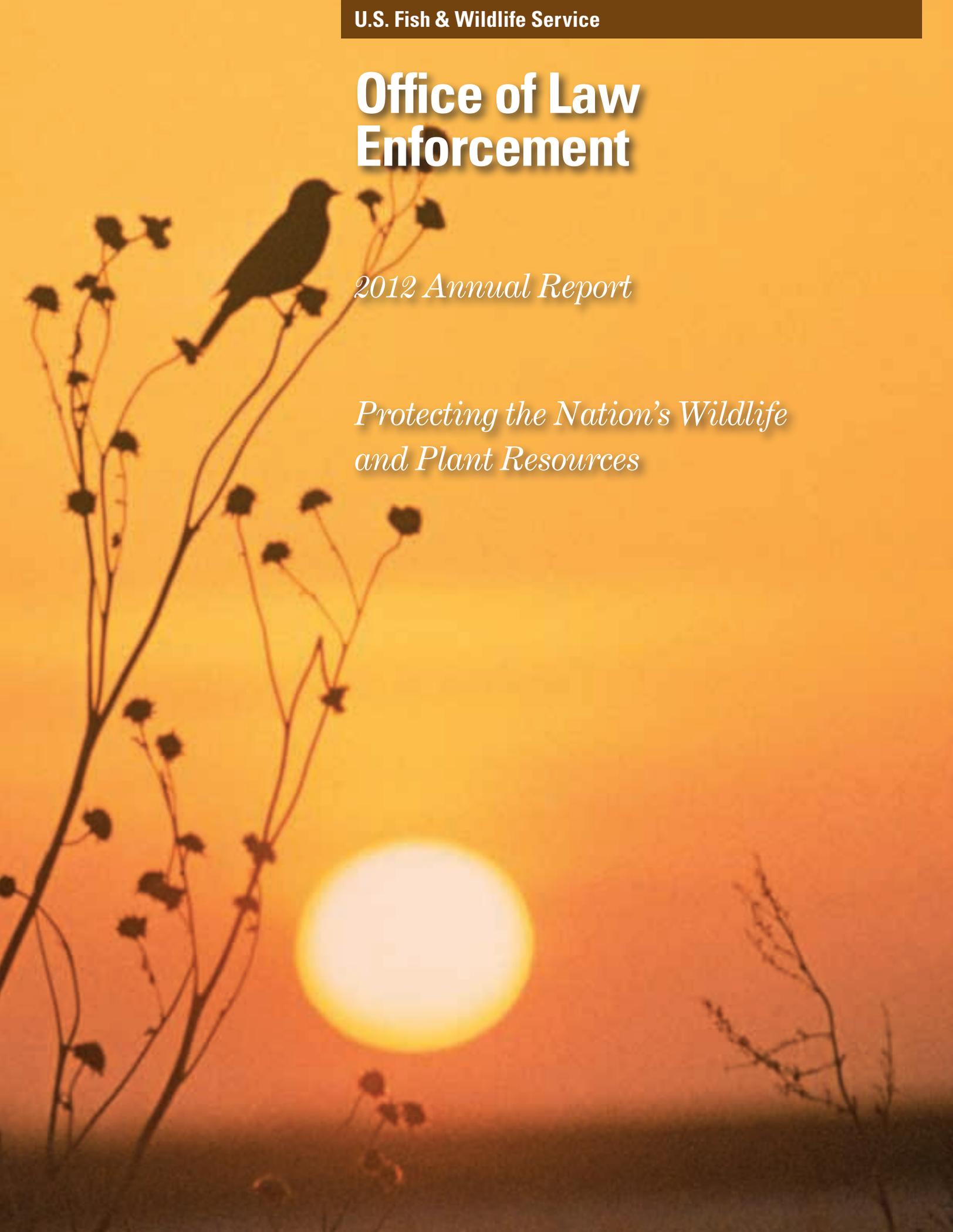


# Office of Law Enforcement

*2012 Annual Report*

*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.*

**For more information, contact:**

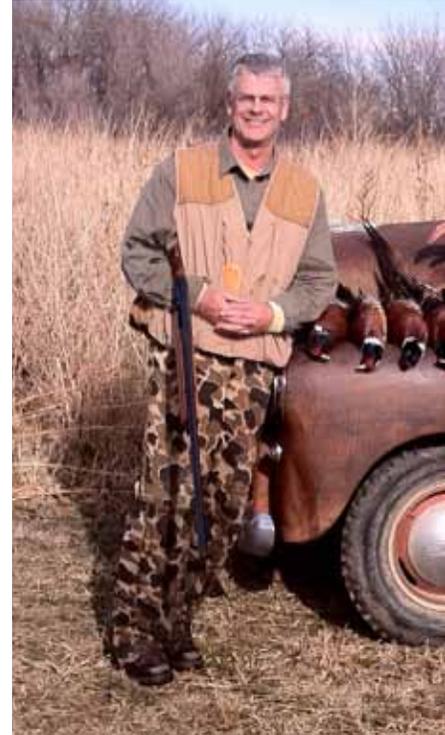
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# Message from the Chief

In 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement's special agents, wildlife inspectors, forensics scientists, intelligence analysts, technology specialists, and dedicated support staff continued to make a difference for wildlife in the United States and around the world. We pursued more than 12,000 investigations of wildlife crime; inspected more than 180,000 shipments of wildlife and wildlife products entering or leaving the United States; examined nearly 2,800 pieces of evidence; and trained hundreds of officers from other Federal, State, Tribal, and international agencies.

Our goal is to strengthen protections for the Nation's "wild things and wild places" by effectively using our resources and expertise for coordinated on-the-ground action in support of wildlife conservation. Working with State, Tribal, and other Federal agencies, the FWS Office of Law Enforcement took on illegal trafficking in resources that ranged from rhino horn, paddlefish roe, and ginseng to native turtles and injurious fish. We helped uphold protections for State-regulated big game species to ensure continued hunting opportunities for true sportsmen and women. Together we made plans to build on this legacy (which dates back to the passage of the original version of the Lacey Act in 1900) and capitalize on our joint "track record" of success.



We also continued to play a critical role in the global effort to stem wildlife trafficking – a trafficking that is taking an increased toll on rhinos, elephants, tigers, and other species long on the brink of extinction. We will continue to work to close U.S. markets for the world's imperiled wildlife and support existing and emerging wildlife enforcement networks in range country regions from Asia to Africa to Latin America.

I want to thank our many partners for their support, not only the State and Indian Country conservation officers and game wardens, but also the Federal enforcement agencies that have assisted our agents and inspectors on investigations we could not have prosecuted without your assistance. I also want to thank the County, State and Federal prosecutors who use their valuable time and limited resources to prosecute wildlife poachers and traffickers both domestically and internationally.

The passion for conservation, dedication to duty, and sustained interagency and inter-jurisdictional commitment to resource protection that we share bodes well for the fish, wildlife, and plants that represent our collective national and global heritage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Willie Woody", written over a horizontal line.

William C. Woody  
Chief, Office of Law Enforcement



# Spotlight 2012

The Office of Law Enforcement works to protect the Nation's wildlife and plant resources and promote global wildlife conservation. During FY 2012, our efforts helped recover endangered species, safeguard migratory birds, protect U.S. wildlife from unlawful take and commercial exploitation (often in partnership with State wildlife agencies), and combat global wildlife trafficking. Major developments included outreach to strengthen longstanding partnerships with the States and a large-scale investigative response to trafficking that threatens to wipe out rhino populations in Africa.

## State Chiefs Meeting

The Office of Law Enforcement and the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC) planned and hosted a three-day "chiefs" meeting at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in late April. As possibly the first "summit" of this type and scope, the meeting provided an unprecedented forum for the managers of wildlife law enforcement programs in the United States to engage in a wide-reaching, open, and productive discussion of mutual concerns and partnership opportunities.

Participants, who were welcomed by Service Director Dan Ashe, included law enforcement chiefs from 48 State or territorial agencies, representatives from Canada and Mexico, and the Office of Law Enforcement regional and headquarters management team. The Service's refuge law enforcement program was represented as were several other Federal agencies that enforce natural resource protection laws.

The meeting included presentations on Service law enforcement and the Department of Justice's Environmental Crimes Section, briefings from top wildlife officials from Canada and Mexico, a day-long executive leadership training program, and discussions of Service and State concerns.

Attendees identified emerging issues and strategies for improving and revitalizing longstanding Federal and State cooperation in wildlife conservation and wildlife law enforcement. This partnership, which dates back more than a century, remains critical to conserving wildlife, wildlife habitat, and wildlife-related recreational opportunities in the United States.

Cooperative Service/State accomplishments from FY 2012 testify to the importance of partnership. This work included joint investigations that exposed illegal guiding and outfitting operations in multiple States (including the largest ever wildlife crime case in Kansas). Service special agents and State counterparts also documented and disrupted illegal trafficking in both Federal and State protected resources. (See p. 4-35 for information by Region on many of these joint accomplishments.)

## Operation Crash

Operation Crash – an ongoing nationwide undercover investigation of trafficking in rhino horn – represents one of the largest investigative operations ever mounted by the Service. This wide-reaching probe, spearheaded by the Office of Law Enforcement's Special Investigations Unit and drawing on the time and talents of top investigators from the program's regional ranks, responds directly to a growing global crisis – a crisis that accelerated in 2012 as the number of rhinos poached in South Africa for the horn trade reached record-breaking levels.

The February 2012 "takedown" of the first phase of Operation Crash, which focused on the unlawful interstate sale and export of rhino horns from the United States, resulted in the arrest of eight individuals. More than 140 Service special agents joined with Service refuge officers, Homeland Security Investigations agents, Internal Revenue Service agents, and State conservation officers to execute search warrants in 13 States.

One defendant – a Texas resident who brokered rhino horn purchases throughout the country for smugglers based in Los Angeles – pleaded guilty in June to felony charges filed in that city. In August, a Manhattan antiques specialist entered a guilty plea to Federal felony charges in New York.

More plea agreements were signed or announced in September. Two California men pleaded guilty to conspiracy, smuggling, Lacey Act violations, money laundering and tax fraud for their roles in interstate and international rhino horn trafficking. An earlier plea by a Chinese national arrested on smuggling charges in Los Angeles was announced at the same time. Meanwhile a defendant in New Jersey signed a plea deal acknowledging culpability on conspiracy and Lacey Act charges.

**2012 Investigative Statistics**

Investigative Caseload \*

Statute	Cases
African Elephant	41
Conspiracy	52
Eagle Protection	228
Endangered Species	8,037
False Statements	29
Lacey	2,446
Marine Mammal Protection	245
Migratory Bird Stamp	113
Migratory Bird Treaty	1,177
Other Federal Laws	159
Rhino Tiger Labeling	41
Smuggling	75
State Laws	157
Wild Bird Conservation	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,855</b>

\* This table reflects investigative cases worked by Service special agents and wildlife inspectors during FY 2012.

**Annual Penalty Statistics \***

Fines	\$8,874, 515
Prison (years)	56
Probation (years)	522
Civil Penalties	\$1,072,208

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

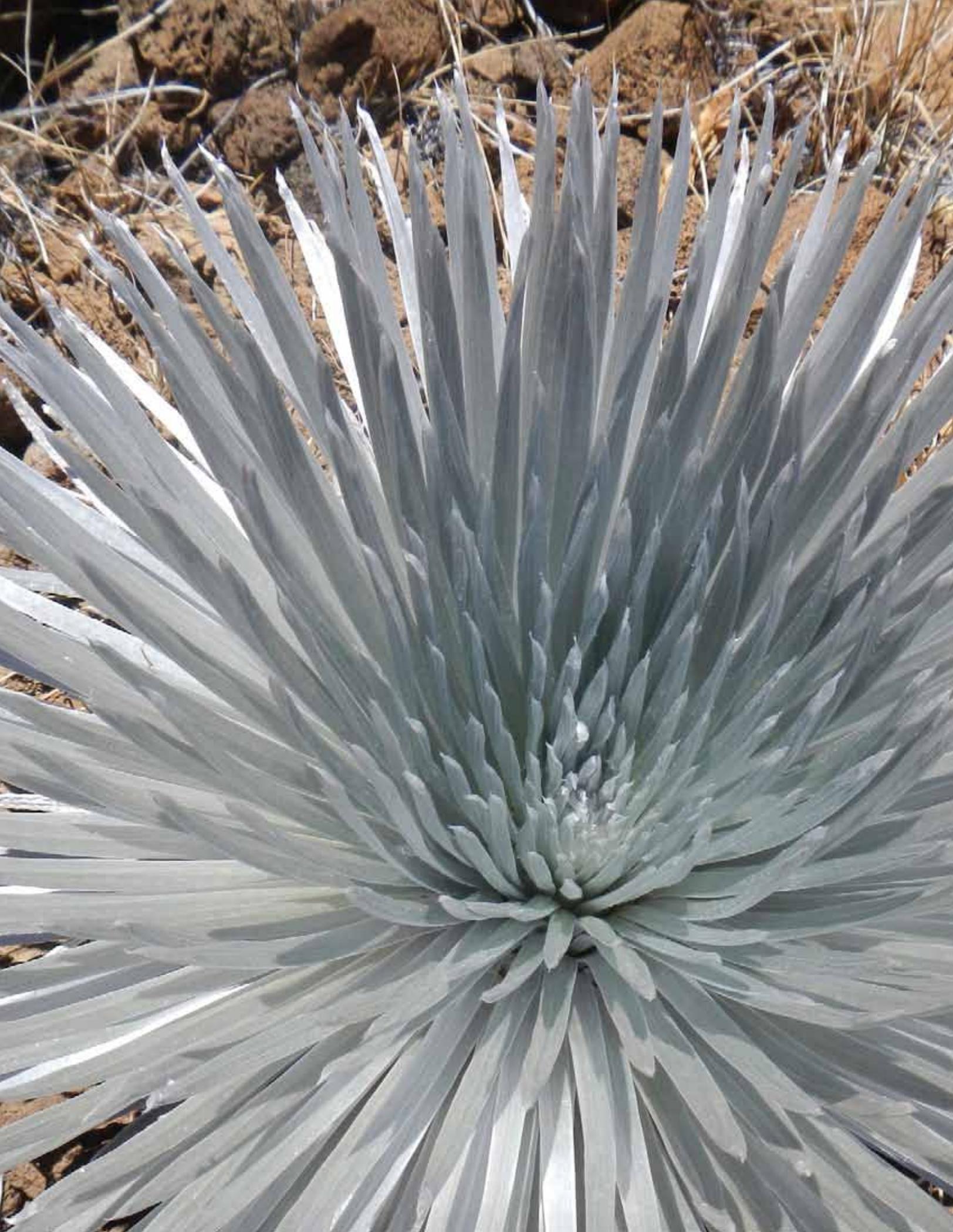


*USFWS/NACLEC State Wildlife Law Enforcement Chiefs Meeting, April 2012.*  
USFWS



*In Operation Crash, agents seized 37 rhino horns, horn products, approximately \$1 million in cash, \$1 million in gold ingots as well as diamonds and Rolex watches.*  
USFWS

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Skyrocketing Asian demand for rhino horn has created a conservation crisis for rhino species.* R. Ruggiero/USFWS



# 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 grey wolves that remain federally protected; the northern spotted owl and western snowy plover; threatened grizzlies and the endangered Selkirk Mountain 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

Three defendants were sentenced in Operation Malama Palekaiko, an ongoing Lacey Act investigation of the illegal transport of non-native axis deer and European mouflon sheep between Hawaiian islands in violation of State laws designed to protect forests, native animals and plants, crops, and ranchland.



*The Pacific Region hosts the Nation's only federally protected grey wolf population.*  
G. Kramer/USFWS

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Endangered silversword.* K. Swindle/USFWS

Species being affected by the presence of these voracious herbivores include some that are already listed as endangered or threatened. Mouflon sheep, for example, are destroying trees that provide virtually the only food source for the palila, an endangered bird known only on the Big Island, and are also eating their way through Hawaii's remaining silverswords, an equally unique endangered plant.

While these ungulates are commercially hunted as big game on the island where originally introduced and established, their expansion to other islands represents a direct threat to species diversity in Hawaii. Those prosecuted to date for transporting deer or sheep between islands to enhance commercial hunting opportunities include the owners of two hunting ranches on



*In October 2012, Gary Young became the Special Agent in Charge for the Service's Pacific Region. He began his career in 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 served two years before becoming the RAC for south and west Texas. In 2009, Young returned to Alaska as Assistant Special Agent in Charge. Young has a B.S. degree in criminal justice from Southwest Texas State University.*



*Free-roaming ungulates are a threat to the endangered palila and other unique Hawaiian species. K. Bohn/San Diego Zoo Global*

Maui and the Big Island, who were fined amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000 and each ordered to perform 100 hours of community service. The third defendant to plead guilty, a Maui helicopter pilot who flew animals between islands, was sentenced to serve one year Federal probation and donate 500 hours of helicopter flight time (worth \$400,000 to \$500,000) to the Service to assist with efforts to eradicate free-roaming ungulates that represent a threat to protected species.

In September 2012, Service special agents and Washington State officers executed 12 search warrants (11 in Washington and one in Los Angeles) to close out the undercover portion of Operation Wilderness, a joint investigation that documented widespread internet-based wildlife trafficking in violation of Federal and State laws. A subject in Los Angeles, who tried to destroy his cell phone to prevent its seizure as evidence, was arrested and charged with obstruction of justice. Federal and State charges against multiple individuals are expected.

A company that was responsible for the destruction of over 400 bank swallow nests and over 3,000 bank swallow eggs at a construction site near the long-shuttered Hanford nuclear weapons production facility agreed to pay \$96,800 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to resolve potential criminal charges under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. These funds will be used to preserve, restore, and acquire

shrub-steppe habitats in the Mid-Columbia region of Washington State. The contractor must also take remedial actions to prevent future violations.

Three Washington State residents investigated in connection with the illegal take of two protected grey wolves and the attempted export of one carcass to Canada via FedEx pleaded guilty to Endangered Species Act violations and other wildlife crimes and were sentenced in Federal court. The trio, all of whom were prosecuted under a 12-count Federal indictment, were ordered to pay \$25,000 in fines and \$20,000 in restitution to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In February, Service special agents in Washington coordinated a series of multi-agency reconnaissance operations designed to protect endangered Selkirk Mountain caribou and their habitat during the winter sports season. Agencies participating in the patrols included the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

The cooperative Service/State investigation of an Idaho big game outfitter operating an unlicensed guiding business resulted in the successful Federal prosecution of this individual for violating the Lacey Act and making a false statement in a bankruptcy proceeding. The guide, who had an extensive history of previous violations, was sentenced to serve 30 months in Federal prison and pay \$41,650 in restitution.

Special agents teamed with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to investigate and arrest three Australian nationals who were organizing groups of compatriots to take elk out of season. One had hunted illegally in the State for over 20 years. The trio pleaded guilty to State charges for the unlawful take of elk and wolves, wasteful destruction of wildlife, transfer of licenses, aiding and abetting, and unlawful possession/transport of wildlife. They were fined \$9,436 and credited for jail time served since their arrest; two were banned from hunting for life and the other was given a 3-year suspension.

A Washington State utility company investigated by the Service in connection with a raptor electrocution incident that caused a brush fire over 10 acres in the eastern part of the State invested \$8,120 to retrofit powerlines in the area.

A commercial guitar importer who was cited by Service officers in Oregon for failure to declare and pay inspection fees for instruments decorated with abalone and mother-of-pearl inlay agreed to pay over \$10,000 in “back” fees and forfeit over \$27,000 worth of guitars. All but three of the 348 guitars were donated to public school music programs in Oregon.

Service special agents in Washington State are participating in a Federal/State Puget Sound Habitat Enforcement Initiative launched by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in response to tribal concerns about lack of habitat protection for salmon in the Sound. Service interests include habitat and enforcement issues for such federally listed species as bull trout and marbled murrelets. Participating agencies include the National Park Service, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.



*Fishery species of conservation and enforcement concern in the Pacific Region include salmon as well as white sturgeon and bull trout. R. Tabor/USFWS*



*Service agents are working with Federal and State counterparts on a Puget Sound Habitat Enforcement Initiative in Washington State. E. Calhoun/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; new partnerships include increased liaison with the U.S. Marshals Service in the Southwest. 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 land areas, 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

The Department of Justice and a major U.S. guitar company entered into a criminal enforcement agreement resolving a Service investigation of Lacey Act violations related to the illegal purchase and importation of woods from Madagascar and India. The company will pay a \$300,000 penalty (which will be deposited in the Lacey Act Reward



*Service agents exposed trafficking in live alligator gar for the “monster fish” market in Asia and the U.S. USFWS*

## PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

*Jaguar skins seized during smuggling investigation. USFWS*

Account); make a community service payment of \$50,000 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for use in the conservation of tree species used to manufacture musical instruments; implement an import compliance program; and withdraw its claims to wood seized during the investigation, including more than \$347,000 worth of Madagascar ebony.

The owners of the Morenci copper mine in southeastern Arizona agreed to pay \$6.8 million to resolve their civil liability

for natural resource damages at that facility; this agreement is the second of two that will result in a total payment of \$12.3 million and the preservation of 715 acres of land as wildlife habitat. The damages addressed by these settlements were first documented during a successful Service investigation that secured criminal prosecutions for the deaths of migratory birds linked to the release of sulfuric acid, metals, and other hazardous substances at copper mines in Arizona and New Mexico.



*Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Nicholas Chavez has managed Service law enforcement operations in the Southwest Region for the past 5 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, 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.*



*An investigation of bird deaths at copper mines in Arizona and New Mexico secured \$12.3 million in natural resource damage payments.  
TJ Blackwell/Wikimedia Commons*

A Texas couple, who were arrested and indicted for the illegal interstate sale of jaguar skins (an endangered species) smuggled from Mexico, pleaded guilty to felony conspiracy and were sentenced to spend one year in Federal prison; each also faces deportation from the United States upon release. The pair, who used a seed and plant business as a cover, sold jaguar pelts to undercover Service special agents in Texas and Florida; offered purchasers future deals on up to 10 additional pelts; advertised skins to potential customers online; and made repeated road trips to Florida to market their “wares.”

Two defendants who were investigated by the Mexican Gray Wolf Law Enforcement Partners Working Group (which includes the Service, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and Arizona Game and Fish) entered guilty pleas for killing two animals that belonged to nonessential experimental populations and were considered “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. One was ordered to pay a \$2,285 fine and \$2,095 in restitution to the Mexican Gray Wolf Conservation Fund. The other was fined \$1,275.

Agents secured felony and misdemeanor indictments of five individuals in four States (New Mexico, Arizona, Louisiana, and Montana) for unlawful trafficking of eagle and migratory bird feathers.

Agents participating in Operation Wild Web (see p. 34) made 61 undercover buys of protected wildlife being sold online in Texas over a two-week period. Investigators in north Texas also purchased wildlife smuggled from Mexico during a regional operation targeting flea markets and botanicas (folk medicine shops).



*Agents organized a proactive effort to intercept mussel-encrusted boats being transported into Arizona. USGS*

Agents checked over 1,600 oil field sites for contaminants problems and Migratory Bird Treaty Act violations, recovering more than 400 bird carcasses or parts and citing 59 violations.

A Florida man who was convicted on conspiracy and Lacey Act charges in connection with the illegal harvest and smuggling of live alligator gar from the Trinity River in Texas was sentenced to serve nine months in Federal prison. Two other defendants pleaded guilty after being investigated by the Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for trafficking domestically and internationally in these large native freshwater fish. Agents documented both the harvest of large adults for the “monster fish” market as well as attempts



*Two deer breeders in Texas paid more than \$1.4 in fines and restitution for bringing potentially diseased deer into the State. USFWS*

to buy thousands of alligator gar fry to stock a planned captive-breeding operation.

A Texas deer breeder was sentenced for violating the Lacey Act after pleading guilty to a 3-count information connected with the unlawful transport of potentially diseased deer into the State. He was ordered to pay a fine of \$243,000 to the Lacey Act Reward Account and \$157,000 in restitution to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. He must also spend two years on probation during which he will be barred from the deer breeding business. Another defendant in this investigation (also a Texas deer breeder) paid \$1 million in criminal fines to the Lacey Act account (which is used to pay for rewards for information on wildlife crimes and care for live wildlife seized by the Service).

Special agents organized an inspection operation on the Utah border to intercept quagga and zebra mussel

encrusted boats unlawfully crossing the State line after being removed from Lakes Meade and Pleasant (both of which are fouled with quagga mussels). Participants in this Federal/State cooperative effort included Service agents from two other regions; National Park Service staff; and State officers from Utah, Arizona, and Nevada.

Wildlife inspectors in the Region organized and conducted multiple cooperative inspection operations with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Agriculture inspectors along the Mexican border.

The Special Agent in Charge launched an international partnership building effort with Mexico, which included an interagency meeting with Mexican wildlife authorities, Federal Police, and prosecutors in Mexico City. Goals include intelligence exchange, the development of protocols for cooperative investigations, and creation of a field

liaison office in the Region where agents will work directly with Mexican counterparts.

Under an agreement with the Department of the Interior's Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Service Law Enforcement in the Southwest will take the lead in coordinating and conducting Federal investigations to secure the prosecution and conviction of individuals and companies violating the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. This law regulates the illegal and fraudulent commercial exchange of Indian products.



# 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 work closely 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 also 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, Minneapolis, and Port Huron) address wildlife trade issues at 39 Customs ports of entry.

Investigations conducted in the Region vary greatly. Agents work closely 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, endangered bats, and other protected species; police migratory game bird guiding and hunting operations; and investigate interstate trafficking in illegally taken big game species.

## Accomplishments

Service agents teamed with Illinois and Iowa conservation officers to uncover the illegal migratory game bird hunting activities of a celebrity Illinois waterfowl guide, call maker, and producer of hunting videos. The defendant, who



*Agents in the Midwest exposed illegal commercial black bear and other big game hunting in six States. W. Traylor/USFWS*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Endangered whooping crane. R. Haggerty/USFWS*

was also prosecuted in Canada, pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor charges in the United States. He was sentenced to serve 13 months in Federal prison followed by a year of supervised release; pay \$100,000 in fines; and give up his hunting and guiding privileges for two years after his release from prison.

Four subjects confessed to Service agents with respect to their roles in the shooting of an endangered whooping crane in

Indiana. Those charged with Federal violations include the shooter and the man who held a spotlight for him.

A company in Skokie, Illinois, pleaded guilty to violating the Endangered Species Act in connection with the illegal export of African elephant ivory for use in manufacturing billiard cue sticks and was fined \$150,000.



*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.*



*A Michigan bird dealer was fined for trapping and selling Northern cardinals and other protected U.S. songbirds. J&K Hollingsworth/USFWS*

A Service investigation secured a criminal complaint in Federal court against two Michigan pet store employees who sold live injurious freshwater fish in interstate commerce in violation of the Lacey Act. The men schemed to sell live walking catfish and at least three species of snakehead fish to customers who agreed not to inform law enforcement officers how they had obtained the specimens.

A Minnesota farmer who pleaded guilty to violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in connection with his deliberate destruction of an American white pelican breeding colony was fined \$12,500 and ordered to spend two years on probation and perform 100 hours of community service. The man tore up over 70 percent of the more than 1,400 nests in the colony, smashed eggs, crushed chicks, and caused others to die of exposure. This crime, which destroyed nearly 15 percent of the species' breeding grounds in the State, stands as one of the largest illegal takes of migratory birds ever in the United States and the most serious violation under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the history of Minnesota.

A Michigan bird dealer pleaded guilty to two felony Migratory Bird Treaty Act violations for trapping and selling live U.S. songbirds, including Northern cardinals, vesper sparrows, American tree sparrows, and American goldfinches. The man, who was ordered to pay \$8,274 in restitution to a local nature center, also pleaded guilty to violating the Endangered Species Act in connection

with smuggling endangered red siskins into the country from Canada. This investigation began after a Michigan wildlife inspector reported a subject entering the United States from Canada with dirty bird cages.



*An investigation in Indiana documented illegal trafficking in American ginseng. D. Petillo/USFWS*

Four individuals in Indiana were successfully prosecuted in connection with the illegal sale and use of Furadan to poison migratory birds and other wildlife. Fines totaled \$25,000.

A Wisconsin resident who owns beachfront property on Lake Michigan received a pretrial diversion for

Endangered Species Act violations involving the harassment of piping plovers. The subject must pay \$7,500 in restitution to a land conservancy and perform 80 hours of community service.

Service special agents worked with State counterparts in Ohio and Kentucky to secure the successful Federal prosecution of two Kentuckians and their caviar companies for trafficking in and falsely labeling paddlefish illegally harvested from the Ohio River. The companies, which exported paddlefish eggs as caviar, were each fined \$5,000 and put on probation for three years during which they may not apply for or receive export permits for their products. The two owners received similar probation sentences and forfeited a boat and truck used to commit the Lacey Act violations.



*Defendants in investigations of illegal waterfowl hunting in the Midwest included a celebrity guide and two police officers. T. Barnes/Univ. of Kentucky*

A joint multi-year undercover investigation with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources focused on individuals and organizations involved in illegally buying, selling, and exporting ginseng. The investigation exposed a complicated scheme that was being used throughout the industry to manipulate paperwork in an attempt to “legalize” illegally harvested ginseng.

Four suspects indicted on Federal wildlife charges entered into plea agreements in Operation Treed – a four-year undercover investigation that targeted the illegal commercialization of wolves, bears, bobcats, and mountain lions by hound hunters and guides operating in Michigan, Montana, the Carolinas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. One man agreed to a sentence involving nine months in prison, a 15-year hunting revocation, a \$25,000 fine, and forfeiture



*The Service secured a guilty plea from a farmer who destroyed nearly 15 percent of the white pelican’s breeding grounds in Minnesota. L. Karney/USFWS*

of a truck, five hunting dogs, several bear trophy mounts, and other equipment. A second man will spend four to six months in prison, pay a \$5,000 fine, and be barred from hunting for five years. Two others face 5-year hunting revocations and \$5,000 fines.

Two now former La Crosse, Wisconsin, police officers pleaded guilty to Lacey Act charges relating to the unlawful possession and transportation of illegally taken waterfowl on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. The officers, who ran an illegal guiding operation on the Refuge, were investigated by Service special agents and wildlife authorities in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

An Oklahoma taxidermist who unlawfully imported a leopard skin and skull for a client in Minnesota pleaded guilty to a felony Lacey Act violation. He was fined \$2,000, ordered to forfeit \$1,600, and barred from possessing or using a firearm for life.

A Des Moines, Iowa, man was indicted by a Federal grand jury on five felony counts of theft of government property.

The charges resulted from a lengthy investigation of the illegal take of black walnut trees from wildlife refuges and other Federal properties in central Iowa.

The Office of Law Enforcement is participating in a newly formed environmental crimes working group in the Eastern District of Wisconsin along with enforcement officers from the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Chicago enforcement office signed an agreement with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Chicago to expand the relationship between the two offices by facilitating joint inspection efforts at the international mail facility at O’Hare International Airport and authorizing use of the Service’s x-ray van inside that building.



# 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 ports that have been designated for wildlife trade: 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

A defendant who knowingly killed an endangered Florida panther (one of only about 100 left in the wild) while deer hunting was sentenced to 60 days home confinement, 30 days in prison, and three



*A wildlife trafficker in Miami combined parts of exotic species to sell as “sculptures.” USFWS*

## PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

*Endangered Florida panther.* Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

years of probation while banned from hunting. He must also pay \$10,000 in fines; forfeit all equipment used to shoot the panther; and perform 200 hours of community service.

A U.S. Virgin Islands-based manufacturer of high-end jewelry, art, and sculpture pleaded guilty to wildlife violations in connection with the illegal importation of CITES-protected black coral from a Taiwanese supplier and was sentenced to pay a criminal fine of \$1.8 million. The company must also make \$500,000 in community service payments to support black coral conservation and forfeit more than \$2.1 million worth of

raw black coral and black coral jewelry and sculptures. The aggregate financial penalty of more than \$4.4 million makes this the largest penalty for illegal trade in coral and the fourth largest for any U.S. case involving illegal wildlife trade.

A Miami artist who fashioned taxidermied wildlife parts into “sculptures” for sale via galleries and the internet was sentenced to 20 months in prison and a \$6,000 fine for illegal trafficking in threatened wildlife. These activities included importing numerous protected species without the permits or declarations required by law. The shipments involved contacts in Bali,



*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 Miami in 1986 and worked in this job in Honolulu from 1988 to 1995. He became a special agent with the Office of Law Enforcement nine years later, and conducted criminal investigations for the Service in Miami and Puerto Rico. In 2004, after a stint as a senior special agent in the program's headquarters office, he became the Resident Agent in Charge for Service investigations and inspections in central and northern Florida, where he served until being promoted to ASAC. Santiago holds a B.S. degree in biology from the University of Puerto Rico. In 2011, he completed the Senior Executive Fellows leadership program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.*

Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Canada, and China, and the resulting artwork fetched prices up to \$80,000.

A Tennessee store owner who bought and sold unlawfully harvested wild American ginseng, cocaine, and the widely abused prescription drug oxycodone was sentenced to serve 24 years in Federal prison. The man was convicted by a Federal jury on multiple felony charges that included wildlife, drug, and firearms violations. A Service special agent worked undercover to document the trafficking of ginseng from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and helped link the man to ongoing drug deals dating back to at least 2002. A total of nine defendants were convicted in the case; prison sentences totaled nearly 35 years.

In a negotiated settlement, the City of Birmingham, Alabama (which was responsible for a dam removal project that killed some 11,760 endangered watercress darters in 2008) agreed to abide by a buffer zone management plan for at least five years, continue maintenance of a water control structure, and cooperate with the Service in other ways. The city must also donate \$182,500 to a non-profit land trust for use in protecting and enhancing watercress darter populations and habitat.

A Georgia man who attempted to illegally ship live trophy white-tailed deer from a Pennsylvania dealer to his 440-acre



*Officers in Louisiana documented illegal commercial hunts for the once imperiled American alligator.*  
M. Field/Wikimedia Commons

property in Broxton, Georgia, was sentenced to pay a \$20,000 fine and more than \$31,142 in restitution for violating the Lacey Act.

The owner of a Florida turtle aquaculture facility who was illegally exporting wild-caught native turtles to China was sentenced to three months in prison, three months of home confinement, three years of supervised release, a \$20,000 fine and 250 hours of community service. The turtle farmer held a State turtle collection permit, but that permit only authorized his business to harvest wild turtles for use as brood stock. An employee also pleaded guilty to Federal charges, and the owner of a second



*Federal and State investigators secured the convictions of two men illegally harvesting spiny lobster from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.*  
B. Dayhuff/NOAA



*A Service undercover agent documented drug trafficking and the sale of ginseng unlawfully harvested in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. NPS*

company was arrested and charged. The trafficking documented is prohibited under an aquaculture permitting system established by the State to shore up declining freshwater turtle populations.

A Louisiana oil company investigated by the Service pleaded guilty to violating the Refuge Administration Act in managing an oil field on the Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge. The company was sentenced to pay \$90,000 in fines and restitution and was ordered to remediate spill sites on the refuge.

Two Florida men who pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges in connection with the illegal harvest of spiny lobster from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary were sentenced in Federal court. One will spend nine months in prison. Both were ordered to forfeit boats used to commit the crime and resolve Federal tax issues involving some \$270,000 worth of black market lobster sales.

A Louisiana hunting outfitter and licensed alligator guide was sentenced to spend six months in prison and pay a \$3,000 fine for his felony conviction under the Lacey Act. The man knowingly took out-of-state clients on illegal hunting expeditions for “trophy” quality American alligators.

Two individuals investigated by the Service and Arkansas State officers paid \$28,000 in Federal civil penalties for unlawfully harvesting some 720 pounds of paddlefish roe in Arkansas and transporting it in interstate commerce.

A man who shot and killed a threatened Louisiana black bear was sentenced to three years of supervised probation while barred from hunting; he must also pay a \$3,000 fine and perform 300 hours of community service.

An Alabama man who pleaded guilty to Federal charges in connection with the

sale of Anhinga feathers was ordered to spend three years on supervised probation; pay \$31,000 in restitution; and conduct public outreach on Federal protections for migratory birds.

A Louisiana man was fined \$10,000 for violating the Lacey Act by providing illegal waterfowl guiding services. He was also sentenced to five years of supervised probation during which he cannot hunt or operate his guiding business.

During Operation Wild Web (see p. 34), agents and State officers in Florida documented 10 violations of Federal law and over 40 State violations. Products offered for sale included black bears, a leopard hide, ivory, migratory birds, and injurious Burmese pythons.



# 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.

Special agents work with partners in State 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 eight ports of entry, 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 protected foreign or U.S. species moving in the global black market wildlife trade. Challenges also include interstate trafficking in wildlife, the import or interstate transport of injurious species, and habitat modification affecting endangered or threatened species.

## Accomplishments

The owner of an African art store in Philadelphia, who was arrested by Service special agents in July 2011, pleaded guilty to smuggling African elephant ivory – a crime that carries a possible prison sentence of up to 20 years. The defendant also agreed to forfeit



*A U.S./Canada investigation exposed trafficking in injurious snakehead fish. USGS*

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

*Smuggled African elephant ivory. USFWS*

\$150,000 and one ton of seized elephant ivory worth an estimated \$400,000. This smuggling operation specialized in "traditional" carvings made from freshly obtained elephant ivory and involved one of the largest seizures ever of this material in the United States.

The Service teamed with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to investigate the unlawful commercialization of injurious snakehead fish and endangered Asian arowana fish being smuggled into the United States from Canada. The main defendant – the owner of a commercial aquarium business in Ontario – pleaded guilty to violating the Lacey Act and paid \$8,000 in fines and restitution. Prosecution in Canada, where he was charged with Federal and Provincial violations, will drive up total fines and

penalties. This three-year undercover investigation documented the trafficking of thousands of dollars worth of prohibited or protected fish.

Two Manhattan businesses pleaded guilty to State felony charges in connection with illegal trafficking in elephant ivory. The two retailers, who were among the subjects of a cooperative investigation by the Service and State, were sentenced to pay \$55,000 in fines and forfeit nearly \$2 million worth of ivory. Both stores were engaged in ivory sales without the permits required under New York State law.

The owner of a Maryland turtle meat processing facility, who was investigated by Service and New York State officers, was fined \$40,000 for his illegal interstate purchases of common snapping turtles – a species protected in New York State. The defendant must also donate \$20,000 to support turtle research and



*For much of 2012, Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) Neil Mendelsohn served as Acting Special Agent in Charge for the law enforcement program in the Northeast. He has held the ASAC job in this Region since 2009. Mendelsohn's career with the Service began in 1993. He served at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York as a wildlife inspector before becoming a special agent in 1998. As a criminal investigator, he worked out of the agency's Los Angeles enforcement office, exposing elephant ivory trafficking and other types of illegal wildlife trade. He transferred to headquarters in 2006, where he served as a senior special agent in the Branch of Investigations. Mendelsohn holds a Bachelor's degree in biology from Washington and Jefferson College and a Master's in criminal justice from Long Island University.*



*Multiple investigations in the Northeast focused on trafficking in African elephant ivory. G. Stolz/USFWS*

education at the Buffalo Zoo, Teatown Lake Reservation, and Buffalo Museum of Science.

A Chinese national purportedly dealing in antiques was sentenced in New York to time served, four years probation, immediate deportation, and a \$50,000 fine for attempting to smuggle 18 African elephant ivory carvings out of the United States. The subject was arrested during an export passenger inspection blitz at New York's John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport, where the ivory (which had been wrapped in aluminum foil to avoid detection on x-ray screening) was found in his carry-on luggage. The carvings, valued at \$55,000, were forfeited.

Service special agents and New York State counterparts arrested an individual for selling 23 injurious albino Burmese pythons to two undercover officers in interstate commerce. The snakes were among the species listed as injurious under the Lacey Act in March 2012.

A commercial flower farmer in New Jersey, who initially planned to seek a jury trial, pleaded guilty to one criminal misdemeanor count for causing the take of bog turtles, a federally threatened species, by destroying the animal's habitat in violation of the Endangered Species Act.

A Connecticut-based commercial fisherman was sentenced to serve

one year of probation, pay a \$10,000 fine, and forfeit \$5,000 after pleading guilty to one felony Lacey Act count. The man admitted transporting and selling 12,140 pounds of striped bass from Rhode Island to Massachusetts, knowing that the striped bass was harvested illegally.

A cooperative investigation with the Maine Warden Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives culminated in the sentencing of a Maine resident to one year in prison for killing a bald eagle and illegally possessing a firearm.

Wildlife inspectors and special agents on the Service's Special Operations Team in New York planned, coordinated, and conducted multiple special inspection blitzes at cargo, international mail, and other facilities at JFK International Airport. These "blitzes" targeted illegal imports of injurious mitten crabs, CITES-listed corals, caviar, and other products made from protected species.

In FY 2012, Service wildlife inspectors in the Northeast refused clearance on unlawful shipments resulting in civil penalty assessments of over \$47,000; the collection of \$19,675 in criminal penalties; the seizure of goods valued at over \$1.4 million; and the re-export of more than \$1.8 million worth of unlawfully imported merchandise. These inspection successes helped protect such species as vicuñas,



*A wildlife inspector in Newark examines a shipment of ivory carvings. B. Butcher/USFWS*

bobcats, markhor, agarwood, rhino and elephant.

Inspectors supported the Service's efforts to ensure humane transport of wildlife being imported into the country. In one case in which more than 100 specimens died, a commercial air carrier and reptile dealer paid \$6,500 in penalties for the inhumane shipping of live reptiles and amphibians into the United States.

In response to problems documented by a 7-year Service/State investigation

of striped bass trafficking in the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River; the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission passed regulations for mandatory law enforcement requirements for all Atlantic Coast States that have a commercial striped bass fishery. For over a year, Service and State task force members worked with fishery managers, biologists, and State enforcement chiefs in recommending this action. These coordinations represent the first time that law enforcement has guided Commission management of a fish

species on the East Coast. The joint investigation secured the Federal felony convictions of 14 commercial fishermen, five owners of fish wholesale businesses, and three companies. Penalties included 140 months of prison sentences, 58 years of supervised release, and more than \$1.6 million 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 federally 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 also 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 and hinder conservation efforts.

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, which are co-located in Colorado.

## Accomplishments

An undercover investigation of illegal take and trafficking in eagles for the "parts" trade documented crimes that



*A number of Service/State investigations documented illegal commercial elk hunting operations. G. Bauer/USFWS*

## PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

*Golden eagle. T. Hisgett/Wikimedia Commons*

impact eagle resources and conservation in Montana and South Dakota. Operation Rolling Thunder resulted in the successful Federal prosecution of all U.S. defendants. Crimes acknowledged in plea agreements totaled 14 felonies and nine misdemeanor violations; defendants will collectively serve 55 months in custody, 16 months in home or community confinement, and 15 years on probation. Fines and restitution exceeded \$102,000.

Operation Cimarron, a five-year Service/State investigation, exposed a ring of poachers responsible for the largest illegal commercial killing of whitetail deer in the history of the State of Kansas. Service agents and State officers from Kansas, Texas, and Louisiana secured the successful prosecution of 27 wildlife law violators, including the two commercial guides who charged clients as much as \$5,500 to poach trophy deer. One was sentenced to 41 months in prison and the other to 27. In total, Operation Cimarron

resulted in five felony and more than 20 misdemeanor convictions involving \$97,500 in fines, \$159,500 in restitution, 51 years of lost hunting privileges, and the forfeiture of more than 100 mounts, five firearms and one bow.

A Service special agent secured the indictment and arrest of a South Dakota man who killed an endangered whooping crane near Miller, South Dakota, on Federal wildlife and witness tampering charges.

A Montana man was sentenced for killing and commercializing in eagles and hawks after pleading guilty to five felony and misdemeanor wildlife charges. The judge placed him on probation for three years and ordered him and his father (who was charged in the case along with four other co-defendants) to pay \$98,500 in restitution for use by non-profit migratory bird rehabilitation organizations.



*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 4 years active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1981-1985.*



*Eagle electrocutions, poisonings, and shootings are a major enforcement concern in the Mountain Prairie Region. USFWS*

## Repository Programs

The Mountain Prairie Region law enforcement program manages the National Wildlife Property Repository and the National Eagle Repository, which are co-located on the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge outside of Denver, Colorado. These facilities support the Service's law enforcement, migratory bird permit, and educational outreach programs nationwide. Both are funded from criminal fine monies deposited in the Lacey Act Reward Account.

The National Wildlife Property Repository receives, stores, and distributes wildlife property that has been abandoned or forfeited to the government as the result of Service wildlife inspections and wildlife crime investigations. This Repository loans wildlife products to public scientific and educational institutions, State agencies, and Service offices for use in conservation education.

The National Eagle Repository supplies whole eagles and eagle feathers and parts to enrolled members of federally recognized Native American tribes for religious use under a Service permit program. The Repository strives to meet the needs of tribal members and is working with tribal representatives throughout the United States to improve Native American access to eagles and eagle parts.



*Deer trophies seized during Operation Cimarron. USFWS*

A Wyoming oil company investigated for violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act agreed to make \$7.5 million in retrofits to its facilities and pay a \$7,000 criminal fine.

A Kansas man who pleaded guilty to shooting and killing a golden eagle has been ordered to pay \$8,000 in fines and restitution for violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. He will also spend three years on probation while banned from hunting, fishing or trapping and must complete 50 hours of community service.

A man who trapped and killed a bald eagle in North Dakota was sentenced to pay \$5,000 in fines and restitution and spend a year on probation while banned from hunting or trapping in any State.

A long-time big game hunting outfitter was convicted by a Federal jury in Denver on six charges of violating the Lacey Act after a week-long trial. The defendant, who has operated an outfitting business since the late 1980s, provided illegal multi-day baited elk and deer hunts to non-resident clients in the White River National Forest for between \$1,200 and \$1,600 over a 5-year period.

A South Dakota man investigated by the Service and the South Dakota Game and Fish Department pleaded guilty to violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Lacey Act as well as State violations of aiding and abetting the unlawful hunting of big game and aiding and abetting over-hunting pheasants. In total, the man was sentenced to pay \$4,000 in fines and \$30,325 in restitution and civil penalties and lost his hunting privileges for one year.

Three subjects investigated by Service agents and State partners were sentenced for illegally trafficking in big game trophies. The owner of a Ten Sleep, Wyoming, outfitting company was sentenced to five months in prison; his brother was put on probation for three years; and a hunter was sentenced to 30 days of home confinement. The brothers were also ordered to pay \$75,000 in restitution to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The owner admitted to taking more than a dozen out-of-state hunters on illegal hunts on his family's property at prices averaging \$7,500 each.



*Agents investigated a Colorado outfitter and guides for capturing and maiming bobcats and other big game species to set up “sure-fire” hunts for clients.*  
G. Kramer/USFWS

A Service/State investigation of a group of Nebraskans who violated the Lacey Act by unlawfully taking deer in Kansas and Nebraska secured the prosecution of nine individuals and the payment of \$14,650 in fines and \$12,750 in restitution.

A Colorado man involved in an unlawful “canned” hunting operation pleaded guilty to a one-count information charging him with felony conspiracy. The charge grew out of a two-year investigation of an outfitter and guides who captured and maimed mountain lions and bobcats and then made the injured animals available to hunters paying as much as \$5,000 per so-called “hunt.” Additional prosecutions are expected.

The final defendant in Operation Sunnyview was sentenced, wrapping up a joint Service/Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks investigation that documented an extensive 5-year elk poaching operation in that State. A father and son from Oregon who, as guides, were the main defendants in this case were fined \$60,000 in Federal court and ordered to pay \$20,000 in

restitution to the State. Both were also banned from hunting for life anywhere in the world and may never fish or trap in Montana again.

A South Dakota resident who pleaded guilty to violating the Archeological Resources Protection Act was fined \$618, ordered to pay \$4,382 in restitution, and forfeited 710 artifacts. The restitution money helped pay the costs of packing and transporting 425 of the stolen artifacts back to the Navaho Nation in Arizona.

The Region's Special Agent in Charge and the supervisor of the National Eagle Repository conducted a series of tribal consultations throughout the United States to discuss the processing of requests for eagles from the Repository and identify ways to reduce waiting times for tribal members.



# Alaska Region

The Alaska Region encompasses over 220 million acres of Federal and State lands and waters (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 fisheries, sought-after 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 big game commercial hunting operations; and works with Native Alaska communities on subsistence and wildlife enforcement issues. Service special agents conduct investigations and deal with compliance and enforcement issues from the Arctic tundra to the Aleutian coastline. The Region's wildlife inspectors (who are stationed in Anchorage) monitor wildlife trade at five of the State's Customs ports of entry, processing some 7,000 shipments each year.

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, including the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. Enforcement challenges include protecting migratory birds and such marine mammals as walrus, polar bear, and sea otter.

## Accomplishments

Two Alaska residents who illegally sold and transported some 230 pounds of walrus tusks were sentenced after pleading guilty to Federal felony charges for conspiracy, illegal firearms possession, and Lacey Act violations. Penalties in this cooperative



*Walrus ivory seized by Service agents in trafficking investigation.* USFWS

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Pacific walrus.* USFWS

investigation, which was led by Service special agents with assistance from Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives special agents and Alaska wildlife troopers, included prison terms of nine years and 3½ years for the pair. Investigators documented the unlawful sale of walrus ivory and polar bear hides to non-Alaska Native buyers in Alaska, Colorado, other States, and other countries. As part of the investigation, the Service issued Violation Notices to 10 individuals from the Saint Lawrence Island village of Savoonga, Alaska, for providing raw walrus ivory to the defendants in exchange for cash, drugs, firearms, and other items.

This walrus ivory and gun trafficking investigation also led to the recovery of five valuable fine art paintings from the Victorian era that had been stolen in 2005 from a collector in New England during a household move. The defendants offered

undercover Service agents a “finders fee” if they could find a buyer for the paintings, which included a canvas by the well-known pre-Raphaelite painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The walrus ivory traffickers claimed to have bought the paintings from a relative, who purportedly stole them while partying with the original thieves. The latter were never arrested, and the owner of the art received \$400,000 for the stolen works as payment on an insurance claim.

Service special agents, Alaska wildlife troopers, and Canadian national and provincial wildlife authorities are conducting an ongoing investigation of unlawful brown and black bear guiding that has already connected two separate commercial guide operations with large-scale (and lucrative) illegal hunting in the northern part of southeast Alaska. Charges are possible in both the United States and Canada for as many as 20



*Alaska Region Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Stanley Pruszenski began his law enforcement career in 1980 as a border patrol agent in southern Texas. In 1986, he joined the Service's Office of Law Enforcement as a special agent stationed in Sacramento, California. In 1991, he was able to fulfill a life-long dream of becoming an agent/pilot in Alaska. He served in that capacity until 1997 when he transferred to headquarters and worked for the Branch of Training and Inspection and the Branch of Investigations. In 2000, Pruszenski was selected as the SAC for the law enforcement program in Alaska and was able to return to that State. He holds a B.S. degree in wildlife management from the University of Maine.*



*Agents secured the conviction of a master guide whose crimes included unlawfully "subletting" his hunting lease on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.*  
J. Goldman/USFWS

possible subjects and four businesses involved in an array of hunting violations (including airborne hunting) as well as such crimes as falsifying export documents. Search warrants executed in connection with this investigation resulted in the seizure of 11 bear hides or body mounts, three mountain goat trophies, one Dall sheep trophy, numerous mounted waterfowl, a PA-18 Super Cub aircraft, two boats, multiple ATVs, a cargo trailer, weapons, and a truck.

An Alaska man convicted of felony violations of the Lacey Act for falsely identifying Alaskan smoked salmon strips that were being unlawfully sold

in interstate commerce was sentenced to five years probation, a \$5,000 fine, and 250 hours of community service.

In June, Service special agents, refuge officers, and Alaska wildlife troopers worked together on the Kuskokwim River to enforce an emergency order closing fishing on the river. On one evening alone, officers seized approximately 1,000 pounds of salmon along with 18 fishing nets and issued 30 State citations for fishing closed waters and violating net mesh size restrictions.

A major international oil company was cited with unauthorized take of



*Caribou are among the big game species available to hunters in Alaska.*  
E&G Bauer/USFWS

a marine mammal and assessed a \$10,000 fine in connection with the killing of a polar bear in August 2011. The company was authorized by the Service to use non-lethal hazing techniques to harass polar bears that posed a threat to company employees working on Endicott Island, an oil production site on the North Slope. In an attempt to haze a polar bear away from the oil production site, security personnel working for the company shot the animal with what they believed was a bean bag round. The round fired turned out to be a cracker shell, and the bear died from injuries caused by the shell entering its body.

A subject charged with failing to tag sea otters and report the kills admitted killing and transporting 87 sea otters in 2008 in Craig, Alaska. Alaska Natives are allowed to hunt sea otters under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, but hunters must properly tag the animals and report their take to the Service. The subject hunted with a non-Native Alaskan hunter, and the pair collected and sold some \$30,000 worth of otter pelts. In a plea agreement, the subject pleaded guilty to three counts of illegally selling marine mammals killed in violation of this Federal wildlife protection law. The agreement called for him to forfeit 144 sea otter pelts and portions of pelts, spend six months in prison, and pay a \$10,000 fine.

A long-time master guide in Alaska who was the subject of a 34-count Federal indictment pleaded guilty to 16 violations connected with his business operations in Alaska, which included unlawful sheep and caribou hunts and illegally subletting his use area on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to another individual. He was fined \$125,000 and put on probation for five years during which he may not engage in hunting or guiding anywhere or accompany anyone else engaged in these activities.

A Tennessee man was sentenced in Anchorage, Alaska, after pleading guilty to one Lacey Act felony count for the sale of an illegally purchased polar bear, one misdemeanor Lacey Act charge for the sale of a walrus tusk, and one misdemeanor Lacey Act count for the sale of a black rhino foot. The man was fined \$30,000, placed on probation for three years, and ordered to forfeit all remaining illegal animal products (including rhino horns) that were in his possession.



*An ongoing investigation in southeast Alaska promises multiple U.S. and Canadian prosecutions for illegal brown and black bear guiding.*  
S. Hillebrand/USFWS

A resident of Craig, Alaska, who agreed to sell raw and tanned sea otter pelts to a non-Alaska Native (a Service undercover agent) pleaded guilty to violating the Marine Mammal Protection Act and was ordered to pay a \$2,500 fine and spend two years on

probation while banned from hunting, possessing, or transporting marine mammals. Alaska Natives may take sea otters and sell their pelts to non-Natives only when the hides have been “substantially altered” and made into an authentic Native handicraft.



# 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 open wild spaces to snow-capped crags in the high Sierras, from rich farmland in the valleys to rain-soaked redwood forests along the Pacific coast. 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 wildlife shipments.

Conservation enforcement issues in the Region range from the growing impact of renewable energy projects on wildlife resources to illegal international and interstate trade in commodities that range from injurious species to global and State wildlife resources barred from import/export or commercial exploitation. Partnership efforts with the States and other Federal agencies include joint investigations, covert and overt task force operations targeting such issues as wolf protection and wildlife trafficking, assistance with eagle and migratory bird industrial take enforcement, endangered species protection, and cooperative training and compliance outreach activities.

## Accomplishments

Service Law Enforcement helped secure the voluntary removal of power poles and overhead lines (now placed underground)



*Agents helped reduce electrocution threats to California condors near Big Sur.*  
G. Kramer/USFWS

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Agents helped investigate a 2007 oil spill near the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.* Almonroth/Wikimedia Commons

by a utility whose operations were responsible for the deaths of three endangered California condors in recent years. This project, which cost an estimated \$4.2 million, involved the removal of 46 wooden power poles and approximately 13,000 feet of overhead utility line near Big Sur in northern California, effectively eliminating any

future risk of condor collisions. This same company also reported voluntarily retrofitting 2,522 poles or other equipment with bird protection devices at a cost of approximately \$18.8 million.

The company responsible for a 2007 cargo vessel collision with the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge entered



*Jill Birchell became the Special Agent in Charge of law enforcement in the Pacific Southwest Region 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.*

a \$36.8 million natural resources damages settlement agreement with State and Federal agencies to compensate for the environmental impact of the resulting oil spill. The vessel ruptured its hull when it hit the bridge, dumping some 58,000 gallons of medium grade fuel oil into the water; most of the oil spread to central San Francisco Bay and the outer coast. Service special agents participated in the criminal investigation that set the stage for this settlement, securing a 10-month prison term for the boat's pilot and \$10 million in criminal fines and community service payments from the company.

A Japanese national investigated for spearheading an international wildlife trafficking ring specializing in CITES-protected turtles and tortoises was sentenced to 21 months in Federal prison and ordered to pay an \$18,403 criminal fine. This individual was arrested at Los Angeles International Airport in January 2011 in a foiled smuggling attempt involving 55 live turtles and tortoises. Service investigators showed that this defendant and his paid couriers made 42 trips to and from the United States from 2004 through 2011.

A Service/State investigative team in southern California conducted 13 "buy/busts" during a 14-day Service-planned operation targeting unlawful online sales of wildlife, which secured the seizure of over 46 wildlife items valued at more than \$25,000. As a result of Operation Cyberwild, 12 defendants were charged in 2012 and successfully prosecuted in either Federal or State court for

violations that included offering to sell endangered species in interstate commerce, trafficking in injurious wildlife, and sale of migratory birds.

The Los Angeles law enforcement office planned, organized, and coordinated Operation Wild Web – a two-week national and international buy/bust enforcement blitz designed to deter the widespread use of the internet to commit Federal and State wildlife crimes. Service special agents from six regions teamed with State officers in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, New York, Massachusetts, and Florida to "work the web" during this operation. The Royal Thai Police and enforcement officers in Singapore and Indonesia also participated. Some 137 buy/busts were completed; wildlife seized included live protected birds, invasive species, tiger and leopard pelts, and products made from such endangered species as sea turtle, jaguar, and ocelot.

Special agents worked numerous buy/bust operations with the assistance of State officers throughout Northern California. In one investigation, a



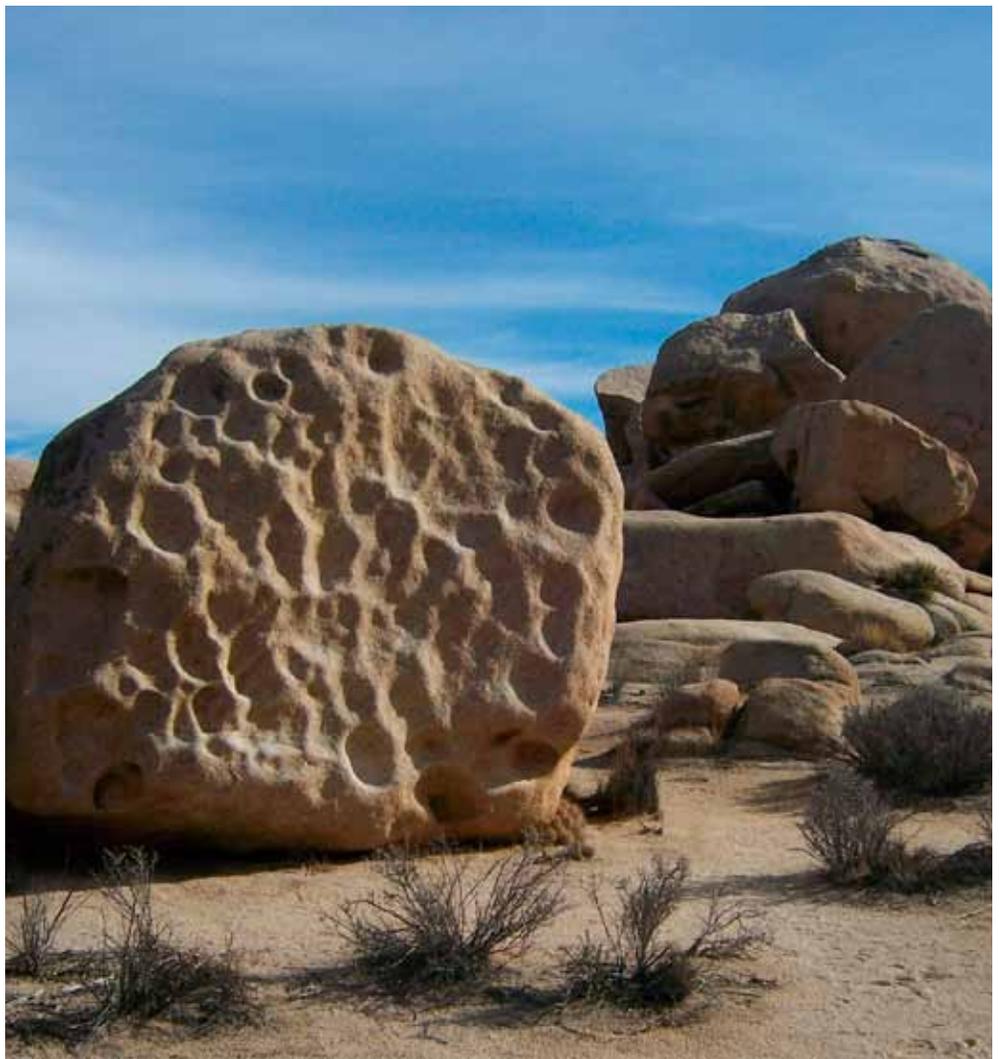
*Officers in Los Angeles intercepted a shipment of smuggled turtles and tortoises hidden in snackfood boxes. USFWS*

subject was sentenced to six months in prison and ordered to pay \$2,200 in restitution for knowingly selling numerous endangered and otherwise protected species (including a juvenile bald eagle) on the internet for tens of thousands of dollars. Other protected big game animals illegally sold or offered for sale included taxidermy mounts of a Siberian tiger for \$15,000; a polar bear for \$6,500; a Kodiak bear for \$14,000; a black bear for \$3,800; the summer coat of a grizzly bear for \$4,500; a grizzly shoulder mount for \$2,500; a cheetah rug for \$900; and a black panther for \$4,500. Other buy/bust efforts documented the sale of waterfowl, other migratory birds, and State-listed injurious species.

Special agents in Sacramento concluded a habitat destruction investigation involving endangered vernal pool fairy shrimp and California tiger salamanders. Under a civil settlement agreement, the subject must purchase 12 acres of preservation credits benefiting the two protected species, valued at \$456,000. Other required actions include granting and conveying a Service-approved perpetual conservation easement to 421 acres to a nonprofit Service-approved third party and establishing a non-wasting endowment to pay for easement management, valued at \$566,896.

In Reno, Nevada, Service agents worked with Service biologists and the Solicitor's office to resolve a habitat destruction case involving the take of threatened Railroad Valley springfish by the Nevada Department of Transportation. Under a settlement agreement, the Department committed to buying and installing a Service-approved fish screen on the PVC outflow pipe at the Big Spring springhead, and creating and aligning a new stream channel to provide more usable habitat for this protected fish. These efforts will cost approximately \$35,380.

Special agents continued to work closely with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to address ongoing illegal take of migratory birds at contaminant sites operated by large utility companies in the southern part of that State. This ongoing effort has documented hundreds of duck, grebe, and shorebird deaths linked to super-saline ponds, evaporation ponds, and other facilities. One company indicated that it plans to install a bird



*A Service enforcement operation at Joshua Tree National Park targeted illegal reptile collectors. © Jarek Tuszynski/Wikimedia Commons*

deterrent radar system at a cost of approximately \$2 million.

The first confirmed sighting of a gray wolf in California since 1924 occurred in December 2011 with the arrival of "OR7," a radio-collared, sub-adult male that dispersed from a pack in Oregon. The Office of Law Enforcement worked extensively with USDA-Wildlife Services and the California Department of Fish and Game to create a Federal/State coordination plan, a mortality response protocol, and gray wolf information for public outreach. Service and State officers also conducted overt and covert patrols to ensure OR7's well-being.

In San Diego, Service special agents and wildlife inspectors teamed with State counterparts and officers from NOAA-Fisheries and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to inspect pleasure boats returning to the United States from Mexico. This cooperative

effort was the first operation of this type in southern California since the late 1990s.

Five special agents participated in a two-night interagency enforcement operation to address illegal reptile collection at Joshua Tree National Park in California. The operation, which also involved National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management rangers and State game wardens, resulted in the issuance of multiple citations for possession of reptile collecting equipment and other violations.

Agents worked with refuge officers, California wardens, local and county authorities, and others to make five arrests and execute search warrants related to a marijuana grow site on Sutter National Wildlife Refuge. Approximately \$1 million worth of marijuana was seized.

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# Wildlife Inspection Program

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

In FY 2012, Service wildlife inspectors policed wildlife trade at 18 designated ports and 20 other locations (many along either the Nation's northern or southern border). The number of inspectors looking at shipments reached a record high of 143.

Inspectors examined some 184,000 shipments, monitoring a several billion-dollar legal trade for compliance with wildlife import/export regulations. Inspectors also conducted proactive inspections to intercept smuggled wildlife as well as special inspection operations or blitzes targeting contraband that ranged from live injurious mitten crabs and red coral jewelry in New York City to live reptiles in Florida and sturgeon caviar in Los Angeles.

Inspectors worked closely with counterparts from U.S. Customs and Border Protection and other Federal inspection agencies. At many ports and border crossings, they provided wildlife import/export training to these officers, broadening the reach of wildlife law enforcement in the global trade arena.

In FY 2012, inspectors also provided training on combating illegal wildlife trade to counterparts around the world. The inspection staff at Miami International Airport, for example, hosted 22 inspectors from Central America and the Dominican Republic at the Miami International Airport in February 2012 for an intensive two-week training program in support of the recently formed Central American Wildlife Enforcement Network (CA-WEN).

Wildlife inspectors from Tampa teamed with Intelligence Unit staff and Traffic North America to conduct the first-ever



*Inspector in Seattle “suits up” in protective gear before checking a live primate shipment. USFWS*

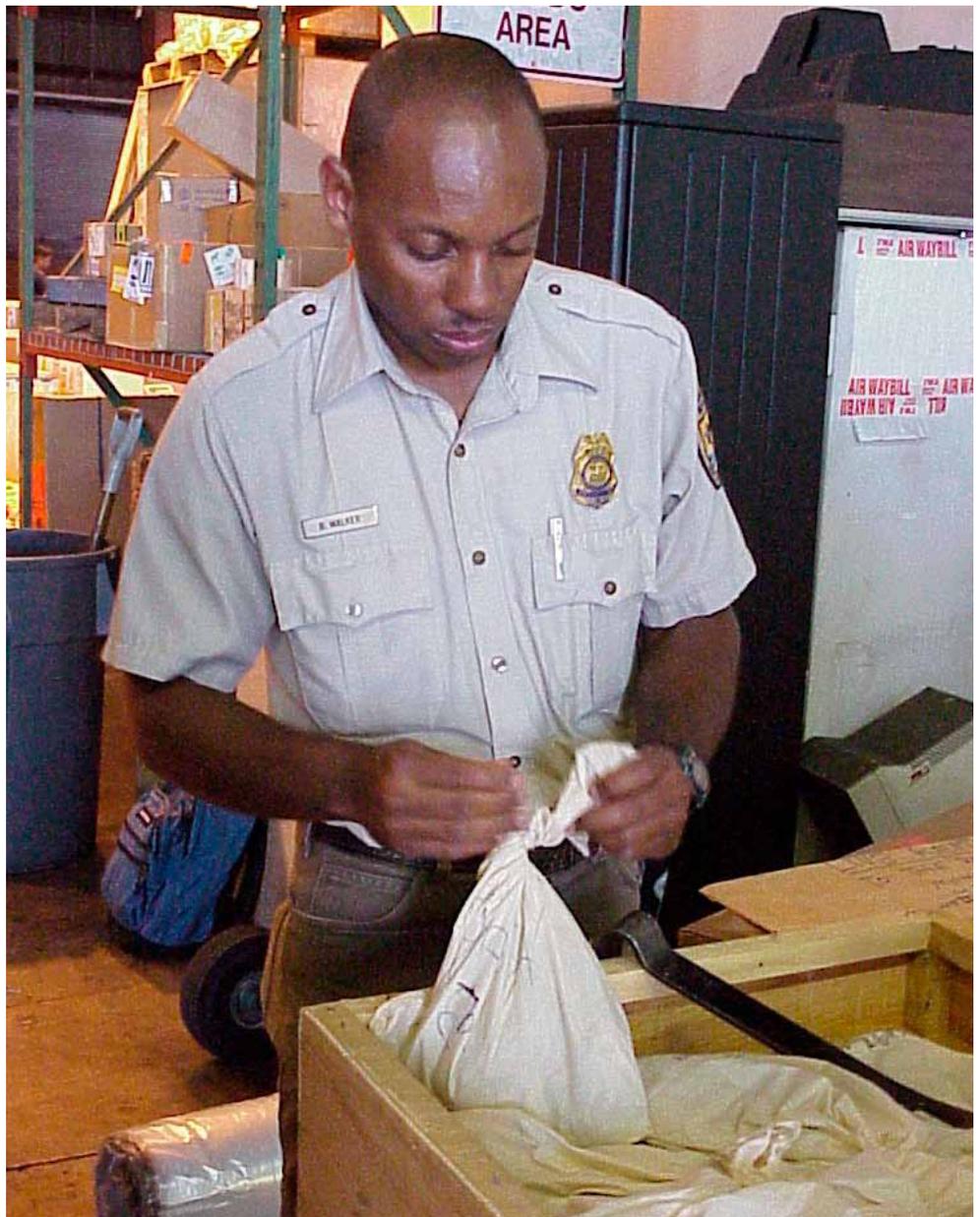
PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *Inspectors work at both air and ocean cargo facilities. B. Butcher/USFWS*

national coral identification workshop for officers with Environment Canada. An inspector from San Francisco served on the Office of Law Enforcement training team that conducted a two-week training program for wildlife officers from sub-Saharan Africa at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana in

June. In September, under the auspices of the Interior Department's International Technical Assistance Program, the Service wildlife inspector stationed in Puerto Rico presented training on wildlife smuggling interdiction and detecting permit fraud in Panama to officers from that country and other nations participating in CA-WEN.

## 2012 Wildlife Inspection Activity

Port of Entry	FY 2012 Shipments
<b>Designated Ports</b>	
Anchorage, AK	7,234
Atlanta, GA	3,569
Baltimore, MD	3,538
Boston, MA	2,718
Chicago, IL	6,317
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX	9,047
Honolulu, HI	4,710
Houston, TX	2,097
Los Angeles, CA	25,337
Louisville, KY	12,292
Memphis, TN	13,729
Miami, FL	11,182
New Orleans, LA	865
Newark, NJ	16,057
New York, NY	29,824
Portland, OR	902
San Francisco, CA	6,284
Seattle, WA	2,996
Designated Ports	158,698
Non-designated Ports	18,882
Non-staffed Ports	6,984
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>184,564</b>



*Inspector checks reptile shipment at Miami International Airport. USFWS*



*Coral shipment seized in Los Angeles. USFWS*

# Seizure Sampler

*Shipments refused clearance during FY 2012 included:*

- A package of orangutan skulls shipped by mail to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)
- 100 live juvenile spectacled caimans (a threatened species) transiting New York's John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport on their way from Guyana to the Czech Republic
- More than 11,000 dried sea fans in a 40-foot ocean container imported into Miami from Haiti
- 330 pounds of blue and yellow abalone shell imported from Mexico at the San Ysidro, California, border crossing
- Bushmeat smuggled into Houston by a passenger from Equatorial Guinea
- Multiple seizures of elephant toenails in Los Angeles
- 26 live corals arriving in Miami from Indonesia with an invalid CITES permit
- Two international mail shipments of CITES skins and feathers being exported from Chicago to Japan
- In Newark, New Jersey, 75 elephant ivory carvings and sea turtle items imported from Great Britain falsely manifested as "toys"
- 12.4 kilograms of sea cucumber hidden in car crossing the border at San Ysidro
- 113 live CITES corals hidden in a tropical fish shipment at JFK
- 80 live giant catfish (an endangered species) at LAX
- Shark cartilage pills imported via El Paso, Texas, that tested positive for opiates
- A \$30,000 shipment of python leather handbags imported into Houston without a CITES permit
- 107 CITES-listed corals from a container shipment exported from the Solomon Islands to Tampa
- A shipment of falsely declared feathered Mardi Gras masks arriving in New Orleans from China
- A \$9,800 shipment of exotic wildlife mounts leaving Washington D.C. for Saudi Arabia
- 5,650 grams of sturgeon caviar from two travelers arriving at LAX from Turkey
- 19 boxes of live rock in transit through Miami from Haiti without CITES permits
- Seven pallets of CITES Appendix II agarwood products shipped as ocean cargo to the Port of Baltimore without permits
- Seven Peruvian snakes (including five venomous specimens) from a traveler at Dallas/Ft. Worth International Airport
- Two African elephant ivory tusks from a cargo shipment in Atlanta
- Three shipments of fish (including one of CITES-listed Amazonian cod from Brazil) imported via Jacksonville and Miami
- Over 8,900 artist brushes made from wildlife hair in Norfolk, Virginia
- Seven ivory tusks, a hippo tooth, and several wildlife handbags from the luggage of a 63-year-old woman returning from Greece at LAX
- A shipment imported via Miami from Haiti containing 343 undeclared stony corals and 122 queen conch shells
- 1,700 framed butterflies (including CITES species) imported from China to Tampa
- 24 pieces of elephant ivory being exported by an auction house via the International Mail Facility at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport



# Support for Officers in the Field

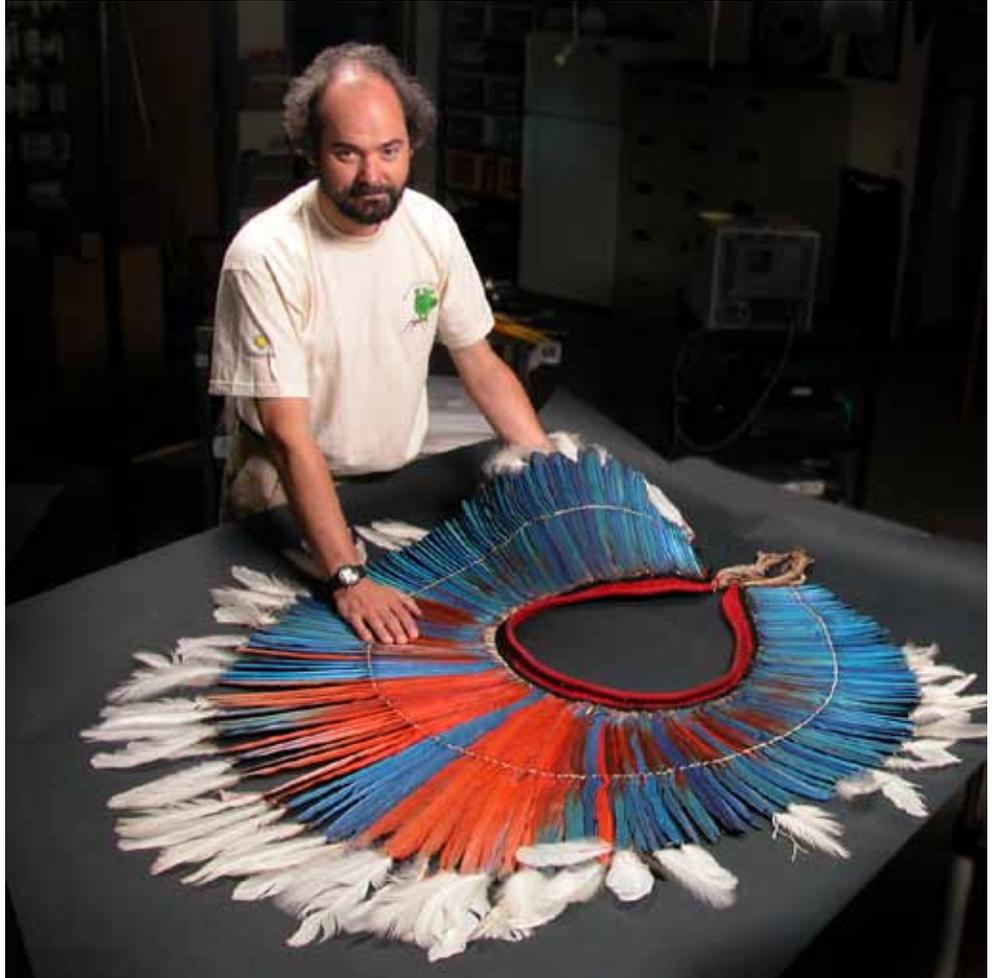
The Office of Law Enforcement supports the work of its special agents and wildlife inspectors in the field by providing national policy guidance, professional training, and administrative and technical support. The program's state-of-the-art infrastructure also includes three special units that provide 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.

In March 2012, after a week-long inspection, the Laboratory earned reaccreditation for the fourth time under the strict Forensics Quality Services guidelines. The accreditation process requires laboratories to demonstrate that their forensic analyses, management, operations, personnel, procedures, equipment, physical plant, security, and health and safety procedures meet rigorous established crime lab standards.

In FY 2012, Laboratory scientists supported 353 wildlife crime investigations, examining 2,797 individual items of evidence. In addition to this caseload, specialists in the Morphology Unit handled 372 requests 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 1,240 individual photos and upholding clearance refusal for more than 50 percent of the shipments represented.



*Feather identification is among the services provided by the Laboratory's ornithologist. USFWS*

**PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:** *The Laboratory's Morphology section includes a specialist in mammal identification. USFWS*

Laboratory scientists also conducted research to develop new analytical techniques needed in wildlife forensics. Scientists in the Chemistry Unit, for example, developed two new mass spectrometer techniques for analyzing protected timber and a new technique for determining the species of black coral jewelry. The Criminalistics Unit worked out a new way to determine the projectile source of plastic-tip bullets.

In the field of genetics, Laboratory scientists developed a new method for identifying the species source of tanned and leathered reptile skins. The process

involves DNA extraction and sequence analysis. Genetics staff also completed the Laboratory's first polar bear matching case using a newly developed protocol.

The Morphology Unit developed a new near-infrared imaging technique for identifying dyed reptilian leathers and released a new identification guide to decorative feathers seen in the wildlife trade. Scientists in the Pathology Unit developed a new protocol for substantiating wildlife electrocutions using an alternative light source to visually detect changes in keratin in hair



*Scientists at the Service Forensics Laboratory have developed ways to use DNA analysis to identify wildlife evidence. USFWS*

and feathers caused by electric current when gross evidence of electrocution is not immediately obvious.

The Laboratory provided training to new Service special agents, wildlife inspectors, and refuge officers. Forensics scientists were also part of a team that provided crime scene investigation training for the Mexican Federal Police in Oaxaca, Mexico, in February 2012. Two Laboratory genetics experts visited forensics laboratories in Southeast Asia and China to share knowledge and best practices with international wildlife forensics colleagues.

#### **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 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.

# 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



*Conservation of polar bears and other marine mammals is the goal of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Suzanne Miller/USFWS*

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. In addition, the Act places a moratorium on the importation of raw or worked



*Tigers are protected under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, provisions added to the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act in 1998 make it illegal to import, export, or sell any product containing, or labeled as containing, tiger or rhino – species that have been used in the past in traditional medicines. © J. Patrick Fisher/Wikimedia Commons*

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.





**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
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