy charges. Service investigators showed that the defendant transported the reptiles by boat across the St. Lawrence River from the U.S. side of the Mohawk Indian Reservation to the Canadian side and delivered them to a Canadian co-conspirator. Species smuggled included native U.S. reptiles such as live American alligators and red-footed tortoises as well as foreign wildlife such as Hermann's tortoises, Russian tortoises, Jackson horned chameleons, and green iguanas. Market value of the smuggled reptiles in Canada exceeded \$800,000 (Canadian).

The Canadian co-conspirator in this reptile smuggling ring was successfully



*Special Agent in Charge Honnie Gordon has directed law enforcement operations for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Northeast since August 2013. A native of Pennsylvania, she served previously as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the Mountain Prairie Region and headed up the Service's law enforcement training program. Her experience as a criminal investigator includes work with the Service Office of Law Enforcement in Florida, Georgia, and Arizona as well as service as a special agent with the U.S. Forest Service in Virginia and Louisiana and with what was then the U.S. Customs Service in San Antonio, Texas..*



*Two defendants were successfully prosecuted for smuggling native reptiles (including red-footed tortoises) and foreign species into Canada. H. Zell/ Wikimedia Commons*

prosecuted in Canada, where he was found guilty of two counts of violating that country's major wildlife law. He was sentenced to serve 90 days in jail, spend three years on probation, and pay \$50,000 (Canadian) in restitution to Canada's Environmental Defense Fund. The smuggled reptiles were forfeited to the Crown.

Another Canadian reptile dealer who was caught smuggling \$53,000 worth of protected reptiles out of the United States and into Canada must pay a total of over \$7,700 in fines and restitution in both countries and serve six months home detention in Ontario.

A Federal jury in Philadelphia returned guilty verdicts on multiple felony counts (including conspiracy and Lacey Act wildlife trafficking) against the two co-owners of a Florida-based company

*The owners of one of the largest live reptile distribution businesses in the United States were found guilty of wildlife trafficking. Crimes included illegal possession of federally threatened Eastern indigo snakes. U.S. Army*

that is one of the largest live reptile and amphibian distributors in North America. A Service investigation showed that from 2006 through 2011, the duo illegally bought and sold protected species unlawfully taken from the wild in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, taking advantage of markets in the United States and Europe. They also illegally possessed and transported federally threatened Eastern indigo snakes.

A cooperative Service/State investigation of illegal ivory sales in New York City secured a guilty plea from a Manhattan-based jewelry wholesale business and its owner on State charges of illegal commercialization of wildlife. Penalties included a \$10,000 donation to the Wildlife Conservation Society and the forfeiture of \$30,000 worth of ivory. Two other jewelry companies in the city pled guilty to similar charges in 2012. The Service's November 2013 "Ivory Crush" (see p. 4) included about one ton of elephant ivory seized during this investigation.

A Queen's company owner and his corporation pled guilty in federal court in Brooklyn, New York to illegally

importing 39,548 piranhas from Hong Kong into New York City. The piranhas were imported using falsified packing lists, and were sold to fish retailers in several states. Service law enforcement agents conducted this investigation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Law Enforcement. The Department of Justice is prosecuting the case. Sentencing is anticipated in April.

An art gallery in Freehold, New York, which was investigated by Service and State officers, was fined \$10,000 for illegal sale of elephant ivory in violation of New York State law.

A licensed commercial fisherman in Maryland was arrested and charged with four counts of witness tampering and retaliation in connection with a Service/State investigation of the illegal harvest and trafficking of striped bass from the Chesapeake Bay. The defendant faces a sentence of up to 20 years in prison on each of the 4 charges.

Two Massachusetts businessmen pled guilty to three felony charges each for unlawfully dealing in millions of dollars of live freshwater baitfish without the required State permits. Investigators showed that they were also bringing live wild baitfish into the State from waters infested with zebra mussels and from areas with fish infected by a deadly virus. These fish were then sold to vendors in other States. A former Maine resident and restaurant owner investigated by Service and State officers was fined \$5,000, ordered to forfeit his vehicle and serve two years' probation. The two year undercover investigation, which revealed violations of the Lacey Act, involved the unlawful purchase and interstate sale of black bear gall bladders and bear paws.

Two men responsible for destroying protected salamander habitat in the Monongahela National Forest have admitted to violations of the federal Endangered Species Act and Forest Service regulations. As part of the civil penalty settlement agreement, the defendants will pay \$1,500 in fines and buy and plant at least 2,000 native red spruce seedlings in a restoration area next to existing salamander habitat.

Two poachers face fines of up to \$250,000 and five years of jail time for illegally harvesting striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay over a four-year period. Two defendants pled guilty to charges of conspiring to violate the anti-poaching Lacey Act and



*Three New York companies forfeited nearly one ton of products made from elephant ivory. USFWS*



*An investigation of the illegal harvest and sale of striped bass from the Chesapeake Bay resulted in the arrest of a licensed commercial fisherman. Stephen G. Johnson/Wikimedia Commons*

defraud the United States through their actions. Between 2007 and 2011, the men caught and sold about 186,000 pounds of the fish, exceeding quotas and pocketing nearly half a million dollars. The Tilghman Island, Maryland, men illegally weighted nets, falsified permits, and set nets at night and out of season. Service special agents and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources conducted the investigation, which was sparked after a discovery of illegally-set nets off Kent Island in February 2011.

A man from St. Michaels, Maryland, was sentenced for his role in attempting to violate the Lacey Act by trafficking illegally harvested striped bass. According to his plea agreement, the defendant assisted in a scheme to illegally poach hundreds of thousands of pounds of striped bass from the Chesapeake Bay in violation of Maryland regulations relating to harvest method, amounts, tagging, and reporting. The defendant was sentenced to probation and ordered to pay \$40,000 in fines and restitution.



# Mountain Prairie Region

Eight States comprise the Mountain Prairie Region: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. Its lands include the short grass prairies of the Great Plains to the east as well as the Rocky Mountains and parts of the intermountain west beyond the Continental Divide. The Region's Prairie Coteau, an area in eastern Montana and the Dakotas, features ponds and wetlands left by the last glacier that are among the most important nesting habitat for waterfowl in North America.

The Region is home to 61 federally threatened and endangered species and an array of other Federal and State protected species. Its predominantly semi-arid to arid climate makes existing surface waters all the more vital for wildlife. The natural resources in the Region are under significant pressure from oil and gas exploration and production activities. The Rocky Mountains are well known for big game species such as moose, elk, mule deer, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. The Service's special agents in this Region work closely with State and Federal counterparts to ensure that future generations of hunters and wildlife viewers have opportunities to enjoy these majestic creatures.

Iconic species in the Region include the grizzly bear, gray wolf, golden eagle, and whooping crane. Service special agents investigate violations committed by industries or individuals whose activities conflict with Federal wildlife laws. Wildlife inspectors are stationed in the Region to police wildlife trade at the international airport in Denver and along an extensive expanse of the Nation's northern border. The Region also manages the Service's National Wildlife Property and Eagle Repositories.

## Accomplishments

A major power company pled guilty to violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in connection with the deaths of at least 14 golden eagles and more than 150 other protected birds at two of its wind projects in Wyoming. The company, which is the



*Service special agents in Wyoming secured the first criminal prosecution of a wind farm in connection with the deaths of protected birds.*

Peggy Higgins/Wikimedia Commons

## PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

*Bull elk bugling.* Credit: USFWS

first wind farm operator to be criminally convicted of killing migratory birds, paid \$1 million in criminal fines and community service payments and will spend up to \$600,000 per year to implement a five-year environmental compliance plan to prevent bird deaths at its four facilities in Wyoming.

A man who shot a whooping crane near Miller, South Dakota, pled guilty to violating the Endangered Species Act and was ordered to pay \$85,000 in restitution and spend two years on probation. He must also forfeit the rifle used to kill the crane and will be barred from hunting anywhere in the United States for two years. The shooter also confessed to shooting waterfowl and a hawk with the same rifle while on his shooting spree.

A Colorado outfitter was sentenced to 27 months imprisonment, 3 years probation and vehicle forfeiture for conspiring to

violate the Lacey Act. The subject's criminal activity involved trapping and holding mountain lions in cages, as well as shooting the cats in the paws, stomach, and/or legs or attaching leg-hold traps to them, prior to the arrival of clients. This would shorten the client's hunts, allowing more hunts and more profit. Three other subjects in this case (two are the subject's daughters) were sentenced to a total of six months home detention, 5 years probation, \$4,600 in fines and 96 hours of community service.

A Hutterite colony in Montana and five of its members who were responsible for the deaths of two threatened grizzly bears pled guilty to Federal charges under the Endangered Species Act. The Colony was ordered to pay nearly \$40,000 in fines and restitution and the five members paid an additional \$6,000 in fines. In another grizzly bear case, a hunter investigated by Service and State officers for shooting



*Steve Oberholtzer is the Special Agent in Charge for the law enforcement program in the Service's Mountain Prairie Region, where he oversees investigations and inspections in eight States and manages the Service's National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repositories. Before taking on the challenges of his current position, Oberholtzer worked as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for Alaska and held special agent (criminal investigator) positions in Virginia, Maryland, California, and Ohio. He started his career with the Service as a wildlife inspector in 1989, working in this capacity in both New York City and Alaska. Oberholtzer holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from the University of Massachusetts and served four years active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1981-1985.*

a grizzly bear in the Teton National Forest in Wyoming was sentenced in State court to pay a \$2,500 fine and serve one year probation without hunting privileges. In Fiscal Year 2014, Service agents conducted 23 separate grizzly bear investigations. Three involved grizzly bears which were found dead and were determined to have been unlawfully shot. Two cases involved landowners claiming self-defense and the rest were big game hunters who encountered grizzly bears while hunting and claimed to have shot the bears in self-defense.

A joint covert investigation with South Dakota and Iowa, addressed an outfitter and his guide service commercializing in unlawful big game hunts in South Dakota. Officers documented violations of State law, Tribal law, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act by the outfitter, guides, and paying clients. Eight defendants were charged, pled guilty, and were sentenced to a total of over \$139,500 in fines and court costs, eight years probation, seventeen years of revoked hunting privileges, two months of incarceration and two years of supervised probation. Additionally, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department charged eighteen of the former clients, who all pled guilty, and were sentenced in South Dakota State Court to a total of over \$87,700 in fines, court costs, and civil damages. Additional State penalties included the forfeiture of firearms and the loss of State and Compact hunting privileges for a combined period of 36 years.

In July 2013 and June 2014, Service agents conducted 40-hour Native American Conservation Officer Training sessions, supported by the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. The course was attended by 37 Tribal Conservation Officers from 8 tribes and by 38 officers from 14 tribes, respectively. The training was designed to meet the specific needs of Tribal conservation officers responsible for protecting trust resources and people in Indian Country and covered defensive tactics, crime scene investigation, search and seizure, firearms proficiency, federal laws in Indian Country, wildlife field forensics, raptor identification, use of force, officer safety and awareness of drug activity. This rigorous training improved the officers' skill set, safety, and working relationships with Service agents.

Additional education and outreach efforts included, among many other events, a presentation on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act at the Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC), Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation for the course "Introduction to Wildlife Law Enforcement", representation

at an extensive job fair at Turtle Mountain Community College reaching over 150 students, an endangered species presentation to 107 students for the Eco-Ed program sponsored by Rolette County Natural Resource Conservation Service, training 23 active duty Minot Air Force Base Military Customs officers, and numerous



*Some \$46,000 in fines were collected from a group responsible for killing two threatened grizzly bears. USFWS*



*Agents documented the illegal take of 417 snow geese by eight hunters in South Dakota. Steve Emmons/USFWS*

training sessions with Customs and Border Protection, United States Department of Agriculture and other State and Federal agencies.

An oil company signed a deferred prosecution agreement, acknowledging its violation of federal wildlife laws in connection with the deaths of 2 golden eagles and 43 other migratory birds. The agreement called for the company to spend \$3.4 million to implement an Avian Protection Plan for its operating sites in Wyoming and make a \$24,000 community service payment to support bird rehabilitation centers.



An energy company pled guilty to wildlife charges in connection with the deaths of birds at its drilling facilities in Montana, Wyoming, and Nebraska. The company was ordered to pay \$22,500 in fines; donate \$7,500 for projects to improve migratory bird habitat; and continue implementing a \$300,000 remediation program to prevent future bird deaths.

A South Dakota resident who admitted shooting 9 eagles and 60 hawks pled guilty to Federal charges and was ordered to pay \$56,285 in restitution and forfeit 3 firearms. Other eagle-related cases included: (1) A South Dakota man was sentenced to one year in prison for shooting a bald eagle and illegal gun possession and must pay \$11,750 in restitution; (2) A man pled guilty to taking a bald eagle and was ordered to pay a \$500 fine along with a restitution payment in the amount of \$10,000, received one year of probation, had his hunting privileges revoked for a period of one year and was ordered to forfeit his rifle used in the commission of the violation. Both of these cases were worked jointly with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks; and, an individual was sentenced in North Dakota District Court for the unlawful snaring of a golden eagle in violation of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The individual was sentenced to 12 months probation, a \$500 fine, and \$5,500 restitution. This was a joint investigation with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

The owner and operator of a South Dakota waterfowl outfitting company was sentenced to 11 months in prison after pleading guilty to a felony violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Eleven other charges in the criminal indictment were dismissed under a plea agreement. In other South Dakota investigations, a waterfowl outfitter charged with felony sale of migratory birds was sent to prison for six months and ordered to pay \$4,500 in restitution, and a commercial guide paid \$5,200 in fines and restitution for taking hunters on unlawful waterfowl hunts.

A joint State/Federal investigation resulted in a Colorado outfitter being convicted of six felony Lacey Act counts. He was sentenced to spend 41 months in prison and pay a \$7,500 fine as well as \$37,390 in restitution. The outfitter provided salt-baited tree stands to improve elk and deer hunting opportunities for his out-of-state clients.

Three former officials of an Indian tribe, one of whom was their Director of Fish and Game, were ordered to pay \$56,625 in restitution to the tribe in connection with four unauthorized high-dollar value big game hunts provided at tribal expense to



*Two hunters paid \$13,500 in penalties and forfeited \$4,000 worth of equipment in connection with a "killing spree" in South Dakota; "victims" included a bison and several mule deer. Gary Zahm/USFWS*

country music performers being filmed for a television program. The trio pled guilty to theft from a tribal government and violating the Lacey Act by illegally selling tribal wildlife. Also, a Colorado man pled guilty to two Lacey Act charges after a joint federal/tribal/state investigation revealed he had been involved with the unlawful take of mountain lions on tribal lands. The man received a \$10,000 fine for his role in the illicit activities. Other adjudications related to this investigation included the issuance of \$15,000 in civil penalties, and a \$5,000 penalty issued by the Tribal judge.

Two nonresidents who went on a killing spree in South Dakota unlawfully shot a bison in Badlands National Park and several mule deer. They paid \$13,500 in fines and restitution and forfeited \$4,000 worth of hunting equipment after pleading guilty to violating the Lacey Act.

A Vail, Colorado, company, who had been a licensed importer for over a decade, and whom had also violated wildlife import regulations numerous times, forfeited \$12,750 in collateral after the Denver wildlife inspector interdicted and seized \$112,000 worth of clothing composed of wildlife skins that were illegally imported.

A Utah resident who had smuggled a one-of-a-kind leucistic boa from Brazil pled guilty to one Lacey Act charge. He was sentenced to serve one year of monitored home confinement, a two year suspension of his import license, and he forfeited eight seized offspring worth approximately

\$40,000. This was a joint endeavor between the Service and the FBI.

A defendant and his two sons were sentenced to a combined total of two years probation, \$9,000 in fines, and \$18,000 in restitution, in a joint covert investigation with Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The defendants, convicted of Lacey Act violations, unlawfully sold elk hunts and used landowner tags to cover the harvested elk.

In June 2014 and October 2014, border operations were conducted along North Dakota Ports of Entry which involved Service law enforcement personnel, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers, Manitoba Conservation Officers, Environment Canada Wildlife Officers, and North Dakota State Game Wardens. A total of approximately 375 vehicles and 900 individuals, comprising commercial shipments, anglers, and hunters were inspected. More than 230 wildlife declarations were filed; three Violation Notices were issued, 16 items of wildlife were abandoned and several verbal warnings were given for lesser offenses. Additionally, intelligence was gathered on possible outfitting/guiding violations which were occurring in Manitoba.

In a joint case with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, four South Carolina residents paid over \$10,000 in fines and forfeited \$20,000 worth of hunting equipment for using poisoned arrows to hunt big game in Colorado.



# Alaska Region

The Alaska Region encompasses over 220 million acres of Federal and State lands (including 15 National Wildlife Refuges as well as multiple National Parks and preserves) managed in the interests of resource conservation. The State, which features intact ecosystems and robust fish and wildlife populations, provides multi-billion dollar commercial fisheries, sought after hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities, sustainable local food systems, cultural resources, and unparalleled ecotourism opportunities.

The law enforcement program helps safeguard scores of federally protected species (including eight listed as endangered or threatened); teams with State counterparts to foil illegal commercial big game hunting operations; and works with Native Alaska communities on subsistence and enforcement issues. Service special agents conduct investigations and deal with compliance matters from the Arctic tundra to the Aleutian coastline. Stationed in Anchorage, the Region's wildlife inspectors monitor trade at five of the State's Customs ports of entry.

Unlawful commercial exploitation of wildlife is a major focus for investigative work. Service law enforcement in the Region has a long history of successful partnerships with the Alaska Department of Public Safety's Alaska wildlife troopers and with other Federal land management agencies. Enforcement challenges include protecting migratory birds and such marine mammals as walrus, polar bear, and sea otter.

## Accomplishments

Prosecutions proceeded in Operation Bruin – a cooperative Office of Law Enforcement, Canadian Wildlife Service and Alaska State investigation of unlawful guiding, illegal take, and smuggling of brown bear and other big game species between Alaska and Canada. The investigation documented two unlawful guiding



*A cooperative U.S./Canada investigation documented illegal guiding and hunting of brown bear and other big game species. Steve Hillebrand/USFWS*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Polar bear and cub.* Scott Schliebe/USFWS

businesses that conducted 18 illegal hunts worth some \$195,000.

One of the main targets, a Haines big game guide, pled guilty to conducting multiple illegal hunts, falsifying documents, and unlawfully importing wildlife from Canada. He was ordered to pay a \$40,000 fine and spend four years on probation with a ban on worldwide hunting and no outfitting or guiding. In a State prosecution on related charges, he was fined \$10,000; forfeited an airplane, pick-up truck, and other equipment; and was required to surrender his guide license for life. A second guide was indicted by a Federal grand jury in July 2013 for Lacey Act violations and was convicted at the end of a jury trial in January 2014. Sentencing is scheduled for January 2015. During September 2014, an additional five

Canadian residents were charged with multiple Lacey Act violations all relating to illegal guided hunts, and falsified export documents. Starting in November 2012, Environment Canada and Canada Crown Prosecutors in Alberta and the Yukon Territory charged 17 of these guides' clients with 55 violations. In 2013 and 2014, four defendants pled guilty and were fined a total of \$39,000. Others elected to stand trial.

An Alaska man charged with trafficking in walrus ivory and migratory birds was sentenced to serve 6 months in prison, pay a \$6,500 fine, and turn over more than 900 pounds of wildlife parts to the Service. The man, who will spend three years on probation and is now banned for life from selling wildlife, was part of a long-term walrus ivory



*Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Stanley Pruszewski, who retired in 2014, directed Service law enforcement in Alaska in 2013. Ryan Noel was selected as the new Special Agent in Charge (SAC) in 2014. Ryan began his career with the Service in 1997 as an assistant refuge manager and refuge officer at Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). He moved on to management positions in South Carolina and Colorado before joining the Office of Law Enforcement as a special agent in 2004. As an agent, Ryan was stationed in Nashville, Tennessee where he worked pesticide and Lacey Act cases before opening a new office in Knoxville, Tennessee. In the Smoky Mountains, Ryan worked with federal and state partners to curtail the trafficking of American ginseng and black bears. In 2009, Ryan became the Resident Agent in Charge for Tennessee and Kentucky. In 2012, he was selected as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Alaska Region where he served until his most recent promotion. Ryan is a native of Pennsylvania where he grew up hunting and fishing in the coal mining region of the Allegheny Mountains. Ryan graduated with degrees in Wildlife Technology from Penn State University and Biology from Slippery Rock University.*

smuggling conspiracy. From 2007 to 2012, his trafficking involved some 225 transactions of walrus ivory and other wildlife parts valued at approximately \$58,000.

Successful prosecutions continued in Operation Enhydra, a Service investigation of the illegal take and trafficking of sea otters, a species protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). One defendant, who was involved in selling sea otter pelts, was sentenced to pay a \$3,000 fine and placed on probation for a year. Another, who pled guilty to participating in the take of 87 sea otters, was fined \$5,000 and ordered to spend a year on probation. A third defendant was sentenced to serve six months home confinement and a year probation, pay a \$10,000 fine, and forfeit 144 sea otter hides.

Special agents investigated the March 2013 take of a sow polar bear near Point Lay, which orphaned a young cub. While the bear was allegedly killed for subsistence purposes, the hunter subsequently offered to sell the hide. Take of a female with a cub and this attempted sale both violate the MMPA. The hunter paid a \$2,275 penalty; the orphaned cub was transferred to the Buffalo Zoo in New York State for care at that facility.

A Service investigation into violations committed from 2005-2009 by hunt guides and clients on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is nearing completion with one remaining defendant. To date, 16 subjects-- including two master guides operating two separate guiding businesses on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one registered guide, six assistant guides, one packer, and six clients-- have



*Investigations targeted both wasteful take of walrus and walrus ivory trafficking.*  
Joel Garlich-Miller/USFWS

A Louisiana knife maker who was investigated by agents in Alaska for illegally buying raw walrus tusks pled guilty to violating the MMPA and agreed to pay a \$3,000 fine, serve one year probation, and abandon all seized wildlife.

A defendant investigated by Service agents was sentenced to 30 months in prison and three years supervised release for the wasteful take of walrus (violation of the MMPA) and firearms-related crimes. The man and a partner opened fire with a shotgun on a herd of walrus hauled out on a beach, wounded four, and killed one from which they only retrieved the tusks.

been convicted on charges related to at least 116 documented violations of the Lacey Act, National Wildlife Refuge Act, and Alaska State Law. The violations were related primarily to the unlawful take of Dall sheep, grizzly bear, and caribou, as well as numerous special use permit violations committed by the business operators. So far, judgments have yielded \$270,000 in criminal fines, \$22,500 in non-criminal payments, 29 years of combined hunt/guide/outfit suspension, and forfeiture of 4 Dall sheep, 2 grizzly bears, 1 caribou, and 1 rifle.

The two final defendants in Operation Yukon Kings, a Service investigation of



*Additional defendants were sentenced in an investigation of the illegal take and trafficking of sea otters.*  
Michael Baird/Wikimedia Commons

subsistence salmon commercialization in Alaska, were cited for Lacey Act violations and paid \$6,825 in penalties.

During the 2014 subsistence fishery, rural residents along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers were significantly restricted from catching and keeping Chinook (king) salmon, the choice species of the region. The villagers were incited to threats of violence, but a multifaceted and coordinated enforcement operation between Refuges and the Office of Law Enforcement—working several weeks from boats and aircraft—provided a safe and productive harvest season. Twenty-two illegal nets were seized and eight violation notices and five warnings were issued.

Service agents investigated the burning of several eagles at the City of Adak, Alaska. The City of Adak burns its trash to compact it before dumping it in their landfill. In December 2013, three eagles were severely burned when scavenging through smoldering trash. A concerned citizen rescued the eagles and shipped them to Bird Treatment and Learning Center (BTLC) in Anchorage. In late February 2014, two more eagles were burned and shipped to BTLC

for treatment. In early March 2014, a special agent and an eagle biologist from the Migratory Bird Management Division (MBM) flew to Adak to investigate and offer solutions. The FWS employees discovered ten dead eagles in the trash burning area. The FWS employees offered several recommendations to the City of Adak to rectify the problem. The City of Adak erected a burn cage in which the trash is inserted and burned, preventing eagles access. No eagles have been harmed since this burn cage was deployed. This was a successful collaboration between OLE, MBM, and the City of Adak.

A resident of Bethel, Alaska, who was charged with fraudulently using the Service seal in a letter intended to incite subsistence waterfowl hunters against Service agents, pled guilty and was sentenced to pay a \$500 fine, spend one year on probation, and publish announcements acknowledging wrongdoing in two newspapers.

The Service law enforcement and marine mammals programs in Alaska and the Indigenous Peoples Commission on Marine Mammals co-sponsored a workshop for Native Alaskan hunters and handicrafters to



*A guide was fined \$20,000 for providing illegal Dall sheep hunts to his clients on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.*  
Jack Frank/NPS

discuss concerns about Native Alaskan use of sea otters and ways to clarify the regulatory term “significantly altered” with respect to items made from the fur of these animals.

Compliance outreach efforts in 2013 included agent visits to Saint Lawrence Island villages to support implementation of walrus harvest ordinances and participation in community meetings in Point Lay and Wainwright to discuss migratory bird hunting and other subsistence issues.



# Pacific Southwest Region

Service law enforcement officers in the Pacific Southwest investigate wildlife crimes in California and Nevada as well as the Klamath Basin. They are responsible for one of the most ecologically diverse areas in the United States. Their “beats” range from arid sand dunes and snow-capped crags in the high Sierras to rich farmland and rain-soaked redwood forests. This incredibly diverse geography provides habitat for a vast array of wildlife, including more than 309 federally threatened and endangered species.

Service special agents work cooperatively with the California Department of Fish and Game and the Nevada Department of Wildlife and with other Federal and State entities to enforce wildlife laws on more than 19 National Forests, 28 National Parks, 46 National Wildlife Refuges, and more than 63 million acres of other public lands and State-protected areas. The Region’s wildlife inspectors monitor wildlife trade at some of the busiest land, sea, and air border crossings in the world – including San Ysidro, the largest land border crossing in the country, and Los Angeles, the second busiest U.S. port for the importation of wildlife shipments.

Conservation enforcement issues in the Region range from the growing impact of renewable energy projects on wildlife resources to illegal trade in “commodities” that include global and State wildlife resources barred from import, export, or commercial exploitation. Partnership efforts with the States and other Federal agencies include joint investigations and cooperative training and compliance outreach.

## Accomplishments

The Service teamed with Homeland Security Investigations and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to disrupt large-scale trafficking of swim bladders removed from totoaba fish – an endangered species that lives off the coast of Mexico. Seven individuals (including two Canadian women) were indicted on Federal charges in San Diego in connection with these smuggling operations. The more than 550 swim bladders seized are worth an estimated \$3.5



*The Service broke up a smuggling ring that was trafficking in swim bladders from endangered totoaba fish from Mexico. USGS*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Threatened California tiger salamander.*  
John Cleckler/USFWS

million in Asian markets where they are prized as a culinary delicacy with supposed medicinal properties.

A lead player in this trafficking, who coordinated cross-border smuggling from Mexico with plans to market totoaba swim bladders in Asia, pled guilty to Federal charges and was sentenced to four months in prison and two years of probation. He was ordered to forfeit his residence (where he prepared and stored the smuggled fish parts) to the government, but subsequent negotiations changed this penalty to forfeiting a significant percentage of its value (\$138,750) in cash. He must also pay \$500,000 in restitution to support conservation programs in Mexico.

The owner of a wholesale fish business in Milpitas, California, who was charged with Federal felonies under two different indictments in connection with the illegal harvest and interstate sale of live undersized leopard sharks in California and live nurse sharks in Florida, was sentenced after pleading guilty to one count

of conspiracy, three counts of violating the Lacey Act, and nine counts of wire fraud. This marine life dealer was ordered to spend five months in home detention and three years on probation, pay \$25,800 in fines and restitution, and forfeit a vehicle, boat, and trailer.

A U.S. reptile dealer was indicted in California on multiple felony charges of conspiring to smuggle wildlife (including native U.S. species) into and out of the United States. He is the first of three U.S. defendants to be prosecuted in Operation Flying Turtle – a Service investigation that already secured the convictions of three Japanese nationals for smuggling thousands of turtles, tortoises, lizards, and snakes to and from the United States and Japan.

The results of Operation Wild Web, a Pacific Southwest Region-led nationwide and international investigation of internet-based wildlife trafficking that secured 154 “buy-busts” in the United States in August 2012, were announced via coordinated



*Jill Birchell became the Special Agent in Charge of California and Nevada in 2011. A 25-year veteran officer, she has worked in four Service Regions from Alaska to Washington, D.C. She also served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Alaska U.S. Attorney's office for wildlife prosecutions as a collateral duty. In her previous position as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the law enforcement program in the Southwest, she oversaw a variety of investigations, including those involving industrial take of protected birds and endangered species habitat take cases. She started her career with the Service as a wildlife inspector in Detroit. Birchell has a BS in wildlife management from Ohio State University and a JD from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.*



*The owner of a wholesale fish business in California was successfully prosecuted for the illegal harvest and sale of undersized leopard sharks and other marine species.*

Matthew Field/Wikimedia Commons

news releases. Agents and state officers in 16 States participated in the two-week enforcement operation targeting internet wildlife trafficking as did wildlife officers in Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore. Seizures included tiger, leopard and jaguar skins; elephant ivory; and protected birds.

Agents arrested a Mesa, California, resident at the Los Angeles International Airport for trying to smuggle over 7,000 CITES Appendix I Brazilian rosewood tree seeds from the United States to Fiji. The man concealed the seeds inside aircraft parts, motorcycle parts, an aluminum water bottle, his wallet, and carry-on luggage. He told agents that he planned to cultivate the seeds in Fiji so that he could eventually harvest and sell the wood. The defendant has pled guilty to a lesser misdemeanor charge and has agreed to pay \$100,000 to the Lacey Act Reward Account.

The former host of the Animal Planet show "Wild Recon" was charged in California for the illegal interstate sale of two protected desert monitor lizards via his Facebook account. He will spend two years on probation, perform 200 hours of community service, and pay \$8,757 in fines and restitution.

The State of California filed 5 felony and 17 misdemeanor charges against the subjects of a joint Service/State investigation of the unauthorized take of threatened California tiger salamanders and threatened California red-legged frogs. A Taiwan-based developer and two construction companies were charged with counts related to forgery, pollution of State waters, and diversion or obstruction of natural water flow. Federal charges are also expected. Alleged criminal activities



*Tiger skin seized during Operation Wild Web – a nationwide investigation of internet-based wildlife trafficking.*

USFWS

include the forging of mitigation credit receipts worth over \$2 million.

A wildlife researcher whose "non-profit" business unlawfully captured and banded eagles and other wild birds was sentenced in Federal court in San Diego after pleading guilty to violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The defendant will spend three years on probation, pay a \$7,500 fine, and turn over data that he had withheld from the government. The researcher pled guilty to this misdemeanor "first offense" related to one bird to avoid felony charges for 39 other eagles.

A chemical company in Nevada that extracts and refines lithium from groundwater using evaporation ponds pled guilty to Federal charges in connection with the deaths of over 300 migratory birds from salt ingestion or contact with electric distribution equipment. The company will pay a \$15,000 fine and \$75,000 in restitution and must remove hazards at its facility.

The borehole drilling activities of a mineral



exploration company caused the draining of a Nevada aquifer and the drying of the pit lakes and the headwaters of the Humboldt River and two tributaries. This situation resulted in the take of Lahontan cutthroat trout in violation of the Endangered Species Act. Under a settlement agreement, the company will spend an estimated \$375,000 to \$450,000 to build a reinforced-concrete fish migration barrier at an approved location in the river's North Fork and monitor stream gauge data.

As part of an agreement to resolve a Service investigation involving the take of five baby burrowing owls at a construction site in Menifee, California, a developer paid \$50,000 in "mitigation" to Riverside County.

A settlement agreement was reached with a winery over the take of vernal pool fairy shrimp, vernal pool tadpole shrimp, and California tiger salamanders in connection with ground disturbance activities. The winery will work with a non-profit to establish and manage a perpetual 1,000-acre conservation easement.

Twelve waterfowl hunters were prosecuted in northern California for the illegal and wasteful take of some 112 snow geese. The most egregious offender must pay a \$10,000 fine and serve three years of probation while banned from hunting.

In the Superior Court of California (Alameda County), an Alameda District Attorney reached a settlement whereby a Bay Area importer/wholesaler of live fishes/invertebrates accepted a civil fine of \$30,000 for Unfair and Unlawful Business Practices. The suit was instigated when a Service wildlife inspector interdicted live *Haliotis asinina* abalone, restricted by the state of California, during a routine cargo inspection. The long history of previous Federal violations by the wholesaler, primarily for the importation of illegal live corals, played a significant role in the establishment of the monetary amount of the fine.

A San Gabriel, California man was taken into custody at his home in Southern California after a warrant was issued for his arrest for the role he played in smuggling 26 Eastern box turtles (CITES Appendix II) and 20 African spurred tortoises (CITES II) out of the United States. The packages, which were declared as toys, had been refused due to the sender's name being on a U.S. Postal Export Compliance Group's "Federally Prohibited Export List." The packages began to give off a strong odor after sitting at the postal facility for several days. The subject was indicted on a total of six counts of outbound smuggling and Lacey Act false labeling charges, and ultimately



*A wildlife researcher involved in the illegal capture and banding of golden eagles pleaded guilty to violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. USFWS*

agreed to plead guilty to a felony violation of the Lacey Act. The man was sentenced to serve 2 months of imprisonment; 2 years supervised release after incarceration; 500 hours of community service; and a \$12,000 fine.

In mid-August, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Director Dan Ashe took part in the Los Angeles Joint Agency Wildlife Smuggling (JAWS) Task Force Operation Dogs Protecting All Wildlife (PAW) where the Pacific Southwest Region utilized Service and state K-9 detections teams and officers from the Service, Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to target international parcels arriving and departing the U.S. The dogs searched thousand's of packages a day, generating over 25 investigations detecting shipments of illegal wildlife, to include coral, products made from elephant ivory, alligator and crocodile leather, and live turtles and reptiles, as well as marijuana, opium, steroids, \$150,000 in gold

bars and coins, and loose diamonds.

In a multi-regional/international joint-investigation, a Canadian citizen was arrested by Canadian authorities after attempting to smuggle 51 live turtles (albino red-eared sliders, Florida box turtles, Eastern box turtles, Gulf box turtles, and an ornate turtle) bound to his legs and groin area underneath his pants from the U.S. into Canada. The individual would travel down to the U.S., receive turtles and tortoises being shipped to local Fed Ex and UPS locations, re-package them, and ship them out of the country, as well as taking some turtles back to Canada. After receiving information that the same individual was once again planning to attempt the smuggling of turtles, agents coordinated efforts which led to the interdiction of the individual. The subject, along with another individual, was arrested and placed into custody in Detroit. The second target was intercepted at the Detroit airport following the discovery of over 900 turtles inside their checked luggage that was outbound to China.



CS1-1

# Wildlife Inspection Program

The Office of Law Enforcement's wildlife inspection program provides the Nation's frontline defense against illegal wildlife trafficking. Wildlife inspectors uphold the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and enforce U.S. laws that regulate wildlife imports and exports.

Service inspectors policed wildlife trade at 18 designated ports and 18 other locations. They examined some 184,000 shipments in Fiscal Year 2013, and 180,000 in Fiscal Year 2014-- monitoring a \$6.2 billion legal trade for compliance with wildlife laws. Inspectors also conducted proactive operations targeting contraband that ranged from medicinals in Newark, New Jersey, to live reptiles in Los Angeles, California.

## Wildlife Detector Dog Program

In 2013, the Service launched its first ever professional wildlife detector dog program, stationing professionally trained wildlife inspector/canine teams at the ports of Miami, Louisville, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The dogs and their handlers reported for duty in April after completing a rigorous training program at a U.S. Department of Agriculture training center near Atlanta.

The dog teams check air and ocean cargo and international mail shipments to detect wildlife smuggling. They represent a significant expansion of Service inspection capabilities. In a fraction of the time it takes a human to examine a hundred packages, a dog can sniff literally thousands.

An example of expanded inspection activities due to the addition of canine teams included the inspections conducted in the Midwest of 209,562 postal packages, 52,110 cargo packages, and twenty vehicle inspections. Here the canine team was successful in intercepting and seizing sixteen illegal shipments of wildlife and also detected four ivory shipments without the assistance of other Federal inspection agencies.

## Partnerships and Compliance Outreach

Inspectors worked closely with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and other Federal inspection agencies. At many ports, they provided wildlife import/export training to these officers. The Service trained new agriculture inspectors and military customs officers as well.



*An inspector in Newark, New Jersey, reseals a carton of live wildlife after examining its contents for contraband.*  
Bill Butcher/USFWS

**PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:** *A wildlife inspector/detector dog team checks packages at the international mail facility in Chicago.* USFWS

Inspectors conducted outreach to promote compliance. Venues were numerous but included the Safari Club International convention, the Dallas Safari Club convention, the convention of the National Association of Music Merchants, the Multi-pharmaceutical Industry Forum, and a New York City World Trade Week event. They also trained appraisers at taping sessions for the program Antiques Roadshow in Tennessee and Louisiana and developed an outreach exhibit at Liberty International Airport in Newark.

## Inspection Accomplishments

In Los Angeles, wildlife inspectors intercepted multiple shipments of CITES corals from Tonga, Vietnam, and Australia. Other live wildlife seized included 800 emperor scorpions from Togo; a shipment of Sulawesi forest turtles from Hong Kong; 20 Indian star tortoises shipped from Slovenia; 10 superb parrots imported from the Netherlands; 86 chameleons and 600-plus spiders from Tanzania; and 120 seahorses from Brazil.

Interceptions in Los Angeles also included a 12,000-pound ocean cargo shipment of live rock from Fiji; 518 CITES leather products smuggled by a traveler from Nigeria; and international mail parcels containing primate skulls from Indonesia, 737 pangolin scales from Hong Kong, iguana meat from Mexico and El Salvador, and big cat teeth from Malaysia.

Inspectors in Chicago uncovered a large-scale smuggling scheme involving live CITES-listed giant clams exported from Vietnam. Shipments were also seized in Los Angeles and New York.

A Chicago inspector's investigation of an international mail package of freshwater mussel shells headed from Kansas to Spain launched a broader Service/State probe that resulted in the seizure of some 1,000 additional shells. Kansas banned commercial mussel harvest in 2003.

A wildlife inspector at John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport in New York caught a paid courier smuggling hundreds of caiman products from Columbia; the company involved paid a \$13,475 penalty and abandoned \$10,000 worth of wildlife.

An air cargo shipment seized in New York contained 24 endangered Asian bonytongue and 20 endangered catfish from Thailand worth \$70,000. Inspectors stopped a shipment of gloves made from the endangered broad-snouted caiman and intercepted a shipment of blue coral live rock being smuggled by a company that was already awaiting sentencing for coral trafficking.

# 2013-14 Wildlife Inspection Activity

Port of Entry	FY 2013 Shipments	FY 2014 Shipments
<b>Designated Ports</b>		
Anchorage, AK	4,784	3,617
Atlanta, GA	3,625	3,570
Baltimore, MD	3,627	3,164
Boston, MA	2,621	2,689
Chicago, IL	7,794	7,945
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX	8,728	8,510
Honolulu, HI	4,396	4,381
Houston, TX	2,398	2,671
Los Angeles, CA	26,557	26,490
Louisville, KY	11,903	11,981
Memphis, TN	12,358	12,038
Miami, FL	12,091	11,745
New Orleans, LA	784	733
Newark, NJ	15,829	16,925
New York, NY	29,874	30,599
Portland, OR	924	740
San Francisco, CA	6,506	5,845
Seattle, WA	2,769	2,577
<b>Designated Ports</b>	<b>157,568</b>	<b>156,220</b>
<b>Non-designated Ports</b>	<b>19,101</b>	<b>18,278</b>
<b>Non-staffed Ports</b>	<b>8,155</b>	<b>5,965</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>184,824</b>	<b>180,463</b>

In Dallas-Fort Worth, inspectors interdicted the smuggling of seven endangered Asian arowana fish from Vietnam and discovered eight live Siamese fighting fish smuggled from Vietnam in a tubular food container.

In Houston, inspectors found an import from the United Arab Emirates that contained over 360 smuggled boots, shoes, and handbags made from sea turtle, African elephant, and other species.

Inspectors in Atlanta intercepted a cargo shipment from France containing Siberian sturgeon and caught a passenger from Nigeria smuggling ivory and undeclared currency. They also seized live corals and tropical fish from Fiji and \$5,000 worth of hippo knives from South Africa.

In Seattle, officers seized 268 pieces of live coral that arrived from Indonesia without valid CITES permits.

Wildlife inspectors in San Francisco seized multiple shipments containing Asian medicinals made from CITES species. These interceptions included an ocean shipment of raw herbs from China; an 88-box shipment (also from China) of products made from seahorse, seal, and turtle shell; a 300-box shipment of similar products from Hong Kong; 400 boxes of medicinals made from tiger, musk deer, seal, and orchids being smuggled by a traveler from Vietnam; and 1,440 bottles of medicine made from Appendix III Chinese pond turtle.

Other interceptions in San Francisco included a mail parcel containing 12 CITES Appendix I serow horns; 10 parcels containing wildlife skulls and skeletons that all arrived in a single month; and 451 key chains made from dried seahorses from China.

Inspections in New Orleans resulted in the seizure of a shipment of crocodilian leather goods from Singapore; a crate of "handicrafts" from Ivory Coast containing CITES reptile handbags; and two commercial shipments of river otter skins headed for Canada and Hong Kong.

In Miami, inspectors stopped a shipment from Paraguay that arrived with false export permits and returned 2,272 live amphibians and tarantulas to that country. They refused clearance of four illegal shipments from Benin containing 6,660 pythons and 1,600 monitor lizards.

Interceptions of live wildlife in Miami also included CITES tortoises and mammals from Guyana; 500-plus reptiles and amphibians from Madagascar; 90 Appendix II pancake tortoises from Tanzania; and



*Species identification is a vital job skill for wildlife inspectors.*  
Frank Kohn/USFWS

40 CITES-listed giant clams re-exported from Vietnam with altered permits; and a shipment from Ghana of 2,000 emperor scorpions falsely identified as to country of origin.

Miami staff turned back a 2,500 pound shipment of Queen conch meat from the Bahamas. Other seizures included a shipment of over 200 live hard corals from Indonesia; 128 caviar-based cosmetic products from Spain that lacked CITES permits; 6,000 Queen conch shells from Belize and 12,000 from the Bahamas; and 4 crates from Jamaica containing 15 live birds.

In Newark, Service staff seized over 588 musk deer pills from a shipment of traditional Chinese medicines and caught a dog food company importing 1,000 pounds of endangered saltwater crocodile bone parts from Australia. Other interceptions included a \$50,670 shipment of saltwater crocodile handbags and 3,000 cartons of Chinese pond turtle medicinals.

Inspectors based in Baltimore seized an ocean container of Muscovy duck products and three container shipments packed with over 10,000 seahorse pills in Norfolk, Virginia.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Service

inspector caught a crew member of a Hong Kong vessel smuggling elephant ivory carvings and stopped a shipment of 250 pounds of Queen conch meat unlawfully imported by ocean ferry from the Dominican Republic.

Inspectors in Tampa investigated a Florida company that illegally imported some 7,400 kilograms of frozen CITES II Amazonian cod from Brazil.

In Champlain, New York, Service officers stopped a shipment of 1,600 brown seal skins from Turkey which were unlawfully transiting the United States on their way to Montreal. The Canadian importer paid a \$10,000 civil penalty.

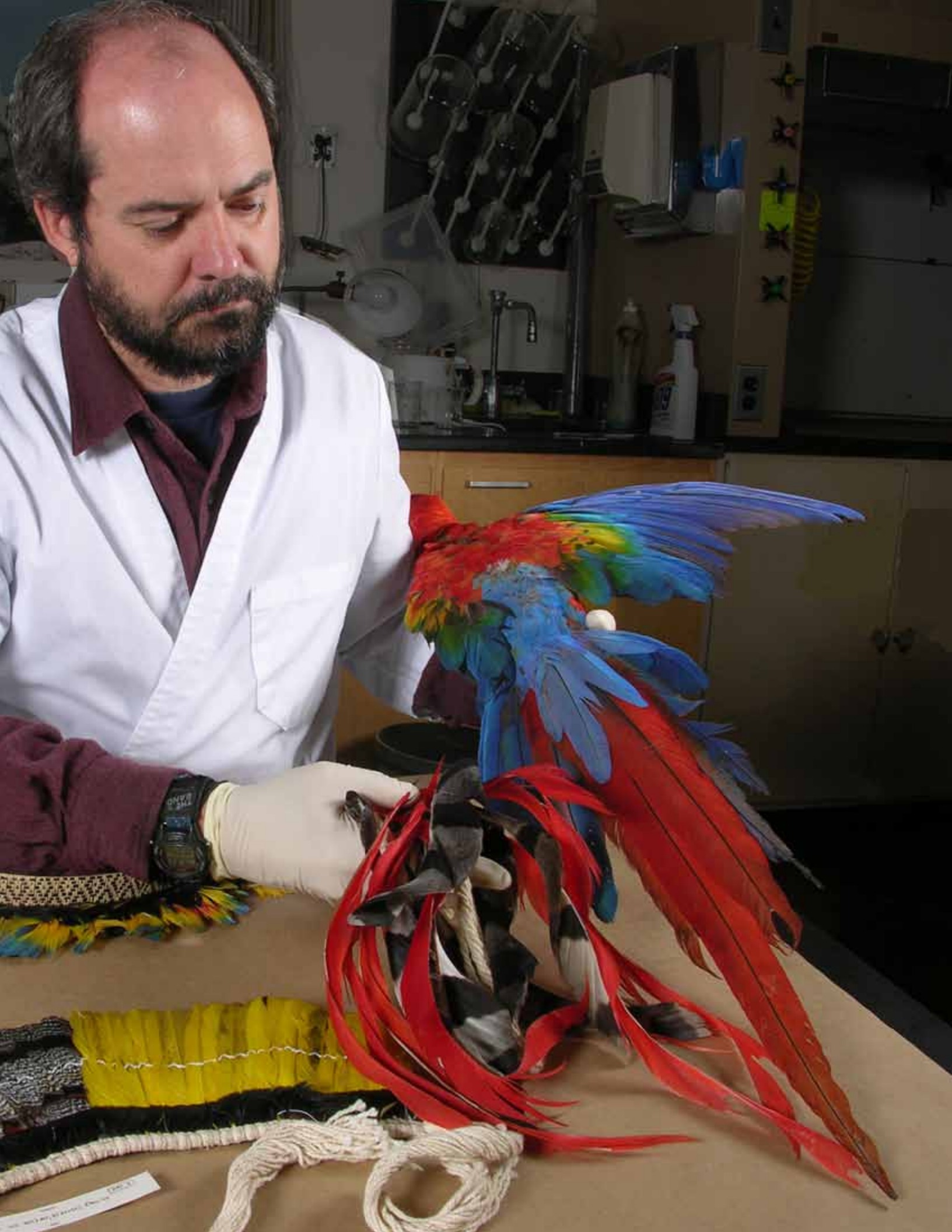
Proactive inspections at Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C. resulted in the seizure of a \$3,500 shipment of Appendix II agarwood chips and an air cargo export of CITES reptilian leather goods headed for Saudi Arabia.

Inspectors working the U.S./Mexico border in Texas seized two large shipments of wildlife leather products crossing via Laredo and caught a manufacturer smuggling more than 10,700 tegu lizard leather and skin pieces into El Paso.



*An inspector in Miami examines a live reptile shipment.* Frank Kohn/USFWS

An importer operating out of Chicago paid a fine of \$5,000 for the illegal import of staghorn coral, elephant ivory, deer antlers, starfish, sea urchins, and barrel sponges. The importer has a history of importing wildlife without the proper CITES permits as well as releasing wildlife shipments without first obtaining FWS clearance. The seized wildlife was forfeited to the Federal government.



# Support for Officers in the Field

The Office of Law Enforcement supports the work of its special agents and wildlife inspectors in the field by providing national policy guidance, professional training, and administrative and technical support. The program's state-of-the-art infrastructure also includes three special units that provide forensic analyses, high-tech investigative assistance, and intelligence gathering and analysis in support of Service wildlife crime investigations and wildlife inspection and smuggling interdiction operations.

## Forensics Laboratory

The National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, located in Ashland, Oregon, is the world's only full-service crime laboratory devoted exclusively to supporting wildlife law enforcement. Scientists at the Laboratory identify the species of wildlife parts and products seized as evidence. They link suspect, "victim," and crime scene through the examination and comparison of physical evidence; determine the cause of death of wildlife crime victims; and help analyze crime scenes.

Laboratory scientists supported 407 wildlife crime investigations in FY 2013 and 319 in FY 2014 examining 2,981 individual items of evidence in FY 2013 and 2,261 in FY 2014. In addition to this caseload, specialists in the Morphology Unit handled 367 requests in FY 2013 and 321 requests in FY 2014, for the identification of wildlife parts or products in photos submitted by Service staff at ports of entry to confirm "probable cause" for seizure. These efforts involved reviewing 1,729 individual photos of 1,685 wildlife items in FY 2013 and 1,562 individual photos of 2,261 wildlife items in FY 2014 – a number that has more than doubled over the past five years.

In one particularly significant investigation, a Genetics Section analyst processed over 500 evidence samples for species identification of the endangered totoaba. This work helped secure the successful prosecution of five defendants who were involved in smuggling swim bladders from the fish into the United



*A forensic scientist prepares to conduct a DNA analysis. USFWS*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Lab ornithologist uses a reference specimen to identify scarlet macaw feathers. USFWS*

States from Mexico for eventual black market export to Asia.

Laboratory scientists also conducted research to develop new analytical techniques needed in wildlife forensics. Scientists in the Genetics Section, for example, developed and successfully applied new protocols for extracting amplifiable DNA from bile for use in species identification. This work will prove particularly useful in analyzing the species source of bile used in traditional Asian medicinals; previously available methods only supported identification to the level of family.

Veterinarian pathologists in the Pathology Section improved operations by adopting electronic recordkeeping and reporting for all case work and launching a new pathology monitoring system for general use that will operate in concert with both new and older

databases. In addition to its typical casework determining cause of death of wildlife crime "victims," the Section also completed a special study of California condor samples.

For the enforcement of the Convention on International Treaty in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) it is important to determine whether agarwood is from a plantation cultivated for sustainable production or if it was harvested from natural forests. Laboratory scientists use Direct Analysis in Real Time (DART) ionization coupled with Time-of-Flight Mass Spectrometry (TOFMS) to differentiate wild from cultivated agarwood. The lab has developed DART TOFMS databases for the analysis of CITES protected wood. Scientists from the Chemistry Section gave presentations about DART TOFMS to several audiences including Oregon State University, the Smithsonian

Institute and an EU Timber Regulation meeting in Hamburg, Germany. Lab scientists participated as invited speaker at the International Wolf Congress in Abruzzo, Italy, as well as the annual Condor Field Team meeting. They also served as a State Department-sponsored Embassy Science Fellow in Hanoi. Recent publications were numerous and included a chapter on crime scene investigation for the book *Wildlife Forensic Investigation: Principles and Practice*, a paper outlining analytical techniques for distinguishing wild and cultivated agarwood, and a paper on the Identification Guides for Wildlife Law Enforcement: Identification of Bald and Golden Eagle Feathers (accessible to officers in the field on mobile devices).

### Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit

The Office of Law Enforcement established its Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit (DERTSU) in 2009 to give special agents in the field access to better support in such increasingly critical areas as retrieval and analysis of computer-based records and utilization of advanced surveillance techniques.

Based in Jacksonville, Florida, and co-located with a group providing similar support to criminal investigators with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, DERTSU is staffed by wildlife crime investigators with skills in computer forensics and technology-based investigations as well as technical experts in these highly specialized fields. The Unit provides a source of multi-layered expertise (both technical and investigative) to assist field officers with large-scale and/or complex investigations.

### Intelligence Unit

The Office of Law Enforcement's Intelligence Unit collects and analyzes information on all aspects of wildlife trafficking to support Service investigations, inspections, and smuggling interdiction efforts. The Unit also coordinates intelligence sharing with other law enforcement agencies in the United States and other countries. It has established and maintains a broad network of domestic and international contacts with conservation groups, trade



*A veterinary pathologist examines an oiled bird carcass to determine cause of death. USFWS*

associations, and other entities involved in, or concerned with, wildlife trade.

Intelligence support is vital to Service efforts to identify and disrupt wildlife trafficking networks. Through the Intelligence Unit, Service investigators have access to such services as background, criminal history and financial checks; border crossing, airline and license checks; wildlife valuations; document analysis; trade research; toll record analysis; link chart creation; prior case research; and website mirroring.



*Computer forensics is vital for retrieving evidence of wildlife crimes. USFWS*



# Appendix: Laws Enforced

The Office of Law Enforcement upholds the Nation's wildlife and plant protection laws. Brief summaries of these statutes appear below.

**Lacey Act** (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378). This Act prohibits the importation, exportation, transportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken or possessed in violation of State, Federal, tribal, and foreign laws. It also authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to designate injurious wildlife and ensure the humane treatment of wildlife shipped to the United States. Originally enacted in 1900, the Lacey Act is the Nation's oldest Federal wildlife protection law.

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act** (16 U.S.C. 703-712). Except as allowed by implementing regulations, this Act makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, including feathers or other parts, nests, eggs, or migratory bird products.

**Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act** (16 U.S.C. 668-668C). This Act makes it illegal to import, export, or take bald or golden eagles, or to sell, purchase, or barter their parts or products made from them, including nests or eggs.

**Endangered Species Act** (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543). This Act prohibits the importation, exportation, taking, and commercialization in interstate or foreign commerce of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species. The Act also implements the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

**Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act** (16 U.S.C. 718). Commonly referred to as the "Duck Stamp Act," this law requires waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older to purchase and possess a valid Federal waterfowl hunting stamp before they take migratory waterfowl.

**Marine Mammal Protection Act** (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407). This Act establishes a moratorium on the take and importation



*Game Management Agents aboard the M/V Eider Duck, a new patrol boat for the Division of Game Management, Game Protection Service of the U.S. Biological Survey. Portland, ME. 1936. NCTC*

of marine mammals, including parts and products, and defines Federal responsibilities for the conservation of marine mammals. It assigns management authority for the sea otter, walrus, polar bear, dugong, and manatee to the Department of the Interior.

**Airborne Hunting Act** (16 U.S.C. 742j-1). Section 13 of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 is commonly referred to as the Airborne Hunting Act. It prohibits taking or harassing wildlife from aircraft, except when protecting wildlife, livestock, and human health or safety as authorized by a Federal or State license or permit.

**National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act** (16 U.S.C.

668dd-668ee). This 1966 Act constitutes an "Organic Act" for the National Wildlife Refuge System. It provides guidelines for administration and management of all areas in the system including "wildlife refuges, areas for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife that are threatened with extinction, wildlife ranges, game ranges, wildlife management areas, or waterfowl production areas."

**African Elephant Conservation Act** (16 U.S.C. 4201-4245). This Act provides additional protection for the African elephant. It establishes an assistance program for elephant-producing countries of Africa and provides for the creation of an African Elephant Conservation Fund.



*The passing of the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty Act (Act) has many success stories for species in peril of extinction including the canvasback shown here in flight. During the turn of the century, the canvasback was a highly sought after duck for high end restaurants in large metropolitan areas. The Act essentially ended “market hunting” saving numerous species of waterfowl. D. Sherony/Wikimedia Commons USFWS*

In addition, the Act places a moratorium on the importation of raw or worked ivory from African elephant-producing countries that do not meet certain criteria.

**Wild Bird Conservation Act** (16 U.S.C. 4901). This 1992 Act promotes the conservation of exotic birds by encouraging wild bird conservation and management programs in countries of origin; by ensuring that all U.S. trade in such species is biologically sustainable and of benefit to the species; and by limiting or prohibiting imports of exotic birds when necessary.

**Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act** (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306). The 1998 reauthorization of this Act prohibits the import, export, or sale of any product, item, or substance containing, or labeled

or advertised as containing, any substance derived from tiger or rhinoceros.

**Antarctic Conservation Act** (16 U.S.C. 2401). This Act provides for the conservation and protection of the fauna and flora of Antarctica. The Act makes it unlawful for any U.S. citizen to take any native bird or mammal in Antarctica or to collect any native plant from any specially protected area on that continent. In addition, the Act makes it unlawful for anyone in the United States to possess, sell, offer for sale, deliver, receive, carry, transport, import, export, or attempt to import or export from the United States any native mammal or bird taken in Antarctica or any plant collected in any specially protected area.

**Archeological Resources Protection Act** (16 U.S.C. 470aa). This Act protects archeological resources and sites on public and Indian lands and fosters increased cooperation among governmental authorities, the professional archeological community, and individuals who own collections of archeological resources obtained before October 31, 1979. The Act makes it illegal for any person to excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any archeological resource located on public or Indian lands without a permit. In addition, the Act makes it illegal for any person to sell, purchase, exchange, transport, receive, or offer to sell, purchase, or exchange any archeological resource taken from public or Indian lands in violation of Federal, State, or local law.

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