

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Office of Law Enforcement

Accomplishments 2018

*Protecting the Nation's Wildlife
and Plant Resources*



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

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Front Cover photo: Bald eagle

Back Cover photo: A school teacher took this picture of two orphaned bear cubs in Wyoming while on a class field trip. Thanks to this picture going viral online, the cubs were rescued and transferred to a zoo in Nebraska. Credit: Michelle Giltner



*Acting Assistant Director
Edward J. Grace*

Message from the Assistant Director

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) is committed to bringing justice to those who profit from the trafficking of wildlife; facilitating the legal wildlife trade; protecting our nation from wildlife related diseases and injurious species; assisting tribal, local, state, federal, and international counterparts; and speaking to the public about the importance of our mission.

There are two distinct markets concerning the wildlife trade: the legal and illegal. Transnational organized criminals (TOCs) not only profit from illegal drugs, weapons, and human trafficking, but also from the poaching, smuggling, and illegal sales of wildlife and wildlife products. They run large and profitable criminal schemes that move these illegal products across international borders using a variety of smuggling methods.

To effectively fight global wildlife trafficking, which greatly affects U.S. native species and commerce, the OLE has strategically stationed senior special agent attachés at seven U.S. embassies in areas that experience high rates of wildlife crime. These seven attachés have built trusted partnerships with counterparts in their host countries, facilitated complex international investigations, participated in training programs, and supported OLE special agents who worked U.S. wildlife crime investigations that had international connections.

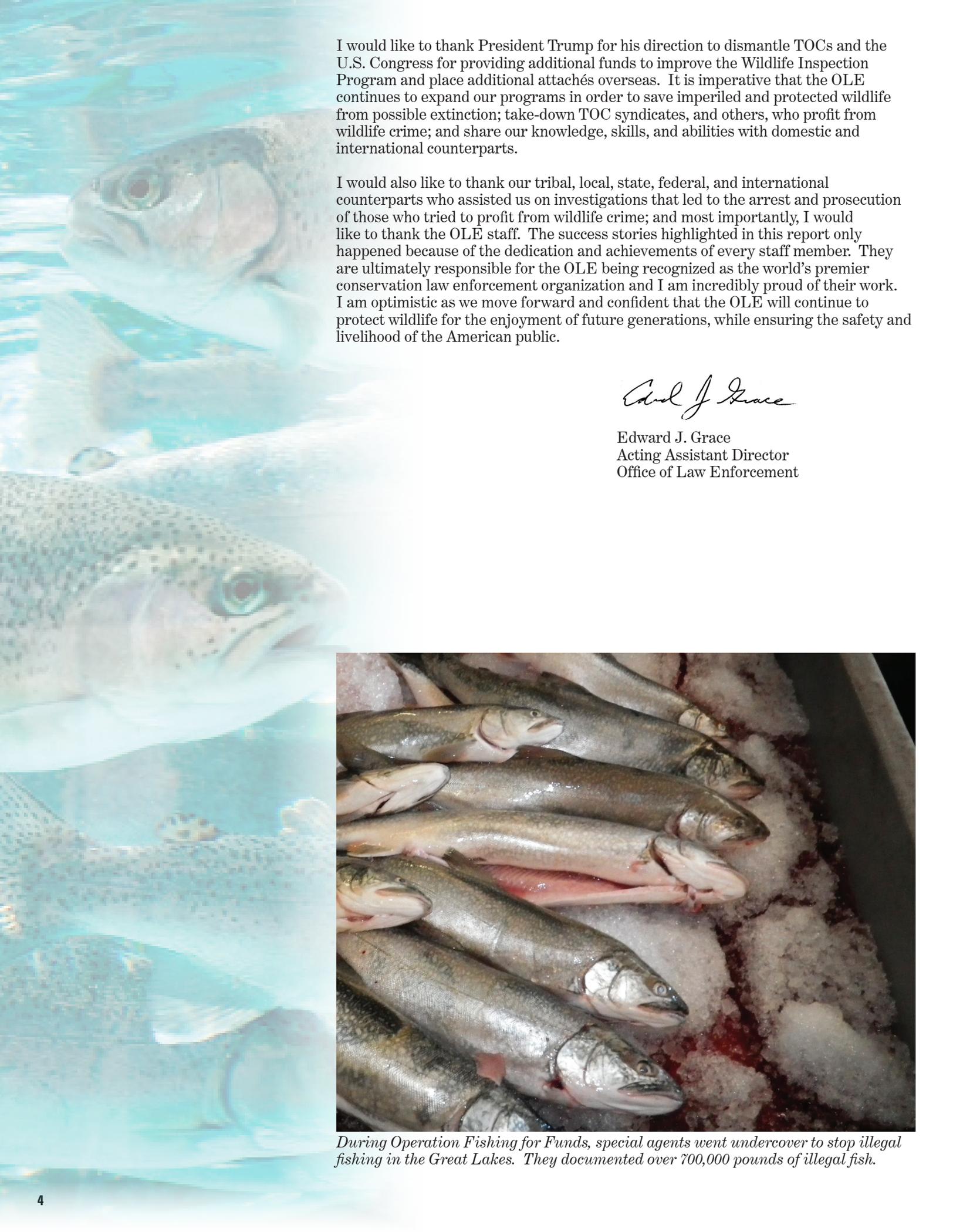
OLE recognizes that comprehensive training is the foundation to any successful law enforcement program. Training is provided to domestic and international law enforcement officers in order to reduce crime, combat terrorism, and dismantle TOCs. In 2018, the OLE provided a cumulative total of 622 training days to thousands of law enforcement officers during 69 domestic and international training missions. The focus of these trainings was to build capacity with international and domestic law enforcement partners, while advancing U.S. interests through international cooperation.

Enforcing federal laws that protect our nation's natural resources, poultry, and livestock; protecting authentic Indian artists from unfair competition caused by counterfeit Indian artwork; and educating the public is equally important to the OLE. Our 2018 accomplishments were impressive. We conducted almost 9,900 wildlife crime investigations, which resulted in \$6.6 million in fines, \$3.8 million in civil penalties, and 57 years in prison. We inspected more than 190,000 declared wildlife shipments that were valued at over \$4.8 billion. After hurricanes devastated and flooded North Carolina and Florida, OLE special agents and conservation law enforcement officers volunteered to assist the rescue teams.

In supporting the field, scientists at the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab examined 2,385 pieces of evidence and 3,115 photos for species identification; the National Wildlife Repository provided tours, distance learning programs, and other outreach activities to almost 3,000 participants; media requests increased by 300%; and staff participated in educational outreach events speaking to thousands in attendance.

In the U.S., the OLE had many successful complex and multi-year investigations such as Operation Fishing for Funds, Operation Ornerly Birds, and Operation Broken Glass. By the end of 2018, these three operations alone were responsible for the prosecution of 50 defendants, who were sentenced to more than 87 years of prison, probation, and home confinement, and ordered to pay more than \$2 million in fines, forfeitures, and restitution.

To expand our capability, the U.S. Congress provided an additional \$2 million in funds to increase the capacity of the Wildlife Inspection Program and also directed the OLE to perform an in-depth study of the program, ultimately to interdict a greater quantity of illegal wildlife and enhance business services to U.S. companies who legally trade in wildlife.



I would like to thank President Trump for his direction to dismantle TOCs and the U.S. Congress for providing additional funds to improve the Wildlife Inspection Program and place additional attachés overseas. It is imperative that the OLE continues to expand our programs in order to save imperiled and protected wildlife from possible extinction; take-down TOC syndicates, and others, who profit from wildlife crime; and share our knowledge, skills, and abilities with domestic and international counterparts.

I would also like to thank our tribal, local, state, federal, and international counterparts who assisted us on investigations that led to the arrest and prosecution of those who tried to profit from wildlife crime; and most importantly, I would like to thank the OLE staff. The success stories highlighted in this report only happened because of the dedication and achievements of every staff member. They are ultimately responsible for the OLE being recognized as the world's premier conservation law enforcement organization and I am incredibly proud of their work. I am optimistic as we move forward and confident that the OLE will continue to protect wildlife for the enjoyment of future generations, while ensuring the safety and livelihood of the American public.



Edward J. Grace
Acting Assistant Director
Office of Law Enforcement



During Operation Fishing for Funds, special agents went undercover to stop illegal fishing in the Great Lakes. They documented over 700,000 pounds of illegal fish.

II. Overview



A CLEO protects manatees from speeding boats.



Service wildlife inspectors protect the health and safety of Americans, native wildlife, and U.S. resources by preventing injurious species from entering the U.S. Photo Credit: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.



An evidence custodian ensures that the seized evidence is documented and stored correctly.

Mission

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) is, “to protect wildlife and plant resources through the effective enforcement of federal laws. By working with federal, state, tribal, and foreign enforcement agencies, and other conservation partners, we help to recover endangered species, conserve migratory birds, preserve wildlife habitat, safeguard fisheries, combat invasive species, and promote international wildlife conservation.”

Focus

Our focus is to investigate wildlife crimes; regulate wildlife trade; help Americans understand and comply with federal conservation laws; work in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and international counterparts to conserve wildlife and plant resources; and protect our nation’s border and natural resources by interdicting illegal wildlife products and injurious species before entering or leaving the country.

Strategic Plan Goals

- Combat global wildlife trafficking
- Protect the nation’s fish, wildlife, and plants from unlawful exploitation, industrial hazards, and habitat loss
- Facilitate and expedite legal trade
- Enhance management accountability

Budget and Staff

The OLE’s final FY 2018 enacted budget was \$75,980,000. This amount was augmented with \$24,848,813 in user fee collections to help offset the cost of the wildlife inspection program. At the end of the fiscal year, the OLE employed 214 special agents, 122 wildlife inspectors, four conservation officers, 26 forensic Laboratory staff, and 135 support staff.

Special Agents and Field Investigations

In 2018, the Service employed 214 special agents to enforce federal wildlife protection laws by conducting investigations, and apprehending individuals charged with violations, throughout the United States and its territories. In addition, special agent attachés assisted international counterparts with wildlife crime investigations, training, and provided access to U.S. resources. Responsibilities under the Lacey Act of 1900 originally consisted of prohibiting the interstate commerce of illegally taken game and preventing the importation of injurious wildlife into the United States. The complexity of investigations has changed through the years from primarily petty offense violations to felony violations involving illegal trafficking in wildlife, both within the United States and foreign countries. Descriptions of successful investigations begin on page 21.

Conservation Law Enforcement Officers

Conservation Law Enforcement Officers (CLEOs) are uniformed officers who patrol throughout an assigned area of responsibility to enforce the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Some of the duties include detecting, investigating, apprehending, detaining, arresting, issuing citations, and assisting in the prosecution of violators who break laws that protect species such as the West Indian manatee in Florida and the Mexican gray wolf in Arizona and New Mexico. Other duties may include assisting special agents, wildlife inspectors, state conservation or wildlife officers, and other law enforcement officers with investigations, surveillance, and warrant executions.

Wildlife Inspectors

Wildlife inspectors are the nation’s front-line defense against the illegal wildlife trade. These professional import-export control officers ensure that wildlife shipments comply with U.S. and international wildlife protection laws.

In 2018, the Service employed 122 uniformed wildlife inspectors who monitored an annual legal trade worth more than \$4 billion. They were stationed at the nation’s major international airports, ocean ports, and border crossings where they stopped illegal shipments, intercepted smuggled wildlife and wildlife products, and helped the United States fulfill its commitment to global wildlife conservation. Detailed information about the Service’s Wildlife Inspection Program begins on page 42.

III. Headquarters

The OLE Headquarters (HQ) is located in Falls Church, Virginia. It provides national leadership, policy development, planning and analysis, and technical administration and support. It acts as a liaison with other federal law enforcement agencies, and drafts and reviews federal regulations. The following are general descriptions of each OLE HQ program.

Office of the Assistant Director

The Assistant Director is the top ranking officer of the OLE, who is responsible for planning, developing, and directing all matters pertaining to investigations and law enforcement throughout the Service. The Assistant Director serves as the Director's principal advisor on all OLE law enforcement activity.

Special Operations Division

The Special Operations Division (SOD) was created in 2011 to consolidate HQ's field operations under one special agent in charge in order to best streamline and focus the work. It is comprised of the following five distinctly different, highly functioning, conservation law enforcement units:

1. The Special Investigations Unit conducts complex, large-scale criminal investigations of wildlife traffickers (See page 21 for more information);
2. The International Operations Unit has senior special agent wildlife law enforcement attachés who are globally stationed at U.S. embassies. They provide the OLE's expertise and resources to international conservation law enforcement counterparts (See page 24 for more information);
3. The Wildlife Intelligence Unit provides analytical support to criminal investigations and liaises with other law enforcement organizations in the Federal Government's Intelligence Community (See page 49 for more information);
4. The Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Surveillance Unit provides state-of-the-art digital evidence collection and technical investigative equipment support to the agents in the field (See page 50 for more information); and
5. The Branch of Training and Inspection provides training to domestic and international conservation law enforcement officers who conduct wildlife-focused criminal investigations (See page 51 for more information).

Investigations Unit

Supervised by a special agent in charge, the Investigations Unit is responsible for ensuring that Service law enforcement policies and procedures are followed nationwide and responds to public and media inquiries on a national level.

The unit is staffed by senior special agents, senior wildlife inspectors, enforcement specialists, and a writer-editor. Together, this unit supports the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the OLE on a myriad of high-level functions. A few examples include ensuring the Service's obligations under Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) are followed; developing program-wide, internal policy; responding to congressional inquiries; writing and publishing public notices to the Federal Register; functioning as a liaison with other programs within the Service; producing or approving all written correspondence for public dissemination; and coordinating the deployment of special agents for natural disaster responses. The unit also serves as the liaison for the International Trade Data System and the Automated Commercial Environment (an electronic database of wildlife imports) with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and communicates with foreign counterparts on behalf of the OLE.





An ornithologist at the forensics lab examines a seized item of evidence that is suspected of being made from macaw feathers.



Special agents process evidence from an investigation seizure.



Wildlife inspectors conduct a targeted inspection looking for illegal wildlife.

Law Enforcement Management Information System

The OLE developed the Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS), which is an interactive, real-time database designed to assist staff in managing their duties and to provide automated control of wildlife permits and trade statistics.

Branch of Planning and Analysis

The Branch of Planning and Analysis is responsible for a wide range of activities pertaining to administrative matters such as budget formulation and execution, workload and funding, monitoring of expenditures, and Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act responses on a national level. It also provides guidance to the regional offices concerning budget and staffing, and serves as the liaison to the OLE for all human resources and contracting functions.

National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab

The National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab (Forensics Lab) opened in September 1988 in Ashland, Oregon. This unique facility provides species-specific identification of wildlife parts and products to assist the Service and individual state and foreign governments in establishing evidence of criminal activities. (See page 48 for additional information about this facility.)

Public Awareness

The Service publicizes the results of major investigations in the belief that publicity will help deter wildlife crime. Other public awareness initiatives include creating airport displays; donating forfeited property for educational purposes; developing brochures and fact sheets; and working with the media in press and television coverage of the Service's enforcement efforts.

In order to reach specific groups, including customs brokers, taxidermists, hunters, importers and exporters, and conservation group members, the Service holds public and professional meetings, gives presentations, and attends outreach events to disseminate information about laws and regulations.



HQ staff hosted a wildlife trafficking table at a media outreach event in Washington, D.C.

IV. Chronology of Historic Events

The goal of the Service in its enforcement efforts is to perpetuate fish and wildlife as national resources by deterring criminal activities. The Service is committed to efforts on behalf of federally protected species, as well as to its continuing partnerships with states, tribes, trust territories, and foreign countries in the interest of conservation.

On September 28, 1972, the Division of Law Enforcement was created as successor to the Division of Management and Enforcement. On April 26, 1973, the former title of U.S. game management agent was changed to special agent. These title changes reflected an overall change in both the Washington Office and field operations. Law enforcement became the primary duty and responsibility of the division.

The following are significant developments in the history of federal wildlife law enforcement:

1900. The Lacey Act took effect as the first federal law protecting game, prohibiting the interstate shipment of illegally taken wildlife, as well as the importation of injurious species. Enforcement of this act became the responsibility of the Division of Biological Survey, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

1905. The Division of Biological Survey became the Bureau of Biological Survey and remained in the Department of Agriculture.

Guy Bradley, a Florida game warden, became the first wildlife law enforcement agent killed while performing his duties to protect the nation's wildlife.

1913. The Federal Migratory Bird Law (Weeks-McLean Law) became effective and the first migratory bird hunting regulations were adopted on October 1, 1913.

1916. The United States signed the Migratory Bird Treaty with Great Britain (for Canada), recognizing migratory birds as an international resource.

1918. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act became law, making it unlawful to take, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, including feathers, parts, nests, or eggs.

1920. In the case of *Missouri v. Holland*, 252 U.S. 416, the United States Supreme Court sustained the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as constitutional, "establishing beyond question the supremacy of the federal treaty-making power as a source of authority for federal wildlife regulation." Citing the state ownership doctrine, Missouri had filed suit to prevent a U.S. game warden from enforcing the act within the state.

1926. The Black Bass Act became law, making it illegal to transport in interstate commerce black bass taken, purchased, or sold in violation of state law.

1934. The Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act became law, requiring all waterfowl hunters aged 16 and over to possess a Duck Stamp.

A Division of Game Management was created in the Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, with responsibility for wildlife law enforcement.

1935. The Lacey Act was expanded to prohibit foreign commerce in illegally taken wildlife.

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board was established by Congress to, "promote the economic development of American Indians and Alaska Natives through the expansion of the Indian arts and crafts market."

1936. The United States signed the Migratory Bird Treaty with Mexico.

1939. The Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Fisheries, Department of Commerce, were transferred to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The goal of the Service in its enforcement efforts is to perpetuate fish and wildlife as national resources by deterring criminal activities.

1940. The Bald Eagle Protection Act became law, prohibiting a variety of activities involving the species, including import, export, take, sell, purchase, or barter.

The Bureau of Biological Survey and the Bureau of Fisheries were combined to form the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior and all law enforcement responsibilities were continued in the Division of Game Management.

1950. Federal Aid Sport Fish Restoration Act, commonly referred to as the “Dingell-Johnson Act” was enacted. It authorized the Secretary of the Interior to provide financial assistance for state fish restoration and management plans and projects from excise taxes on fishing equipment. Grant funds are awarded to U.S. states for conservation purposes.

1951. The program to enforce and manage the protection of migratory waterfowl was expanded by transferring the personnel and funds of the Section of Waterfowl Management Investigations to the Branch of Game Management.

1956. The Fish and Wildlife Service was reorganized into two unique Bureaus: the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and a Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. Wildlife law enforcement responsibilities were placed in the Branch of Management and Enforcement of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

1960. Following an investigation that revealed large-scale market-hunting of waterfowl, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act was amended to include felony provisions for commercial activities.

1962. The Bald Eagle Protection Act became the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and extended protection to golden eagles.

1970. The Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969 became effective prohibiting the importation into the United States of species “threatened with extinction worldwide,” except as specifically allowed for zoological and scientific purposes, and propagation in captivity. The act amended the Black Bass Act to prohibit interstate and foreign commerce of fish taken in violation of foreign law, a provision that the Lacey Act, so that its prohibition on interstate and foreign commerce applied not only to wild birds and mammals, but to other wildlife such as reptiles, mollusks, amphibians, and crustaceans. This amendment was made in an effort aimed primarily at protecting the American alligator.

The Bureau of Commercial Fisheries was transferred to the Department of Commerce and became the National Marine Fisheries Service.

1971. The Airborne Hunting Act was signed into law prohibiting the use of aircraft to hunt or harass wildlife.

1972. The United States signed the Migratory Bird Treaty with Japan. The Migratory Bird Treaty with Mexico was amended to protect additional species, including birds of prey.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 became law, establishing a moratorium on the taking and importing of marine mammals, such as polar bears, sea otters, dugongs, walrus, manatees, whales, porpoise, seals, and sea lions.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act was amended to increase penalties from \$500 or six months imprisonment to \$5,000 or one year, and to add the provision that a second conviction was punishable by a \$10,000 fine or two years imprisonment, or both. In addition, the amendment allowed for informants to be rewarded one-half of the fine, not to exceed \$2,500.

The Division of Management and Enforcement was reorganized. Waterfowl management responsibilities were transferred to the Office of Migratory Bird Management and Division of Management and Enforcement became the Division of Law Enforcement.



Operation Snap involved the unlawful collection of alligator snapping turtles for commercial use. These turtles are all protected under various state laws.



Special agents investigate wildlife crime no matter where it occurs.



1973. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 became law, recognizing that, “endangered species of wildlife and plants are of aesthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the nation and its people.” The Act expanded the scope of prohibited activities to include, not only importation, but exportation, taking, possession and other activities involving illegally taken species, and interstate or foreign commercial activities. It implemented protection for the new “threatened” category, which was defined as, “species likely to become in danger of extinction.”

The field of organization of the Division of Law Enforcement was restructured into 13 law enforcement districts and conservation law enforcement officers received the title of special agent.

1974. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The selection for the first special agents in charge and assistant special agents in charge was announced.

The Branch of Training and Inspection was created to provide law enforcement training to new special agents for the Service and graduated the first Special Agent Basic School cohort.

1975. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora entered into force, regulating the importation, exportation, and re-exportation of species listed on its three appendices.

The first wildlife inspector was hired in New York City to inspect wildlife shipments.

1976. The United States signed the Migratory Bird Treaty with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Service hired wildlife inspectors at eight designated ports of entry to inspect wildlife. The eight ports were Chicago, Illinois; Honolulu, Hawaii; Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; New Orleans, Louisiana; New York City, New York (includes Newark, New Jersey); San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington.

The Branch of Special Operations was created to initiate long-term, covert, wildlife investigations.

The Branch of Training and Inspection relocated to the newly established Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, Glynco, Georgia to provide consolidated federal law enforcement training.

1979. The Supreme Court, in the case of *Andrus v. Allard*, upheld the prohibition of the sale of migratory bird feathers, regardless of whether they were obtained before federal protection took effect.

The number of district offices was reduced to 12 when the Kansas City District Office was consolidated with the Denver, Colorado, District Office.

The Division of Law Enforcement hired a police crime lab director to establish a forensics program for wildlife law enforcement.

1981. The Black Bass and Lacey Acts were repealed and replaced by the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981. A comprehensive statute, the Lacey Act Amendments restored protection for migratory birds, which were removed from the Act in 1969, and initiated protection for plants. The Lacey Act Amendments increased penalties and included a felony punishment scheme to target commercial violators and international traffickers by fines of up to \$20,000 or five years imprisonment, or both.

Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas became a designated port for wildlife entering or leaving the United States.

1982. The Endangered Species Act was amended to include a plant-taking prohibition on federal lands and a new exception allowing the inadvertent, non-commercial transshipment through the United States of endangered fish or wildlife.

The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 prohibits the representation in the marketing of Indian arts and crafts products within the United States.



Native Americans can possess eagle feathers for religious purposes; however, they may not sell them commercially.



Samples of seized items stored at the National Wildlife Repository include traditional medicine packets comprised of illegal tiger parts.

The field organization of the Division of Law Enforcement was reduced from 12 to 7 districts, one for each region of the Service.

1983. The Law Enforcement Management Information System became operational.

1986. The Supreme Court, in the case of Dwight Dion, upheld the applicability of the Eagle Protection Act to Native Americans on reservations.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act was amended to require that felony violations be “knowingly” committed.

1988. The African Elephant Conservation Act became law, providing additional protection for the species, whose numbers had declined by 50 percent in the last decade.

The Lacey Act was amended to include, among other things, felony provisions for commercial guiding violations.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation created the national Guy Bradley Award, which is awarded to one state and one federal law enforcement officer in recognition of an outstanding lifetime contribution to wildlife law enforcement, wildlife forensics, or investigative techniques.

1989. The National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (Forensics Lab), the only full-service crime laboratory for wildlife in the world, was dedicated in Ashland, Oregon. Its mission is to provide forensic expertise to assist in wildlife investigations, ranging from species identification to technical assistance such as surveillance, crime scene investigation, and photography.

1990. Portland, Oregon became a designated port of entry for the importation and exportation of wildlife.

The Forensics Lab was renamed the Clark R. Bavin National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab in 1990 in memory of Clark R. Bavin, Chief, Division of Law Enforcement, from 1972 until his death in 1990.

The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, Public Law 101-644, was enacted. It is a truth-in-advertising law that prohibits misrepresentation in the marketing of Indian arts and crafts products within the United States.

1991. The Forensics Lab developed and published an Identification Guide for Ivory and Ivory Substitutes.

1992. Baltimore, Maryland became a designated port of entry for the importation and exportation of wildlife.

The Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992 was signed into law to address problems with the international trade in wild-caught birds, which contributes both to the decline of the species and to unacceptably high mortality rates.

1994. Boston, Massachusetts was designated as a port of entry for importing and exporting fish and wildlife shipments.

1995. Due to the ever-expanding collection of wildlife property, the National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repositories moved from their location at the Forensics Laboratory in Oregon to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge near Denver, Colorado.

President Clinton establishes the International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEAs) to train international law enforcement officials to reduce crime, combat terrorism, and share knowledge and resources.



1996. Atlanta, Georgia was designated as a port of entry for importing and exporting fish and wildlife shipments.

1997. The Division of Law Enforcement was removed from the supervision of the Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife to report instead directly to the Service director. The Washington Headquarters office was renamed the Office of Law Enforcement.

The Forensics Lab received its first national accreditation under the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors' Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB). The Lab has continued its national accreditation, now ISO-accredited by the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board.

1998. The Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act eliminated strict liability from the enforcement of baiting prohibitions, substituting a "know or reasonably should know" standard for charging individuals for hunting with bait. The Act increased the penalty for hunting over bait and made placing bait a separate federal crime.

The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act was formalized into what it is today, which prohibits the import, export, or sale of any product, item, or substance containing, or labeled as containing, any substance derived from tiger and rhinoceros.

The Forensics Lab was designated the official crime lab of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Wildlife Working Group and INTERPOL. Treaties to this effect were signed at the headquarters of INTERPOL in Lyon, France, by the Secretary of INTERPOL and the Secretary of CITES.

The Service created the Pacific Southwest Region, which administered California and Nevada.

2000. A Service reorganization established the position of Assistant Director for the Division of Law Enforcement within the directorate, providing executive-level leadership for the agency's law enforcement program.

2002. Anchorage, Alaska became a designated port for wildlife trade.

The Secretary of the Interior mandated line authority for all special agents in the Department of the Interior. To meet this requirement, the Division of Law Enforcement was reorganized as the Office of Law Enforcement under the direction of an executive level chief. Regional law enforcement managers who previously reported to Service regional directors became special agents in charge reporting directly to the Assistant Director, Office of Law Enforcement.

The Office of Law Enforcement begins active international capacity building by participating at the ILEA in Botswana.

Service special agents were converted from the general investigator job series to the criminal investigator job series, making Service special agents on par with other federal investigative agencies.

The Branch of Training and Inspection graduated the first criminal investigators cohort at the Special Agent Basic School.

The Forensics Lab developed training materials to instruct African wildlife rangers on how to investigate elephant and rhinoceros kill sites like human homicide crime scenes are investigated.

Operation Crash connected transnational organized crime to wildlife crime.



American paddlefish are sought after for their caviar, which is often exported commercially.



The tiger and bear mounts above were seized during law enforcement actions. They depict the harsh reality of wildlife trafficking.

2003. The Repository underwent a renovation to add a large education room and additional office space for staff.

The Manatee Refuge Officer (MRO) Program was created. Three staff members were permanently detailed to the OLE from the Service's Division of Refuge Law Enforcement. Their mission was to conduct manatee protection, on non-Refuge lands, around the state of Florida.

2004. The MRO Program added two additional MROs, which increased the program staff count to five.

Houston, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky; and Memphis, Tennessee became ports of entry for importing and exporting wildlife shipment bringing the nation's total to 18 designated ports.

2005. Due to beluga sturgeon being critically endangered, importing caviar into the United States from the Caspian and Black Sea basins becomes illegal.

2006. A 17,000 square foot addition to the 23,000 square foot Forensics Lab was constructed to house modern wildlife pathology, genetics, and bio-safety III isolation labs, along with an escape-proof room for their flesh-eating dermestid beetles.

The Forensics Lab director assisted the International Coral Reef Initiative in developing a program to apply land-based, CSI techniques to damaged coral reefs.

2007. The bald eagle is de-listed, but remains protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

2008. The Lacey Act was amended to include a wider variety of prohibited plants and plant products, including products made from illegally logged woods.

2009. The Office of Law Enforcement initiated the Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit (DERTSU) to provide technical support to field agents in the critical areas of retrieval and analysis of computer-based records and the use of advanced surveillance techniques. The DERTSU consists of two entities: a full-fledged digital forensic laboratory and a highly technical covert surveillance equipment program.

2010. The Office of Law Enforcement's first multi-district, multi-office investigations were created. One was Operation Crash, which was initiated due to the increase of international smuggling of rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory and the other was in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

2011. Operation Crash connected transnational organized crime to wildlife crime.

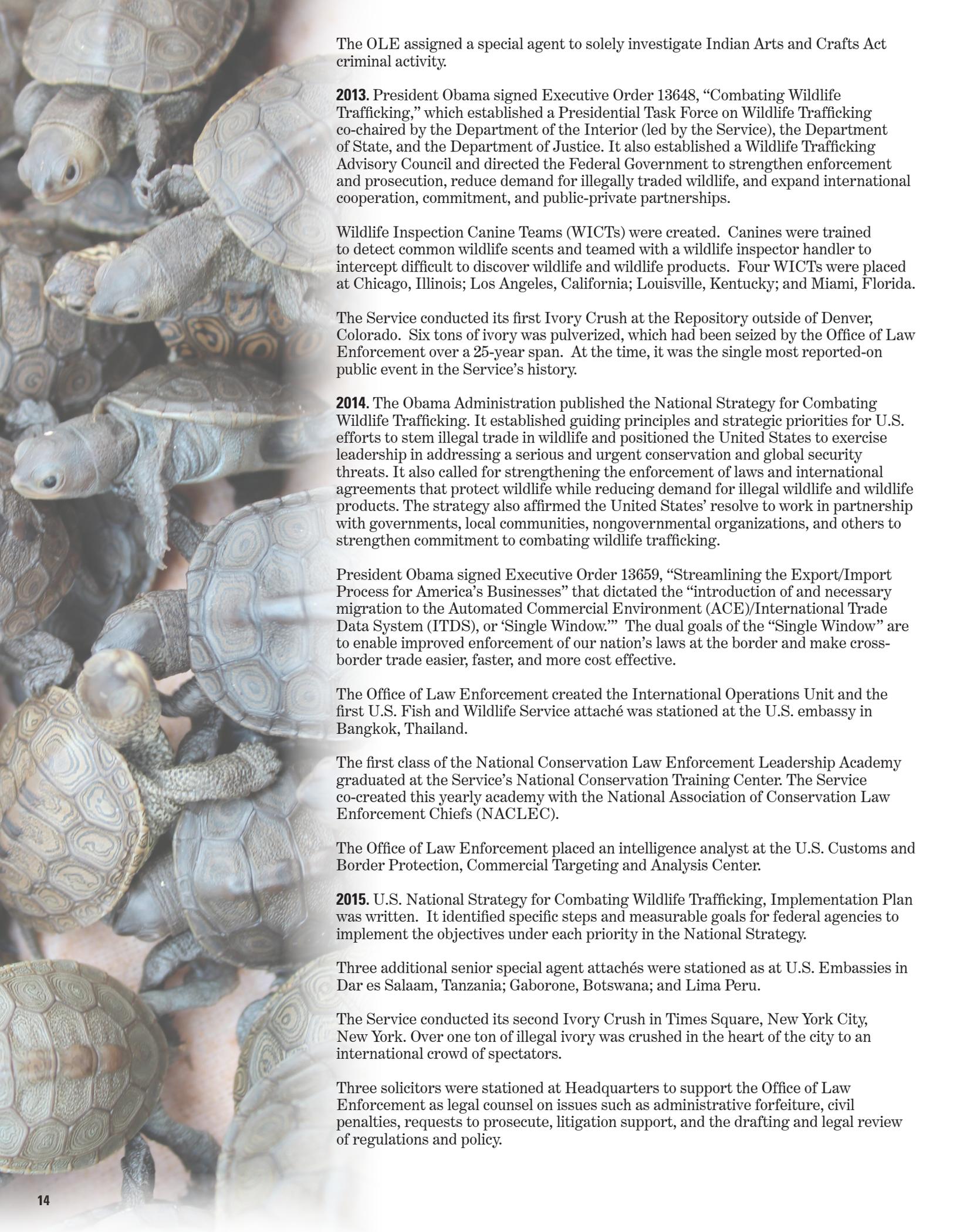
The Special Operations Division was created and ultimately comprised the following five conservation law enforcement units: the Special Investigations Unit (formally the Branch of Special Operations), International Operations Unit, Wildlife Intelligence Unit, DERTSU, and the Branch of Training and Inspection.

2012. The Service and the Indian Arts and Crafts Board signed the Memorandum of Agreement, "to facilitate the cooperation of the two agencies" to conduct Indian Arts and Crafts Act criminal investigations.

The MRO program staff were officially hired by the OLE. Field officers were classified as conservation law enforcement officers (CLEOs) and their duties were expanded to include law enforcement actions to assist in the prosecution of those who violate of a variety of law enforcement laws, rules, and regulations that have been created to ensure the protection of federally protected species and resources.

The Forensics Lab director created a Wildlife Crime Scene Investigation Manual for the Wildlife Working Group of INTERPOL.

The Forensics Lab developed a revolutionary new procedure to ID the species source of kiln-dried wood planks utilizing a newly invented Direct Analysis in Real Time (DART) mass spectrometer to analyze oil molecules found in wood.



The OLE assigned a special agent to solely investigate Indian Arts and Crafts Act criminal activity.

2013. President Obama signed Executive Order 13648, “Combating Wildlife Trafficking,” which established a Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking co-chaired by the Department of the Interior (led by the Service), the Department of State, and the Department of Justice. It also established a Wildlife Trafficking Advisory Council and directed the Federal Government to strengthen enforcement and prosecution, reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife, and expand international cooperation, commitment, and public-private partnerships.

Wildlife Inspection Canine Teams (WICTs) were created. Canines were trained to detect common wildlife scents and teamed with a wildlife inspector handler to intercept difficult to discover wildlife and wildlife products. Four WICTs were placed at Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles, California; Louisville, Kentucky; and Miami, Florida.

The Service conducted its first Ivory Crush at the Repository outside of Denver, Colorado. Six tons of ivory was pulverized, which had been seized by the Office of Law Enforcement over a 25-year span. At the time, it was the single most reported-on public event in the Service’s history.

2014. The Obama Administration published the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking. It established guiding principles and strategic priorities for U.S. efforts to stem illegal trade in wildlife and positioned the United States to exercise leadership in addressing a serious and urgent conservation and global security threats. It also called for strengthening the enforcement of laws and international agreements that protect wildlife while reducing demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products. The strategy also affirmed the United States’ resolve to work in partnership with governments, local communities, nongovernmental organizations, and others to strengthen commitment to combating wildlife trafficking.

President Obama signed Executive Order 13659, “Streamlining the Export/Import Process for America’s Businesses” that dictated the “introduction of and necessary migration to the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE)/International Trade Data System (ITDS), or ‘Single Window.’” The dual goals of the “Single Window” are to enable improved enforcement of our nation’s laws at the border and make cross-border trade easier, faster, and more cost effective.

The Office of Law Enforcement created the International Operations Unit and the first U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service attaché was stationed at the U.S. embassy in Bangkok, Thailand.

The first class of the National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy graduated at the Service’s National Conservation Training Center. The Service co-created this yearly academy with the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC).

The Office of Law Enforcement placed an intelligence analyst at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center.

2015. U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, Implementation Plan was written. It identified specific steps and measurable goals for federal agencies to implement the objectives under each priority in the National Strategy.

Three additional senior special agent attachés were stationed as at U.S. Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Gaborone, Botswana; and Lima Peru.

The Service conducted its second Ivory Crush in Times Square, New York City, New York. Over one ton of illegal ivory was crushed in the heart of the city to an international crowd of spectators.

Three solicitors were stationed at Headquarters to support the Office of Law Enforcement as legal counsel on issues such as administrative forfeiture, civil penalties, requests to prosecute, litigation support, and the drafting and legal review of regulations and policy.

The Operation Crash Team was awarded the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal for excellence in government service.

2016. Congress passed the bipartisan END Wildlife Trafficking Act, which codified the Task Force, National Strategy, and Implementation Plan.

The Service finalized regulations to strengthen ESA trade prohibitions in African elephant ivory, with exemptions for antiques and items containing small amounts of ivory.

An attaché was stationed in Beijing, China and another in Libreville, Gabon.

Four additional Wildlife Inspection Canine Teams were added to the corps. They were stationed at Anchorage, Alaska; Honolulu, Hawaii; Houston, Texas; and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The OLE assigns a second special agent to investigate Indian Arts and Crafts Act criminal activity.

A judge ordered proceeds of illicit activity seized during Operation Crash directed to fund wildlife projects in Africa via the Service's Rhino Tiger Conservation Fund. Thanks in part to these funds, five baby black rhinos have been born at the Sera Wildlife Conservancy.

The Service and WildAid implemented a U.S. consumer education and awareness campaign to benefit wildlife conservation by reducing demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products.

In partnership with the San Diego Zoo Global, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, WildAid, and the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance, the Office of Law Enforcement conducted a public burn of illegal rhinoceros horn.

The Service created a formal Wildlife Intelligence Unit. As wildlife trafficking continued to expand, the need for a formal intelligence unit was recognized; however, intelligence had been an integral part of the Office of Law Enforcement for decades.

The Service created a musical instrument certificate (passport) to ease the paperwork burden on musicians internationally traveling with musical instruments made from CITES-listed species. The passport program facilitates the frequent non-commercial, cross-border movement of musical instruments for purposes including, but not limited to personal use, performance, display, and competition with the issuance of just one document.

The Office of Law Enforcement Deputy Assistant Director, and the team who worked Operation Crash, were awarded the 2016 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal, People's Choice Award, which was presented by the Partnership for Public Service. This award, commonly referred to as the "Sammie" is considered the "Oscar" for excellence in government service.

The Service revised section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to increase protection for African elephants in response to the alarming rise in poaching to fuel the growing illegal trade in elephant ivory. The rule created a near-complete ban on commercial trade in elephant ivory, but still allows for the non-commercial movement of ivory to occur for certain items such as museum specimens, musical instruments containing antique ivory, antiques, and other movement that benefit elephant conservation.

With the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs, the Service created the International Conservation Chiefs Academy and the first cohort graduated at the Service's training center in West Virginia.

The Branch of Training and Inspection began instructing the Wildlife Trafficking Investigator Program at all of the ILEAs, expanding to eight ILEA international training missions per year.

The Office of Law Enforcement placed an intelligence analyst at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, National Targeting Center.



Due to funds garnered by Operation Crash, the Sera Wildlife Conservancy was able to relocate 10 black rhinos in 2015. Since that time five calves have been born at the Conservancy bringing the total to 15 black rhinoceroses.



A special agent inspects a large shipment of eel meat entering the United States.



2017. President Trump signed Executive Order 13773, “Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking on Transnational Organized Crime.” The order directed federal law enforcement to take several actions including, to strengthen enforcement of federal law in order to thwart transnational criminal organizations and subsidiary organizations, and “to ensure that Federal law enforcement agencies give a high priority and devote sufficient resources to efforts to identify, interdict, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations and subsidiary organizations.”

President Trump signed Executive Order 13777, “Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda,” which directed the Federal Government to, “lower regulatory burdens on the American people.”

The Department of the Interior Solicitor’s Office issued its revised interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act’s prohibition on the take of migratory bird species. The change included, “the take of a migratory bird, its nest, or eggs that is incidental to another lawful activity does not violate the act, and the act’s criminal provisions do not apply to those activities.”

The Office of Law Enforcement stationed an attaché in Mexico City, Mexico.

The Service implemented the “eLicense” system to ease the paperwork burden on an importer and exporter of wildlife.

In the U.S. Southwest, a uniformed Conservation Law Enforcement Officer (CLEO) was hired and assigned to patrol the Mexican gray wolf range in New Mexico and Arizona.

2018. The U.S. Congress directed the Office of Law Enforcement to perform an in-depth study on the Wildlife Inspection Program. Specifically, the Office of Law Enforcement was to, “conduct an analysis of potential options for increasing the capacity of the wildlife port inspection program...it should include a detailed explanation of the existing program and potential options for enhancing the program.”

The Botswana attaché was reassigned to Pretoria, South Africa.

The Office of Law Enforcement placed two intelligence analysts at the Department of Justice, International Organized Crime Intelligence & Operations Center’s Fusion Center to work with analysts and special agents from 12 other agencies in support to cases involving transnational organized crime, including wildlife.

The Branch of Training and Inspection began a first joint training mission with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, instructing the Wildlife Border Inspection Training Program (WBITP) at the ILEAs, expanding to 11 ILEA international training missions per year. In conjunction with the WBITP, the Branch of Training and Instruction conducted its first ever international port inspections.

The Branch of Training and Inspection facilitated two International Conservation Chief’s Academies per year.

The Branch of Training and Inspection began offering country specific training to support Service attachés. This expanded the Office of Law Enforcement international training efforts to 19 missions per year.

The Branch of Training and Inspection partnered with the Department of Justice Environmental and Natural Resource Division and began offering the Wildlife Trafficking Executive Symposium at the ILEA Roswell, New Mexico. This program is the highest level of instruction the Service offers.

The Forensics Lab constructed a 14,000 Morphology Center addition to house and preserve the Lab’s more than 60,000 collection of ‘known’ comparison standards (e.g. hides, furs, skulls, bones, teeth, claws, etc.).

The Forensics Lab disproved the myth (responsible for causing the deaths of tens of thousands of pangolins) that pangolin scales contain tramadol, a narcotic pain reliever. These research results were broadcast internationally to help protect this critically endangered species.

The Forensics Lab disproved the myth (responsible for causing the deaths of tens of thousands of pangolins) that pangolin scales contain tramadol, a narcotic pain reliever.



Office of Law Enforcement staff work with other federal government law enforcement officers to protect our nation's border from illegal products being smuggled into the U.S. Credit: HSI



A wildlife inspector examines a package for illegal wildlife products.

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE



Directors

Since 1900, the following people have served as Chief of the Biological Survey or as Director of the Bureau or Service for the periods indicated:

1900-10.....	C. Hart Merriam
1910-17.....	Henry W. Henshaw
1917-27.....	Edward W. Nelson
1927-34.....	Paul G. Redington
1934-35.....	Jay N. "Ding" Darling
1935-46.....	Ira N. Gabrielson
1946-53.....	Albert M. Day
1953-57.....	John L. Farley
1957-64.....	Daniel H. Janzen
1964-70.....	John S. Gottschalk
1986-89.....	Frank H. Dunkle
1989-93.....	John F. Turner
1993-96.....	Mollie Beattie
1996-97.....	John G. Rogers Jr., (Acting)
1997-2001.....	Jamie Rappaport Clark
2002-2005.....	Steven A. Williams
2005-2009.....	H. Dale Hall
2009-2010.....	Sam Hamilton
2010-2017.....	Dan Ashe



In 1905, Guy Bradley became the first wildlife law enforcement officer killed on duty while protecting the nation's wildlife. Credit: National Audubon Society.

Enforcement Chiefs

The following people have been in charge of the law enforcement responsibilities of the Service, or its predecessor agencies, for the periods indicated:

1900-16.....	Theodore Sherman Palmer
1916-26.....	George A. Lawyer
1926-34.....	H. P. Sheldon
1934-48.....	W. E. Crouch
1948-52.....	Jesse F. Thompson
1952-57.....	Joseph P. Linduska
1957-62.....	John D. Findlay
1962-67.....	Allan T. Studholme
1967-72.....	Charles H. Lawrence
1972-90.....	Clark R. Bavin
1991-96.....	John J. Doggett, III
1997-2007.....	Kevin R. Adams
2007-2011.....	Benito A. Perez
2011-2017.....	William C. Woody
2017-2018.....	Edward J. Grace (Acting)

Enforcement Officer Titles

Titles of federal wildlife law enforcement officers:

1900-13.....	Inspector; Interstate Commerce in Game
1913-18.....	Inspector; Migratory Bird Law
1918-28.....	U.S. Game Warden
1928-34.....	U.S. Game Protector
1934-73.....	U.S. Game Management Agent
1973-Present	Special Agent

V. Laws Enforced



Diamondback terrapin turtles are native to the eastern and southern regions of the United States.



Illegally collected diamondback terrapin turtle hatchlings were returned to the wild upon the conclusion of the investigation.



Diamondback terrapins are collected for the pet trade. Decline in population is also associated with habitat loss and commercial harvest.

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 federal, state, 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 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.

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 ivory from African elephant-producing countries that do not meet certain criteria.

Wild Exotic 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.

Indian Arts and Crafts Act (18 U.S.C. 1159). This act is a truth-in-advertising law that prohibits misrepresentation in the marketing of Indian arts and crafts products within the United States. It is illegal to offer or display for sale, or sell any art or craft product in a manner that falsely suggests it is Indian produced, an Indian product, or the product of a particular Indian or Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization within the United States.

Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-231) This act provides the framework for the United States to employ assets and resources to curtail poaching and to disrupt and dismantle the illegal wildlife trade networks (and their financing) in foreign countries. This act also established the concept that the United States can provide assistance in helping focus other countries in halting the poaching of imperiled species and ending the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. Additionally, this act recognizes the ties of wildlife trafficking to broader forms of transnational organized criminal activities.

Executive Order 13773 “Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking on Transnational Organized Crime.” The order directed federal law enforcement to take several actions including the strengthening of enforcement of federal law in order to thwart transnational criminal organizations and subsidiary organizations and “to ensure that Federal law enforcement agencies give a high priority and devote sufficient resources to efforts to identify, interdict, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations and subsidiary organizations.”

Executive Order 13777 “Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda,” directed the Federal Government to, “lower regulatory burdens on the American people.”



A three-year joint investigation resulted in the arrest of eight subjects for the theft of Native American cultural items and other archaeological resources.

VI. Investigative Activity

2018 Investigative Statistics *Investigative Caseload **

Statute	Cases
African Elephant Conspiracy	36
Eagle Protection	77
Endangered Species	165
False Statements	6,727
Lacey	29
Marine Mammal Protection	1,657
Migratory Bird Stamp	208
Migratory Bird Treaty	10
Other Laws	434
Rhino Tiger Labeling	307
Smuggling	23
Wild Bird Conservation	154
Total of all Cases	42
	9,869

Annual Penalty Statistics

Prison	57 Years
Probation	364 Years
Civil Penalties	\$6.6 Million
Other/Negotiated Payments	\$3.6 Million

* This table reflects investigative cases worked by Service special agents and wildlife inspectors during FY 2018.



This black rhinoceros horn mount was sold by an undercover special agent to a wildlife trafficker during Operation Crash.

The Service believes that the effectiveness of its law enforcement effort can be maximized by directing its attention on the illegal commercialization of wildlife. Accordingly, the Service performs covert investigations to identify violators who are involved in sophisticated activities that would escape detection by traditional overt methods. By apprehending such violators, the Service hopes to deter large-scale illegal operations and believes the value of law enforcement successes preserve wildlife through the deterrent it creates.

In addition to conducting investigations, Service special agents are occasionally called upon to assist other federal law enforcement agencies in providing law enforcement and security support. This occurred in FY18, when due to the historic flooding caused by hurricanes in North Carolina and Florida, OLE special agents and CLEOs provided security to non-law enforcement search and rescue crews both in boats and on land.

Special Investigations Unit

The senior special agents assigned to the covert team known as the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) remain committed to investigating and infiltrating transnational organized criminals (TOCs) and entities associated with trafficking endangered wildlife in the U.S. and abroad. In 2018, the SIU continued their efforts to prosecute those subjects who were identified during two highly successful investigations: Operation Crash and Operation Journey.

Operation Crash

In 2011, Operation Crash was launched to detect, deter, and prosecute criminals who engaged in the illegal killing of rhinoceros and the trafficking of rhino horns and elephant ivory. Over the course of the investigation, over 50 individuals and businesses from around the world were charged for their roles in these wildlife trafficking investigations. To date, more than 40 years of prison and almost \$8 million in fines and restitution have been imposed by the courts to wildlife traffickers who were brought to justice by this operation.

In 2018, highlights of Operation Crash included the sentencing of an Australian antiques dealer; a California man convicted by a jury trial, a Texas man who smuggled rhino horns from the U.S. to Asia, a Beverly Hill auctioneer who bought and sold rhino horns worth millions of dollars, and a member of the "Rathkeale Rovers" was remanded

into custody of the United Kingdom and will be extradited to the U.S. to be prosecuted.

In February 2018 and following extradition, an Australian antiques dealer, who also owned an antique business in China, was sentenced in U.S. federal court to almost two years in prison and ordered to forfeit all of the ivory items that were seized during the investigation. The defendant led a complex, international smuggling scheme that allowed almost \$1 million in elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn, and coral to be trafficked from the U.S. to Hong Kong through a Massachusetts shipping company. The defendant, another Chinese national and the owner of the shipping company, used many methods to smuggle the illegal wildlife items in order to avoid detection such as false labeling. In the U.S., the defendant pleaded guilty to eight felony counts, which included smuggling, conspiracy, and Lacey Act violations. The subject, who has a history of wildlife trafficking, was previously convicted for ivory smuggling.

In a separate Operation Crash investigation, a California man was sentenced to 27 months in federal prison for his role in the sale of two black rhinoceros horns to an undercover agent in a Las Vegas hotel. The special agent, posing as a taxidermist, paid \$55,000 in cash for the horns that were transported from California to Nevada. After his arrest and eventual indictment, the man was convicted during a contentious 3-day jury trial in September 2017 on violations of the ESA and Lacey Act. After being sentenced in March of 2018, the subject appealed his sentence and the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the defendant's sentencing. In addition, the court noted that the Asian retail market price of \$20,000 - \$29,000 per pound for rhino horn. This price will be used to determine the market value of the illegal horns and will be used to enhance future sentencings.

The Operation Crash investigation also identified a Texas man who was actively involved in the purchase and transport of several black rhinoceros horns, including the attempted purchase of a pair of horns from an undercover agent in Illinois.

This subject, along with several others, were indicted in the United States District Court for the Central District of California for their role in the international smuggling scheme, which involved rhino horns being smuggled



from California to Vietnam, Hong Kong, and other locations. In March of 2018, the defendant pleaded guilty to violating the ESA and was sentenced to three years of probation, ordered to perform 300 hours of community service, and pay a \$10,000 fine. The prosecution of his co-conspirators remains pending in that district.

Prosecutorial efforts also continued against a Beverly Hills auctioneer who was actively involved in the complex scheme to buy and sell rhinoceros horns. Raw rhino horns, as well as expensive carved libation cups made from rhinoceros horns, were among the items being unlawfully sold by the auction house. The defendant was indicted for his role in multiple deals involving rhino horns worth an estimated \$2.4 million dollars. He pleaded guilty to one count of violating the ESA and was sentenced to two years of probation.

The Irish Travelers, also known as the “Rathkeale Rovers” are an organized criminal syndicate whose members were suspected in the numerous rhinoceros horn thefts in Europe, as well as illegal

rhinoceros horn purchases and wildlife smuggling throughout the world. Special agents investigated these wildlife traffickers and have brought many to prosecution. In 2014, one of these crime syndicate members became an international fugitive after being indicted in the U.S. for his role in smuggling of a rhinoceros horn libation cup from Miami to the United Kingdom. In 2016, the subject was arrested and sentenced to prison in the United Kingdom in connection with the rhino horn theft investigations in Europe. Working closely with their law enforcement counterparts in Europe, the SIU special agents were able to secure the arrest of this Irish national after he was released from the prison in the U.K. The subject has been remanded to custody of the United Kingdom and is awaiting his extradition to the U.S., which is expected to happen in 2019.

Operation Journey

From 2011 through 2018, Special agents conducted a significant international, covert wildlife investigation that centered on the worldwide trafficking of rare and protected bird specimens by renowned bird collectors from around the world.



A sampling of bird mounts in the attic of a collector's residence.



Just a few of the birds that were killed and mounted by a collector after a trip to Peru.



Libation cups are carved from rhinoceros horns.



Special agents fly planes to reach remote areas that are prone to wildlife crime.

The investigation, known as Operation Journey, identified several major collectors from the U.S. including subjects from Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Texas who were actively involved in the killing, buying, and selling of birds from multiple countries.

In order to infiltrate this group of collectors, many of whom were taxidermists, one of the special agents had to become a professional taxidermist. To accomplish this, the agent completed taxidermy training, posed as a world-class bird taxidermist, and even competed at the World Taxidermy Association championships where he met several major collectors who were illegally killing and trading protected bird species. The agent gained the trust of many collectors including two of the largest in the U.S. who resided in Alaska and Florida. The covert agent was included into their illegal schemes and shown their extensive trophy collections. Each collector had more than 5,000 mounted bird specimens, which were comprised by some of the rarest birds in the world including the extinct passenger pigeon. While meeting with these collectors, the covert agents were advised that many of the birds, such as songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl were killed during collecting trips to places such as Argentina, Croatia, Ecuador, Italy, and Peru. Other specimens were hunted in the U.S., purchased online, or traded from other U.S. and foreign collectors.

The smuggling scheme was described in detail to the covert agents and often included wildlife being hand carried in luggage or mailed in packages between U.S. and foreign collectors. Hundreds of specimens were mailed to the collector in Alaska who, illegally and without permission, used a university museum permit to “legitimize” the protected birds that were being unlawfully imported. This well-known bird collector, and former Alaskan Representative, conspired with the Florida subject, and others, to mail smuggled bird specimens into the U.S. for their own personal collections.

In 2011, the Alaska and Florida subjects traveled to Peru on a collecting trip and

returned to the U.S. with approximately 81 dead bird specimens. In 2013, the Florida collector, along with others, returned to Peru and imported 79 bird specimens that had been purchased or killed. The specimens, which were brought back to the U.S., was vast and included species such as the crested duck, Puna teal, sharp-winged teal, white-throated toucan, Andean coot, torrent duck, and black-faced ibis.

In 2013, covert agents participated on a sea duck hunt on remote St. Paul Island in Alaska that was coordinated by the illegal collectors. They hoped to obtain other species such as king eider, harlequin, and oldsquaw specimens for their collections. The agents observed numerous hunting violations, including over limits and wanton waste of undesirable ducks that were killed.

After three years, this long-term covert operation resulted in multiple search warrants being executed with hundreds of protected wildlife species seized. Charges of conspiracy, smuggling, and Lacey Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) violations were filed in federal courts in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. Both the Alaska and Florida collectors pleaded guilty to felonies for their illegal activities. They were fined \$10,000 and \$20,000 respectively and also received one year of supervised release. Between the two, approximately 550 illegally imported bird specimens were forfeited to the U.S. Government. Two additional collectors pleaded guilty to lesser charges of violating the MBTA, were fined a combined \$3,500, and forfeited their illegally obtained birds.

In addition, the investigation resulted in the indictment of foreign nationals on charges of conspiring with the U.S. collectors to illegally kill, purchase, and smuggle protected bird species internationally. Several red notices were issued, and in 2018 two subjects were arrested in Peru on provisional arrest warrants who are now being held in Peru awaiting extradition to the United States. The special agents will continue to work with their foreign counterparts to seek the arrest of the third subject who is believed to be in Europe.



International Operations Unit

The International Operations Unit (IOU) manages the Attaché Program, which was created in 2014 in response to the National Strategy for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking. Specifically, the Federal Government was directed to advance the following three strategic priorities, “1) strengthen enforcement, 2) reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife, and 3) expand international cooperation and commitment.” The Attaché Program seeks to strengthen enforcement and expand international cooperation and commitment, which will ultimately reduce the demand for illegally traded wildlife.

To fulfill this mission, the IOU stationed a senior special agent as the first attaché at the U.S. embassy in Bangkok, Thailand in 2014. Building upon the success of the first attaché, the OLE continued to tactically station additional attachés. In 2018, the Service had seven attachés stationed in Bangkok, Thailand; Beijing, China; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Libreville, Gabon; Lima, Peru; Mexico City, Mexico; and Pretoria, South Africa.

The attachés were stationed at strategically picked U.S. embassies due to the abundance of wildlife resources, the cooperation of the host country, and the need to address wildlife trafficking in that region. They have a challenging assignment and numerous mission goals. To carry out their objectives, their job duties include work such as strengthening international partnerships in order to protect the world’s wildlife from poaching and illegal trade; gathering intelligence; coordinating international investigations; providing training to build capacity with international law enforcement partners; leveraging U.S. Government assets to enhance law enforcement efforts; and providing assistance to foreign countries with the Service’s scientific resources such as the Forensics Lab and the Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Surveillance Unit (DERTSU).

In the last few years, the Attaché Program has strengthened enforcement by leading or assisting with significant wildlife trafficking investigations. In 2018, attachés continued to initiate and lead several intelligence driven enforcement operations. For example,

the attaché in Tanzania led wildlife criminals who ran a trafficking scheme between Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, multiple countries in Asia, and had direct ties to the United States. The attaché worked closely with senior special agents in the OLE’s SIU, attachés stationed in Bangkok and Beijing, and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents to proactively target members of this transnational criminal organization.

Another ongoing OLE-led investigation was initiated by the attaché in Gabon. Working with a DEA agent in Nigeria and multiple non-government organizations in Africa, the attaché is proactively targeting large-scale ivory traffickers in Gabon, many of whom have been identified as having a U.S. nexus through their financial and money laundering activities. The attaché has also received and forwarded information related to criminal activities such as piracy and kidnappings to other U.S. Government agencies.

No law enforcement investigation will be successful without the involvement of international counterparts. To expand international cooperation and commitment, the Attaché Program has created additional international law enforcement positions and units and worked with host-nation officials to expand and develop regional law enforcement relationships.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State (DOS), Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), the OLE is implementing a technical advisor to support the attaché in Thailand and creating a Wildlife Trafficking Vetted Unit in Gabon. In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and a non-government organization, is assisting the OLE to create a Wildlife Crime Unit in Uganda, which is the first of its kind to vet, train, and equip law enforcement officers and target high-level wildlife trafficking organizations.

The Attaché Program has also increased coordination and cooperation with non-traditional partners within the U.S. intelligence agencies to detect, interdict, and dismantle wildlife trafficking organizations. The attaché in Gabon has developed an extremely close relationship to host-nation counterparts, which has resulted in the attaché gaining access to extensive foreign intelligence



A wildlife inspector and an attaché share their knowledge, skills, and abilities with international law enforcement counterparts during a wildlife crime training in Senegal.



An attaché teaches how to properly document a wildlife crime scene.



The defendant had to forfeit 180 illegal wildlife skulls and skeletons that were seized during an investigation.



These lion parts were falsely labeled as "dog toys" or "home decorations" in an attempt to evade authorities.

that is of benefit to multiple U.S. agencies. As a result of developing and expanding relationships with host-nation counterparts, attachés in Bangkok, Gabon, and Tanzania have also been instrumental in collecting large-scale forensic information from seized computers, cellular devices, and other equipment in Asia and Africa. This intelligence information has enabled the OLE to further identify and target international criminal organizations involved in wildlife trafficking, drug trafficking, money laundering, and other criminal activity.

Engagement with the U.S. intelligence community has enhanced information gathering and sharing and significantly highlighted the importance of wildlife trafficking's role in transnational organized crime. Continued success will only be realized as an integral part of, and in coordination with, the interagency community. In cooperation with our interagency partners and international counterparts, the OLE is confident that the U.S. Government can succeed to effectively counter the global wildlife trafficking threat.

To continue the success of the Attaché Program, the OLE has been approved to open additional attaché offices at U.S. embassies in Brasilia, Brazil; Hanoi, Vietnam; Nairobi, Kenya; and at the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Germany

Field Investigations

Service special agents conducted many investigations into the illegal poaching, commercialization, and trafficking of wildlife and plants. These cases required tedious attention to detail, and the dedication of countless hours to surveillance, undercover work, records analysis, and the coordination with multiple other districts and agencies. Throughout 2018, the OLE completed the following several investigations and performed proactive law enforcement.

International Trafficking Investigations

In a joint investigation with the Wildlife Enforcement Directorate of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Service special agents conducted a multi-year investigation that resulted with a Chinese national who was ordered to pay more than \$8,500 in fines and restitution and sentenced to three months in prison after pleading guilty to a felony Lacey Act false labeling charge. Service special agents discovered that the subject, while living in Canada, shipped seven pythons from a U.S. post office in New York (near the Canadian border) to Shanghai, China. He used a fictitious name and falsely declared the contents as "Belts, Candy, and Chocolate." The defendant then attempted to smuggle three western hog-nosed snakes in his socks while returning back to Canada. He was arrested by Canadian authorities, but fled to China before settling the charges. After a warrant was secured, he was arrested by Service special agents in California when he returned to the U.S., and was then transferred to the Western District of New York to be prosecuted and sentenced.



In New Jersey, an investigation into the unlawful harvest and trafficking of diamondback terrapins resulted in a felony guilty plea by the main subject. The investigation revealed that the individual took terrapins from the wild and sold them as “captive bred” pets. With coordination from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW), U.S. Postal Service (USPS), and the ECCC, it was determined the terrapins were poached from the wild, transported across state lines, and then illegally sold in interstate and foreign commerce to Canada. The estimated illegal market value of the terrapins was in excess of \$700,000. The investigation concluded with the release of over 3,500 terrapins back to the area where they were originally poached. The return of such a high number of animals is rare and was only achieved because of the excellent inter-agency cooperation.

Operation Global Reach is an ongoing, multi-year, covert investigation into the international sale of illegal wildlife products conducted by Service special agents in Seattle, Washington. In 2018, one defendant was sentenced to five months in prison, followed by two years of supervised release for illegally selling and exporting protected wildlife parts, including a crab-eating macaque skull, to a buyer in France. He was also ordered to forfeit over 180 individual wildlife skulls and skeletons comprised of mammals, birds, and reptiles. The investigation was initiated after Service special agents discovered internationally protected wildlife being sold on e-commerce websites. The defendant smuggled wildlife parts into and from the United States without declaring or presenting official paperwork. He also undervalued the shipments and fraudulently labeled the wildlife parts as “toys, models, or decorations.” In the execution of a search warrant, Service special agents found more than \$14,000 worth of unlawful wildlife products in a storage unit at his residence. In addition, court documents showed that he illegally sold more than \$7,000 worth of wildlife to international buyers and more than \$21,000 worth of foreign wildlife to purchasers throughout the United States.

Operation Kingsnake is another multi-year, international investigation that resulted in the prosecution of several subjects for snake trafficking. In 2018, an additional defendant was sentenced for his role in the transport

of 15 protected snakes, which had been poached in several areas of the United States. He was sentenced to three years of probation, 300 hours of community service, and fined \$5,000 payable to the Lacey Act Reward Account.

After receiving intelligence about a scheme to purchase endangered lion parts and smuggle them to an overseas buyer, Service special agents in Texas went undercover to investigate and catch a wildlife trafficker. In a case that received national recognition, Operation Texas Pride revealed that a United States citizen purchased protected lion parts in the United States and exported these parts to a wholesale buyer in Thailand. The agents meticulously evaluated numerous emails and text messages, and spent hundreds of undercover hours where they acted as “straw buyers.” The subject provided the agents with cash and directed them to buy certain protected lion parts, such as a lion skull, at an auction house in Texas. The investigation discovered that in order to evade authorities and not lose the entire skull, the subject purposely pulled the teeth from the jaws, placed the parts into separate packages, and shipped the packages separately. The Thai buyer would then use these items to make jewelry such as pendant necklaces from the teeth and claws. In court, the defendant admitted to falsely declaring 68 packages of protected lion parts as “dog toys” or “home decorations” that were valued at more than \$150,000. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to nine months in federal prison followed by one year of supervised release.

In 2018, the Service special agents investigated several other turtle poaching and smuggling cases. One case based in Missouri, involved a Chinese national and his co-conspirators who smuggled eastern box and spotted turtles from locations in three Midwestern states to Hong Kong. Initially, a Wildlife Inspection Canine Team (WICT) in Chicago, Illinois intercepted a package of smuggled turtles. With the use of intelligence and surveillance, Service special agents documented multiple felonies committed by the subject and were able to connect over 70 illegal packages, valued at \$258,000, to the subject. The investigation culminated with the execution of search and arrest warrants at his residence. Service special agents seized electronic devices, which were analyzed and discovered to contain child pornography.



U.S. spotted turtles were poached and smuggled from three Midwestern states to Asia. The defendant was connected to smuggling over 70 packages of illegal turtles.



Operation Indian Roof documented 16 packages of Indian roofed turtles smuggled via the international mail. The packages were falsely labeled such as "snacks." The turtles in this photo were secured in socks and hidden amongst candy and noodle packages.



This "breeder buck" is inside a small breeding pen. Several of these live white-tailed deer were smuggled into southern Mississippi and located on five acres of "breeder pens" within a 1,000 acre high-fence enclosure.



An investigation began after a citizen witnessed a couple collecting protected Blanding's turtles on a remote highway in Minnesota. For the "tip," the citizen received a monetary reward.

The primary defendant was indicted on seven felony counts including Lacey Act false labeling, smuggling, conspiracy, and also for possession of child pornography. He pleaded guilty, his pre-trial release was revoked, and he awaits sentencing.

Another investigation was initiated when a Chicago wildlife inspector discovered 10 live box turtles being smuggled in a non-declared package to Hong Kong. Subsequent surveillance documented the subject making several shipments of packages, many of which were intercepted and found to contain hidden box turtles. A search warrant and interviews revealed that the subject met an individual on the dark web who paid him to smuggle live turtles to Hong Kong. In 2018, the defendant pleaded guilty to felony Lacey Act false labeling and currently awaits sentencing.

In another case called Operation Indian Roof, a South Carolina grand jury indicted six individuals from multiple states for their involvement in an international turtle smuggling scheme. The investigation documented that the ringleader ran an international syndicate of wildlife smugglers who exchanged protected turtles for illicit sales. The co-conspirators collected protected U.S. native turtles and smuggled them to Asia, and in exchange received protected turtles from Hong Kong to sell in the United States. Service special agents, with U.S. postal inspectors, documented 16 international packages that were shipped from Hong Kong to the ringleader's address. The packages contained smuggled turtles that were falsely labeled as "snacks." Inside, turtles were tied up in socks and hidden amongst candy and noodles. In total, the estimated value of the smuggled turtles was more than \$400,000.

During a controlled delivery of one of the parcels, five of the subjects self-surrendered, but the ringleader fled. However, through the joint investigative work of Service special agents and the U.S. Marshals Service, the subject was tracked down and arrested. By the end of December 2018, five defendants pleaded guilty to the international smuggling of wildlife and the sixth defendant pleaded guilty to a Lacey Act violation. To date, four defendants have been sentenced to a combined total of 32 months in prison, 11 months of home confinement, six years of supervised release, and ordered to forfeit \$263,225 in proceeds.

Domestic Wildlife Trafficking Investigations

Several states in the Midwest have been ranked as the top areas in the nation for producing trophy white-tailed, buck deer and are renowned hunting destinations for these deer. Since white-tailed deer are an important natural resource, hunting is carefully managed by each state's conservation law enforcement program. It is also highly important to stop the illegal transport of deer from one state to another in order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), commonly referred to as zombie deer disease.

In 2018, two defendants pleaded guilty for their roles in selling and transporting white-tailed deer from Indiana to Alabama in violation of the Lacey Act. Both were sentenced to two years of probation, banned from hunting during probation, may not engage in any game breeder activities, and one of the defendants was ordered to perform 20 hours of community service. The leader was ordered to pay \$650,000 in restitution to the Alabama Conservation and Natural Resources Foundation, \$100,000 to the Lacey Act Reward Fund, and had to forfeit the trailer used to transport the deer.

Another domestic trafficking investigation began when a concerned citizen witnessed a man collecting protected Blanding's turtles along a remote highway in Minnesota. This person knew that these turtles are protected and extremely vulnerable during breeding season as they move to nesting habitats to lay eggs. The witness reported the vehicle's license plate number and other identifiable information to a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) officer. The tip ultimately led to the discovery and take down of a multistate poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking scheme based in Wisconsin. During this joint investigation, it was discovered that the subject had planned to travel to the East Coast to poach bog turtles from the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and then sell them. The subject also left an incriminating digital footprint by using online retailers to illegally sell other wild reptile and amphibian species. Ultimately, Service special agents and MDNR officers rescued 120 native map, painted, and softshell turtle eggs, which he had poached from the wild. The defendant was charged with felony Lacey Act



violations for knowingly transporting four Blanding's turtles in interstate commerce and five misdemeanor Lacey Act violations for illegally taking, selling, and shipping eastern tiger and blue spotted salamanders from Wisconsin to buyers in other states. For his crimes, he was sentenced to 44 days of imprisonment, three years supervised release, and fined \$2,000. The person who reported the crime remained anonymous and received a \$1,500 reward through the Lacey Act Reward Account.

Service special agents jointly investigated a white-tailed deer trafficking case with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Office of Inspector General. In 2018, two Louisiana residents were convicted in federal court with conspiring to violate the Lacey Act. They were charged for their role in the purchase and transport of live white-tailed deer into Mississippi, which is in violation of state and federal law. They also admitted to knowing the deer had come from a captive herd in Pennsylvania that had tested positive for CWD. The defendants were each sentenced to three years of supervised probation and fined \$10,000. In addition, they were jointly ordered to pay \$120,000 in restitution to the MDWFP and banned from hunting for a period of one year. The court further ordered that their 1,000-acre enclosure be placed on a five-year quarantine to prevent the entry or exit of any animal in the hope of not spreading CWD.

Cooperative Investigations

Operation Broken Glass is an example of exemplary law enforcement collaboration. This complex, undercover operation has spanned six years and involved investigative assistance from multiple local, state, and federal partners. The operation's remarkable success is a direct result of the following law enforcement agencies providing assistance to this Service-led investigation: the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission; Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection; Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC); Maine Marine Patrol; Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Massachusetts Division of Natural Resources, the Town of Yarmouth; Massachusetts Environmental Police; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); New Hampshire Fish and Game Department; NJDFW; New York State Environmental Conservation; North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission; North

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Police Department; Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management; Service National Wildlife Refuge Law Enforcement; South Carolina Department of Natural Resources; and Virginia Marine Resources Commission. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Environment and Natural Resources Division led the prosecution of the defendants, with assistance from U.S. Attorney's Offices in Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

The operation was initiated in response to the wide-scale poaching and unlawful export of juvenile American eels, also known as "elvers" (or glass eels), from the United States to East Asia, and focused on the illegal activities of the most prolific dealers and fisherman. To date, 22 defendants have been sentenced to serve a total of 50 years in prison or probation, and ordered to pay over \$300,000 in fines and restitution for unlawfully selling more than \$7 million worth of illegal elvers.

Another international, multi-year joint investigation was conducted with the New Brunswick Energy and Resource Development of Canada, resulted in a commercial guide being charged with felony Lacey Act violations for running illegal moose hunts in Canada. The North American moose is the largest member of the deer family and considered to be a trophy animal by hunters. The cost for a legal guided moose hunt was approximately \$5,000, but this guide charged nearly \$10,000 to U.S. hunters for these illegal hunts. The commercial scheme, devised by the guide, allowed U.S. hunters to illegally shoot moose in Canada. Since the U.S. hunters did not possess the required New Brunswick moose permit, the moose would be illegally registered by Canadian citizens who were complicit in the scheme. The guide would subsequently transport the moose hide and antlers across the Canadian border into Maine using the fraudulent paperwork. He was convicted and sentenced to 30 days in jail and ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine. The guide was also sentenced in New Brunswick to five days in jail and fined over \$18,000 for violating Canada's Fish and Wildlife Act.

In various coastal parts of the United States, Service special agents routinely work joint investigations with the NOAA concerning marine species. In one investigation in Hawaii, Service special agents executed a search warrant to



Raw walrus ivory and whale teeth were smuggled overseas, carved into jewelry, smuggled back into the U.S., and fraudulently sold to innocent consumers as authentic, locally made Hawaiian artwork.



The photo depicts one of the last colonies of endangered Mariana fruit bats also known as Mariana flying foxes. They are important pollinators. They feed on fruit and flowers, which pollinate trees, spread seeds, and fertilize the forest.



Commercial harvest of alligator snapping turtles is prohibited in every state where they naturally occur. Hatchlings from the turtles saved during Operation Snap will be used to repopulate the species in its wild habitat.

obtain the largest number of whale and turtle bone products in Hawaii's history, seizing over 2,500 pieces that were valued from \$250,000 to \$450,000. The illegal activity was first discovered by Service wildlife inspectors in Torrance, California, when an illegal shipment of whale bone jewelry was intercepted. The investigation revealed a scheme, which involved two individuals who smuggled jewelry made with endangered humpback whale and green sea turtle bones from the Kingdom of Tonga, to Hawaii and Japan for commercial purposes. The investigation also revealed that sea turtle bone could be used to make jewelry, since it was believed to be too brittle to craft products. In 2018, the two defendants in this case pleaded guilty to Lacey Act wildlife trafficking and conspiracy to smuggle. The U.S. District Court of Hawaii sentenced the couple to six months of home incarceration, five years of probation, and fined them \$40,000.

In another investigation, a Service special agent discovered that a shipment of non-declared and undervalued commercial abalone jewelry was tied to an individual who had been previously convicted as the lead defendant in the 2015 investigation dubbed Operation Hawaii WildWeb. This investigation was also worked jointly with NOAA and involved multiple subjects who purchased raw walrus tusks and whale teeth from Alaska, smuggled them to the Philippines to be carved into fishhook jewelry pendants, smuggled the carved pieces back to Hawaii, and then fraudulently sold those pieces as genuine, locally made Hawaiian pieces of art. The indictment listed 21 charges in violation of the Lacey Act, Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), CITES, and the ESA. For their crimes, the defendants were charged with conspiracy, smuggling on import and export, Lacey Act trafficking, and Lacey Act false labeling for the sale of products derived from illegally acquired walrus, whale, elephant, and black coral. In 2016, the lead defendant was incarcerated for smuggling wildlife and then remained on probation. Once this new violation was discovered, it was reported to his probation officer. The U.S. District Court in Hawaii imposed a new term of 35 months of probation and ordered him to pay a \$25,000 fine.

Preventing further species loss is paramount to the OLE. Service special

agents, with help from the United States Coast Guard and the Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency, conducted an endangered Mariana fruit bat protection operation on the island of Rota where one of the last viable populations of the species remains. This fruit bat, also known as the Mariana flying fox, is an important pollinator that is only found in the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam. During the day, the bats congregate at favored roost sites. At night, they spread across the islands to feed on fruit and flowers. In the process, they pollinate trees, spread seeds, and fertilize the forest. These bats roost in areas that are the most remote or difficult locations for humans to access. The bat population is near extinction due to being hunted and poached for food at unsustainable levels, as well as habitat loss caused by violent storms. After the protection operation, the island of Rota was hit by Typhoon Mankut and Super Typhoon Yutu, which decimated the flora on the island. As a result, several Mariana fruit bat colonies migrated from Rota back to Guam, where the bats had been previously poached to extinction. A Service special agent is now coordinating with Guam Department of Agriculture wildlife enforcement officers and the U.S. Department of Defense to monitor and protect the temporary roosts on Guam.

Operation Snap was an investigation into the poaching, sale, and trafficking of threatened alligator snapping turtles. This Service-led investigation, with assistance from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, began after a Texas game warden executed a traffic stop and discovered 12 of these protected turtles hidden in bags under the tarp of a boat that was being pulled by one of the subjects. The collaborative work revealed a network of poachers who were supplying meat markets in Louisiana with alligator snapping turtles that had been illegally taken from Texas waters. Alligator snapping turtles are among the largest freshwater turtles in the world, can grow to weigh more than 200 pounds, may live for more than 100 years, and their meat is considered a delicacy. The commercial harvest of alligator snapping turtles is prohibited in every state where they naturally occur and these turtles are designated as "threatened with statewide extinction" under Texas State law and protected under Louisiana State law.



Four of the six defendants have been sentenced to a total of 37 months of prison, 12 years of probation, 150 hours of community service, and ordered to pay \$37,328 in fines and restitution. They admitted that the combined market value of the poached turtles was between \$55,000 and \$135,000. In addition, all of seized live alligator snapping turtles were forfeited and sent to the Service's Natchitoches Fish Hatchery in Louisiana to be cared for and to start a breeding program. To date, 20 turtles have been hatched and will be held for four years until they have matured enough to be reintroduced into areas where they no longer existed due to poaching and other threats. The brood stock turtles should continue to produce offspring for the next 50 years.

In Hawaii, Service special agents work closely with local and state counterparts to protect native species and enforce state and federal wildlife laws. In 2018, a Service special agent, Hawaii Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement conservation officers, and Honolulu Police Department officers investigated the killing of 15 Laysan albatrosses. The adult defendant was convicted on Hawaii state charges that included cruelty to animals, theft, criminal property damage, and other prohibited acts in a state reserve. He was sentenced to 45 days in prison, one year of probation, 200 hours of community service, and ordered to pay more than \$1,500 in fines and restitution. Additionally, the juveniles involved were charged and punished according to state law. They were sentenced to community service and ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution.

Between 2015 and 2017, Service special agents worked with state conservation officers in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio to document violations of commercial fishing regulations in and around the Ohio River basin. In May of 2017, multiple search warrants and numerous interviews were conducted that documented multiple Lacey Act violations related to interstate commerce and sale of paddlefish and sturgeon roe. In 2018, a defendant was sentenced for violations of the Lacey Act and felon in possession of a firearm. He was ordered to serve 24 months in prison and three years of probation; pay \$1,200 in fines

and restitution; and forfeit caviar worth \$500,000, a fishing boat, and multiple firearms.

With the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Service special agents worked a multi-year investigation, which uncovered the theft of Native American cultural items that were unlawfully excavated and removed from government lands. This investigation resulted in the arrest of eight individuals who were collectively sentenced to five years of prison, 17 years of probation, and fined almost \$129,000 in community service payments. Additionally, two of the defendants were discovered to have firearms while on probation. They were subsequently charged by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) as being felons in possession of a firearm and ordered to serve an additional five years in federal prison.

Protecting our nation's border is an important priority. No matter the commodity, criminals will seek to profit by black market sales and it is imperative for the U.S. government to have a unified law enforcement presence at the border. The OLE in the Southwestern United States performs this work in a variety of ways, one of which is a joint task force named, "Operation Safeguard." This operation is led by the Department of Homeland Security (HSI) and is dedicated to fighting illicit activities at the U.S-Mexico border. With law enforcement counterparts, the OLE works with the local communities and businesses to report suspicious activity and investigate intelligence leads to interdict smuggled wildlife products at the southern border. This operation was created because transnational organized criminals have been caught smuggling humans, narcotics, weapons, bulk cash, and wildlife in commercial vehicles at border crossings.

Service special agents also work with conservation law enforcement partners to investigate illegal hunting operations in Alaska. One investigation, worked jointly with Alaska Wildlife Troopers and the National Park Service (NPS), concerned a major illegal big game guiding business that operated in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. The investigation discovered that four men had been guiding numerous clients to illegally take



Thanks to Operation Ornery Birds, 130 birds were released back into the wild. Species such as indigo buntings, painted buntings, rose-breasted grosbeaks, northern cardinals, house finches, and clay-colored sparrows were recused during the investigation. Credit: Kaine Aigner



An evidence custodian documents the numerous birds that were seized during a search warrant execution during Operation Ornery Birds.



A defendant had placed birds in hair curlers and taped them to his legs in an attempt to smuggle them into the U.S.



A close-up of birds inside of hair curlers.

brown and black bear, Dall sheep, and moose. Through the execution of several search warrants and interviews, Service special agents further discovered that the subjects had used the sugar substitute, Xylitol, to illegally poison wolves as a means of predator control. In 2018, three of the four subjects were sentenced for felony Lacey Act violations pursuant to a plea agreement. Sentencing totals included a combined \$46,000 in restitution, 15 years of probation, over 400 hours of community service, three months of community confinement, and nine months of home confinement.

Undercover Investigations

Operation Fishing for Funds, based in Michigan, focused on a Michigan fish wholesaler who pleaded guilty to one felony count of Lacey Act false labeling. He was sentenced to four months in prison, two years of probation, and ordered to pay \$270,276 in restitution for his role in the illegal sale of 4,675 pounds of fish. Special agents went deep undercover, which included operating a fish shop in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, to document illegal commercial fishing activities that occurred in the Great Lakes. Thanks to their work, numerous other fishermen and wholesalers were prosecuted for violating state and tribal fishing regulations and their illegal transport and sale of fish was stopped. At the end of FY18, Operation Fishing for Funds was responsible for the prosecution of 21 defendants; more than 34 years of prison, probation, and home confinement; and 1.68 million paid in fines, forfeitures, and restitution.

Another covert and multi-year investigation focused on the illegal purchase, take, transport, and distribution of paddlefish and paddlefish roe. The American paddlefish is a freshwater fish that is an important cultural and sport-fishing U.S. natural resource. It was once common in waters throughout the Midwest; however, the global decline in other caviar sources, such as sturgeon, has led to an increased demand for U.S. paddlefish roe, which is marketed as caviar. This increased demand has led to poaching and the consequent decline of the U.S. paddlefish population.

Operation Benchmark was an undercover operation that targeted Internet sales of threatened or endangered species between Europe and the United States. Through a confidential informant based in the United Kingdom, subjects who

wanted to purchase illegal wildlife products were directed to an undercover Service special agent. Immediately following the sale of two tiger skin rugs for \$8,000, a take-down was executed, and the subject was arrested. He pleaded guilty for felony violations of the ESA and Lacey Act, sentenced to one year of probation, and fined \$8,000.

In a case involving an antiques dealer in Chicago, Illinois, Service special agents discovered he was selling and exporting illegal wildlife items made with elephant ivory, sea turtle, and mother of pearl online. Upon conclusion of the investigation, he was charged with violations the ESA. In 2018, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 24 months of probation and fined \$40,000.

Operation Ornery Birds is a multi-year, undercover wildlife trafficking investigation, which targeted all aspects of the illegal global trade of songbirds. The operation coincided with the 100-year anniversary of the MBTA and was led by the OLE in Florida. During the investigation, Service special agents aggressively pursued numerous subjects who had captured large numbers of protected birds and then smuggled the wildlife internationally for financial profit. In total, birds from 40 different endangered songbird and raptor species were trafficked throughout the continental United States and Cuba. A multi-agency law enforcement team executed 16 search warrants during which seven traffickers were arrested, over 400 illegally-taken birds were rescued, and 110 complex and intricate traps were seized. To date, these defendants have been sentenced to a combined total of 36 months in federal prison.

During the investigation, Service special agents also uncovered sophisticated methods used by wildlife traffickers to trap migratory birds such as mist-nets and lime-sticks. Mist-nets are very fine nets, which are basically invisible to birds and lime-sticks are tree limb branches that are covered with a sticky adhesive. The birds are lured to these traps with electronic audio vocalizations or other live birds. Once a bird lands on a lime-stick, it cannot fly away and becomes more attached as it struggles. While these birds struggle on the branches, sophisticated mechanical traps capture the birds.

The operation resulted in several positive outcomes. One success is the collaborative work with law enforcement



counterparts in the Republic of Cuba. Due to this operation, the OLE became one of only a few federal law enforcement entities allowed to travel to Cuba. During bi-lateral meetings, officers exchanged vital information to support the investigation, developed plans for future casework, and both countries committed to preventing the exploitation and trafficking of native and protected natural resources.

Another substantial success was returning more than 130 birds back to the wild. During a media event, held with the NPS, wildlife that had been rescued during the operation was released to their natural habitat in Florida's River of Grass at the Everglades National Park. The return of these birds, combined with the successful investigation and prosecutions, generated substantial news coverage. It also brought an awareness of wildlife trafficking to the public and was a significant deterrence to the local community of trappers and traffickers.

Smuggling Investigations

As a result of a multi-year, joint investigation with CBP into the illegal smuggling of live finches from Guyana, four individuals were arrested for smuggling 108 live birds on passenger flights into John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport. At the time of their arrest, two individuals had 25 live birds strapped to their legs that were hidden inside of hair curlers. These two subjects pleaded guilty to felony smuggling charges. A third individual was found with 13 birds in his pockets, was arrested, and pleaded guilty to misdemeanor Lacey Act charges. Sentencing for these three individuals is still pending. The final individual was found with 70 birds concealed in his carry-on bag. The birds were rescued and he was immediately deported. Service special agents are working with their counterparts in Guyana, and the OLE attaché in Peru, to assist with prosecution of this subject in Guyana. These specific species of finch are protected in Guyana and can sell for as much as \$5,000 to \$10,000 each in the United States.

Another wildlife smuggling investigation involved the discovery of a shipment that contained protected mammalian and avian heads and carcasses. The package originated in Nigeria and was addressed to a resident in the Bronx, New York. Working with CBP and the USPS, the investigation was initiated when a package of recently poached, illegal wildlife items was seized at

the international mail facility at JFK International Airport. Included in the shipment were a chimpanzee head, a taxidermy western banded snake eagle, a taxidermy parrot, a taxidermy red-footed falcon, a taxidermy hooded vulture, a hyena head, two feline heads, and a taxidermy barn owl. Further investigation revealed the intended recipient is a practitioner of witchcraft and performs ceremonies involving protected wildlife for commercial gain. The Nigerian shipper had online advertisements concerning the availability of wildlife products for sale and posted pictures of numerous items including leopard and kudu skins, dried chameleons, ostrich heads, crocodile heads, baboon heads, and an elephant head. After the OLE intercepted a package of illegal wildlife items, Service special agents executed a controlled delivery and search warrant at the recipient's address. All of the illegal wildlife products were removed, eventually forfeited to the government, and many will be used for educational purposes. In 2018, the defendant was charged with illegally importing endangered species and migratory birds.

In Seattle, Washington, a subject was charged with smuggling illegal wildlife products, including a carved Bornean orangutan skull, to add to a traveling oddity and curiosity collection. The investigation began when Service wildlife inspectors at the port of San Francisco intercepted the skull at the international mail facility. The package was falsely labeled to contain an item made with shells, rattan, seagrass, resin, and cow bone. For his crime, the defendant was fined \$1,000 and ordered to forfeit all of the illegally imported wildlife products, including the orangutan skull.

Express shipping hubs located in Anchorage, Alaska import and export wildlife products chiefly to and from Asia. Due to its location and the high volume of the legal wildlife trade, the Alaska OLE intercepts a considerable amount of illegal wildlife products. In addition, Service special agents in the region have initiated and assisted with international wildlife trafficking cases, which involved a myriad of protected species such as walrus, whale, elephant, pangolin, live coral, rhinoceros, turtle, monitor lizard, and other reptiles. These investigations have identified illegal criminal networks connected to multiple countries in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere, that overlap with other transnational criminal activity such as narcotics, money laundering, and the arms trade.



Service wildlife inspectors must be ready for the unexpected, which could be deadly. King cobras were hidden inside of potato chips cans and then smuggled into the U.S.



Asian arowana are the most expensive aquarium fish. These endangered and internationally protected fish are smuggled in a variety of ways. Often the fish die due to inhumane smuggling methods. These fish were rescued and permanently placed at an aquarium.



Due to its strategic location as a shipping hub, Alaska interdicts an array of smuggled wildlife. These pictures show how corals were smuggled into the U.S. from Asia. It was falsely declared as "aquatic ceramic decorations" and a physical inspection revealed nine live corals. The bottom photo was taken after they were transferred to a local coral rescue center.



For example, an ongoing investigation by Service special agents concerns live corals that were smuggled into the U.S. at an Alaskan port of entry. Working with the Philippine National Bureau of Investigation, Environmental Crime Division, Service special agents have investigated the illegal collection, smuggling, and selling of live, protected corals to U.S. aquarium stores and clients. To date, the investigation has revealed that a subject smuggled more than 45 large shipments of live internationally protected corals, which were falsely declared as, "Plastic Toys." In 2018, the Philippine government, with assistance from the OLE's Thailand special agent attaché, conducted a takedown operation that included the execution of a search warrant at the subject's residence in the Philippines.

In a law enforcement initiative named Operation Jungle Book, Service special agents worked to conduct the largest wildlife trafficking related prosecutorial sweep in Southern California's history. The operation involved a large volume and variety of animals seized at the border and across the Los Angeles area and resulted in federal criminal charges against 16 defendants who were arrested for attempting to smuggle live wildlife, such as tigers, monitor lizards, king cobras, Asian arowana fish, turtles, exotic songbirds, and live coral. The smuggling methods documented were inhumane and a percentage of the wildlife trafficked died in transit. The fortunate ones that survived were rescued by the Service, and placed with partners to be cared for and rehabilitated.

During Operation Jungle Book, a southern California defendant, who was already under investigation for smuggling live turtles, put himself, his family, law enforcement officers, and the public in danger by smuggling highly venomous king cobra snakes concealed inside of potato chip cans. During the same act, he also smuggled albino Chinese soft-shelled turtles. After the cobras and turtles were discovered in transit through the mail, special agents executed a search warrant at the subject's residence and discovered five diamond back terrapins, various internationally protected turtles, and a Morelet's crocodile located in a child's bedroom. During the defendant's court appearance, he admitted to smuggling an additional 23 cobras worth approximately \$46,000 on the black market, pleaded guilty, was sentenced to five months in jail, and fined \$4,500.

Another defendant associated with Operation Jungle Book attempted to smuggle eight Asian arowana fish from Indonesia into the U.S. in bags of water, concealed in teapots, and falsely labeled as, "Porcelain Herbal Pots." The Asian arowana is endangered, internationally protected, and cannot be traded commercially. For these reasons, they sell for high dollar amounts on the black market and are considered to be the world's most expensive aquarium fish. After entry into the United States, CBP officers observed the package leaking water, seized it, and contacted Service special agents for further investigation. Agents executed a search warrant at the subject's residence and recovered evidence that the subject intended to sell the fish on the black market. The defendant was charged and sentenced to six months of home confinement, 40 hours of community service, three years of probation, and ordered to forfeit \$15,370. All eight arowanas died as a result of the smuggling scheme.

A separate defendant attempted to smuggle Asian arowanas within his luggage on a flight from Vietnam to Los Angeles. The fish were concealed in black bags and the defendant knowingly failed to declare the fish to U.S. authorities. The defendant was arrested at the airport, and was convicted and sentenced to three months of probation, 15 months of house arrest with electronic monitoring, and fined \$35,000.

Operation Jungle Book encompassed another investigation involving the interception of five internationally protected monitor lizards that were hidden within stereo speakers and smuggled into the United States. Upon inspection, Service special agents discovered that two of the lizards had died in transit and a third that suffered a crushed foot. Service special agents executed a search warrant at the defendant's residence, which resulted in the seizure of four yellow-headed water monitor lizards (two of which were close to six feet long) and two spiny-necked water monitor lizards. For his role in this smuggling scheme, the defendant was sentenced to three years of probation with six months of home detention.

During Operation Jungle Book, Service special agents were also able to identify and charge a local pet storeowner who was also smuggling monitor lizards inside speakers to his pet store in Long Beach. Service special agents covertly met with the storeowner several times and observed opened speakers and multiple



monitor lizards for sale in his store. The storeowner was ultimately arrested and charged with smuggling.

A separate monitor lizard smuggler was sentenced to 21 months in prison and ordered to pay \$25,000 in restitution as a result of Operation Jungle Book. In addition to smuggling monitor lizards, the defendant illegally imported newts, turtles, and iguanas, into the U.S. from the Philippines. He was also responsible for domestically trafficking live turtles and had previously been convicted for smuggling wildlife. The monitor lizards were concealed within the package and fraudulently labeled. During a search warrant executed at the defendant's residence, Service special agents recovered a wide variety of illegally imported wildlife, including additional monitor lizards, a Fly River turtle, a Yucatan box turtle, a large Cuban iguana, and various leaf turtles from Vietnam. This was his third felony conviction for wildlife smuggling and he committed this crime while on supervised release.

Two additional defendants in the Operation Jungle Book investigation were prosecuted for smuggling multiple CITES protected Asian songbirds. One of the two defendants was sentenced to 12 months of prison for smuggling 93 birds, worth approximately \$100,000, from Vietnam. The birds were hidden in his carry-on bag and were detected by an x-ray machine examination. Many of the 93 died in transport due to the inhumane way they were smuggled. The second Asian songbird smuggler received 18 months of prison and was fined \$5,500 for smuggling 30 birds, which were hidden under his clothes inside of his suitcase. Twenty-five birds were discovered dead and the other five were permanently transferred to a zoo.

Another case related to Operation Jungle Book involved a tiger cub that was later named, "Moka," which means "chance" in Hindi. Moka was only six-weeks old when two men, one adult and one teen, attempted to smuggle the tiger cub into the U.S. at the California-Mexico border. Initially, CBP conducted a vehicle inspection of the subject's car and discovered Moka hidden under the legs of one of the men, who stated, "It is just a cat." CBP officers contacted a Service special agent who investigated the violation and discovered that not only did the vehicle have a custom-made, built-in area under one of the seats to hide trafficked items, but a cell phone had texts concerning the illegal trade of many

species including tigers. Both defendants received six months in prison and three years of supervised release. The teen, who has family ties to drug-trafficking organizations, was also ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine.

The final Operation Jungle Book case highlighted the smuggling of live corals destined for the pet trade. Over the course of several months, Service special agents and wildlife inspectors intercepted and documented hundreds of pieces of CITES protected corals that were hidden within legal imports and exports of invertebrates. In total, three subjects and two businesses were indicted on multiple charges including conspiracy, smuggling, and attempting to export wildlife contrary to law.

As a result of this wildlife trafficking sweep, a media event was held to highlight the Operation. Joining the OLE at the event were representatives from the United States Attorney's Office, CBP, HSI, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Wildlife rehabilitation partners such as the Los Angeles Zoo, San Diego Zoo Global, STAR Eco Station, and Turtle Conservancy were also in attendance. During the event, government officials explained the federal charges, and members of the press were able to direct questions to Service special agents and wildlife inspectors, CBP officers, U.S. attorneys, and wildlife rehabilitation partners about their work. In addition, the press was able to interact with many of the rescued animals at the event.

During the media event, Moka was highlighted as a champion for wildlife caught in the dangerous black market world of wildlife trafficking and quickly became a media favorite. As soon as the Service rescued Moka, it was transferred to a zoo who expertly cared for the cub including a life-saving surgery. About one year later, Moka was transferred to its permanent home at an animal sanctuary. In July of 2018, and in coordination with "Global Tiger Day," a press event was held at the sanctuary to bring awareness to wildlife trafficking and let the public witness the successful and permanent placement of the baby tiger that was internationally trafficked.

In a different case in northern California, a man was sentenced to a Lacey Act felony for fraudulently importing into the U.S. an unlawfully hunted leopard trophy. The investigation discovered that in 2011, the subject shot the leopard in



Operation Project Dakota Flyer was initiated with a focus to investigate illegal commercial activity related to bald and golden eagles. The investigation discovered protected bird parts were trafficked from species native to every continent except Antarctica.



A trap used to snare birds. The trap is baited with meat and then snaps shut when the raptor lands on it.



Ginseng is a valuable U.S. natural resource that is poached from the wild, dried, and sold to buyers on the black market.



“Moka” was only six-weeks-old when the OLE rescued it from wildlife traffickers at the Mexico-U.S. border. Moka became a media sensation and is a champion for the multitude of wildlife trafficked for illicit profit.

South Africa without a permit, left the trophy with the guide, returned to the U.S., and arranged for a leopard hunt in Mozambique. The subject then applied for U.S. permits for a Mozambique-taken leopard and returned to South Africa. There, he and his guide hid the dead leopard in the tire well of a vehicle and drove the vehicle across the border into Mozambique. The subject then claimed the leopard was killed in Mozambique and filed a fraudulent declaration with the Service upon import. For his actions, he was sentenced to three years of probation, banned from hunting and using weapons, and fined \$10,000.

Sea cucumber smuggling has become prevalent along the Mexican border. Sea cucumbers are found on the ocean floor and support the ecosystem because they act like a water filter. A sea cucumber intakes debris and expels calcium carbonate, a key building block of coral; therefore, it helps to protect the fragile coral reefs and reduce algae blooms. In many parts of the world, sea cucumbers are sought after as a food delicacy, medicine, and an aphrodisiac. This has heightened demand, increased illegal trade, and led to sharp declines of the species.

In February of 2018, a defendant was sentenced to 10 months of prison and ordered to pay a \$7,500 fine and \$16,600 in restitution to CONAPESCA, the Mexican agency responsible for the oversight of the fishing industry. The defendant was sentenced for his role in the smuggling 77 kilograms (170 pounds) of protected sea cucumbers and 38 kilograms (84 pounds) of endangered black abalone from Mexico into the U.S. The sea cucumbers and abalone were smuggled inside of three suitcases and one large trash bag as the subject crossed the border in his minivan.

In a separate case related to the illegal importation of sea cucumbers, the combined total of fines, restitution, and forfeiture was approximately \$1.25 million. Two co-owners and a business were charged in a 26-count indictment with conspiracy, illegal trafficking in wildlife, importation contrary to law, and false labeling related to the importation of \$17 million of Mexican sea cucumbers into the U.S. The company and owners admitted that the sea cucumbers had been taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of Mexican law and also falsified documents to export the product to Asia.

In May 2018, two China Eastern Airlines flight crew members were apprehended

at the Los Angeles International Airport when they attempted to return to China carrying 31 live spotted turtles and 14 live box turtles in their suitcases. Initially, a Transportation Security Administration screener recognized the turtles in an x-ray of their carry-on bags and contacted the OLE. Upon opening the baggage, it was discovered the turtles hidden in socks and inside of pillowcases. The individuals pleaded guilty to felony conspiracy charges and each were sentenced to three years of probation and fined \$5,500.

Migratory Bird Trafficking Investigations

In 2014, Operation Project Dakota Flyer was initiated to stop the unlawful trafficking in protected migratory birds with a particular emphasis in bald and golden eagles. The operation, which began in a rural area of South Dakota, perfectly illustrates the global crisis of wildlife trafficking. Investigative work performed by Service special agents and forensic scientists revealed that over 35 species of bird, from every continent except Antarctica were trafficked. This multi-year, operation is one of the largest-ever wildlife trafficking investigations that began in the U.S. Midwest. It utilized two confidential informants, a mobile storefront, and an Internet website as undercover businesses. Service special agents recovered more than 150 bald and golden eagles, 100 hawks and owls of various species, and 20 species of other protected birds through seizure and covert purchases.

To date, 35 defendants have been charged and 29 of those have been sentenced in federal court. Collectively, the 29 defendants were ordered to pay \$174,190 in fines and restitution and sentenced to 16 years of prison, 84 months of probation, and multiple years of home confinement or supervised release. In addition, the court also assigned a dollar amount concerning restitution for the loss of the eagles, and other migratory birds, where it can be proved that the deceased bird was trafficked. As a result, immature eagles are valued at \$5,000 and adult eagles at \$10,000.

Another migratory bird investigation concerned an individual who had set 21 traps to catch birds of prey. Although 12 birds had perished, Service special agents were able to rescue a turkey vulture, an owl, and a red-tailed hawk, which were transferred to a zoo for rehabilitation. The defendant was indicted and sentenced in U.S. District Court. He was ordered to pay over \$13,600 in restitution and had to forfeit his hunting privileges for three years. Service special agents also



seized the 21 traps, which were sent to the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP) to be used in educational displays. Birds of prey are often illegally trapped because they eat chickens, baby livestock, quail, roller pigeons, and other animals that are used for food or commercial gain.

Plant Trafficking Investigations

A joint investigation with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Game Commission resulted in 14 subjects federally charged for Lacey Act trafficking violations concerning the illegal harvest and sale of American ginseng. Ginseng is a valuable, natural U.S. resource and in order to keep it viable, legal harvesting and enforcing laws that pertain to its legal harvest are paramount. American ginseng takes several years to mature. If harvested too early, the seeds never reach the forest floor and the next generation is lost.

Ginseng is alleged to have healing properties and many cultures seek it as a medicinal ingredient. During the investigation, and at a time when no legal ginseng root harvest or sales may occur, an undercover special agent purchased ginseng that had been poached. The agent then sold the roots to complicit dealers before the lawful ginseng season opened. All of the defendants pleaded guilty and paid more than \$40,000 in fines. In addition, three Pennsylvania ginseng dealers had their state licenses revoked.

Another plant investigation involved the illegal collection, smuggling, and sale of U.S. indigenous cacti by domestic and international buyers via the Internet. Operation Spicewood Spines was a multi-year, Service-led investigation, which uncovered a trafficking organization of Texans who had poached and smuggled thousands of highly endangered, internationally protected living rock cacti from the Big Bend region of Texas to various collectors in Europe and Asia. This species of cacti is internationally protected under CITES, where it is listed as Appendix I. This listing means that the species is threatened with extinction, prohibited from commerce, and limited to international movement only for scientific research or zoological display.

The operation began when Service special agents received a tip from an investigator with the USDA. As the operation advanced, other agencies including HSI, the NPS, the USPS,

the ATF, and the TPWD provided law enforcement assistance. The majority of the living rock cacti were recovered during the execution of six search warrants located in remote areas of southwest Texas. In addition, several packages of live cacti were intercepted at international mail facilities before export. In total, approximately 3,500 living rock cacti were transferred to non-profit partners for care and permanent placement. In 2018, four of the six defendants pleaded guilty and were sentenced to a total of 10 years of probation. They were also ordered to pay \$118,804 in fines and restitution.

Illegal Hunting and Poaching Investigations

Another joint investigation with state conservation officers concerned a Hawaiian homeowner who was upset that several Hawaiian geese, or nene, were defecating on his lawn and in his pool. He shot and killed at least four of these endangered birds, which is the official state bird of Hawaii. As a result, a State of Hawaii Environmental Court fined the defendant \$40,774, which is the maximum allowable amount.

In Oregon, Service special agents completed an investigation into the take of a regionally endemic and threatened butterfly. In August 2018, a Canadian butterfly collector pleaded guilty for poaching threatened Oregon silverspot butterflies. The investigation revealed that the subject ran a business in Canada that sold insects, butterflies, beetles, and arthropods. He was a semi-professional butterfly collector who had spent the past five years collecting butterflies in the western United States. Annually, he collected approximately 1,200 butterflies and then illegally exported them to Canada. He pleaded guilty, paid a \$2,500 fine to the Lacey Act Reward Account, was required to file declarations for his past export shipments, and was barred for one year from entering the national forest where the butterflies were caught.

Also in Oregon, four subjects were sentenced for violations of the MBTA. Over three years, the landowner and others placed more than 40 tons of corn into a pond located on the owner's property. Service special agents and Oregon State Police contacted the landowner and hunters who were hunting on the baited pond. At the time of the contact, the hunters had already taken 55 mallards, nearly twice the group's legal limit. Two subjects were charged with taking waterfowl over bait and each was



U.S. Southwest indigenous catfish are coveted by international buyers. The successful Operation Spicewood Spines saved over 3,500 endangered living rock catfish from being smuggled from the U.S.



The endangered nene is the state bird of Hawaii.



A juvenile bald eagle photobombs a covert camera.



A joint investigation with the Alaska Wildlife Troopers and the National Park Service prevented the further illegal take of big game such as bear, moose, and Dall sheep.

fined \$3,330. Two additional subjects were charged, one with taking waterfowl over bait and the other for placing and directing the placement of bait. These two subjects were found guilty, each were fined \$5,500, placed on 18 and 24 months of probation, banned from hunting, fishing, and possessing firearms during the probation period, and had to forfeit shotguns.

Service special agents in South Dakota also investigated other cases that involved illegal hunting. One highly successful investigation was worked jointly with the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority and focused on an unlawful guiding business. Commercial hunts took place on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and catered to hunting clients from North Carolina and Pennsylvania. As a result of this collaborative work, 12 hunting clients entered into pre-indictment resolutions with the U.S. Attorney's Office, paid \$36,560 in fines and restitution, and forfeited 19 hunting trophies. In April of 2018, the owner of the guiding business was indicted on one felony count of violating the Lacey Act by a federal grand jury in the District of South Dakota.

In Montana, Service special agents documented two illegal mountain lion hunts by a commercial outfitter for out-of-state clients. The joint investigation with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks discovered the defendants filed false hunting reports and hunted with the use of a light after legal hunting hours. They also treed a mountain lion and then called a hunter to shoot and kill it. The outfitter was sentenced to four years of probation, during which he may not hunt or fish. The three clients were sentenced to a total of three years of probation, \$28,000 in fines, and the forfeiture of their mountain lion trophies. The outfitter's houndsman was sentenced to serve six months in prison (concurrent to unrelated charges), three years of probation, and is prohibited from hunting, trapping, or fishing while on probation.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act Investigations

The OLE often works proactively to prevent the future take of wildlife and conducts this work in many different ways. For example, Service special agents worked closely with the SDGFP, Wildlife Damage Management Program to change the program's policies in order to reduce future eagle take. In 2018, Service special agents investigated the non-targeted take of at least 11

bald or golden eagles that had been inadvertently trapped or snared by the SDGFP. In an effort to protect eagles, the SDGFP acknowledged their mistakes and committed to making and implementing policy changes that would prevent such trapping or snaring.

In another case, while working jointly with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Service special agents investigated an eagle poaching case. As a result, the defendant pleaded guilty to state wildlife violations and was placed on probation. During the investigation, Service special agents discovered that an elderly, indigent man had been poaching wildlife in violation of state and federal laws to feed himself and his pet house cats. He admitted to killing deer, antelope, geese, and small game during closed seasons and without licenses. He also admitted to shooting a golden eagle and numerous hawks in the protection of his cats. Service special agents assisted the state to provide the man with donated wild game so that he no longer had to hunt illegally.

Eagles and other migratory birds are often electrocuted at power stations. Service special agents documented that a Wyoming power company had failed to report at least six eagles and numerous other migratory bird deaths at their facility. They also had failed to implement an Avian Protection Plan. In lieu of a federal prosecution, the Service special agents negotiated a voluntary reporting system and worked with the company to re-draft their Avian Protection Plan in order to prevent additional mortalities.

Endangered Species Investigations

The Mexican wolf is the rarest subspecies of gray wolf in North America. In the 1970s, the Mexican wolf almost became extinct and prompted the Service to begin efforts to conserve, breed, and reintroduce the species to various areas. In the late 1990s, Mexican wolves were released into the wild for the first time in the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area. To support the Service's efforts to rebuild this species, the OLE hired and assigned a CLEO to the Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program. Working closely with local, tribal, state, and federal law enforcement counterparts, this officer patrols the entire wolf range throughout Arizona and New Mexico to provide protection and assist with the survival of this species.

In another successful prosecution, a defendant pleaded guilty to knowingly taking a Mexican gray wolf. He admitted



that he intentionally captured the wolf in a trap on his grazing allotment in the Gila National Forest and hit the wolf with a shovel. The wolf died from this injury. In addition to the trapping, hidden cameras filmed the subject placing four poisoned meatballs inside of a cow carcass in an attempt to poison wolves. For his actions, he was sentenced to one year of probation and fined \$2,300. Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) revoked his grazing permit; however, the defendant has appealed that decision. The USFS will make a final decision regarding the revocation of his grazing permit after all appeals have been exhausted.

In a separate Mexican wolf case, one of two defendants was sentenced for his role in the death of a Mexican wolf in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. The judge sentenced him to five years of probation, he may not hunt, and he cannot step foot onto a national forest in Arizona. In addition, to the probation and restrictions, he forfeited a bolt-action rifle with scope and was ordered to pay \$7,500 in restitution to the Service.

In a case in Montana, Service special agents learned of a U.S. hunter who had paid \$50,000 to shoot and kill an elephant in Zimbabwe. After discovering that the hunt may have been illegal, an investigation was opened. Service special agents discovered that in Africa, the professional hunter bribed local officials to access wildlife preserves that were closed to hunting. As a result of the investigation, the U.S. hunter was convicted on one count of violating the ESA and was sentenced to pay a \$25,000 fine, banned from hunting threatened or endangered wildlife for four years, and ordered to surrender the ivory tusks to the government of Zimbabwe.

Loggerhead sea turtles are an endangered species and have the highest international protection possible. The southeastern United States represents one of the most important nesting areas of loggerhead sea turtles in the world. When a female comes ashore to lay eggs for the first time, she has spent about 30 years at sea.

In Florida, two individuals poached 469 turtle eggs from three separate loggerhead sea turtle nests. A joint OLE and FWC investigation resulted in the successful arrest and prosecution of two individuals. In 2018, both defendants pleaded guilty to felony violations of the Lacey Act in the federal district court. Each were sentenced to seven months in prison followed by two years

of supervised release and were ordered to pay \$227 in restitution to the state of Florida.

The Florida panther is the last subspecies of puma still surviving in the United States. Historically, it occurred throughout the southeastern United States, however, the endangered panther is now restricted to less than 5% of its historic range. Located primarily in southwest Florida, the Service and FWC estimate that only 120 to 230 adult panthers exist in the wild. Service special agents, along with the NPS and the FWC, investigated two men who were ultimately sentenced to a combined 14 days in prison, five years of probation, 300 hours of community service, and fined \$1,000 for violating the ESA. During the investigation, it was discovered that one subject had crawled into a Florida panther den in the Big Cypress National Preserve and unlawfully removed and harassed two, three-week old panther kittens. The other defendant filmed the event in an attempt to produce a wildlife film.

The CLEOs in Florida enforce federal laws that protect manatees in the vast waterways of Florida. They work on boats to enforce slow speed zones, which were established to protect manatees from vessel strikes. CLEOs work cooperatively with state, local, and federal partners to educate the public and to enforce the regulations that protect the majestic manatee. In 2018, CLEOs logged more than 1,000 hours on the water and issued 451 violation notices and warnings.

Throughout 2018, 17 grizzly bear investigations were initiated and seven cases were closed. These investigations are important for grizzly bear recovery and to prevent further take. In northwest Wyoming, a convicted felon shot and killed a sow grizzly bear on a highway. The two orphaned, yearling cubs became a public safety concern. The defendant pleaded guilty for unlawfully killing a grizzly bear as well as being a felon in possession of a firearm. He was sentenced to five years of standard probation, fined \$5,000, and ordered to pay \$25,000 in restitution for the three grizzly bears removed from the wild. A picture of the cubs went viral over the Internet and they became a media sensation. The cubs were rescued and transferred to a permanent home at a zoo in Nebraska.

Also in Wyoming, Service special agents investigated a case involving two other men who had illegally shot and killed a



A schoolteacher took this picture of two orphaned bear cubs in Wyoming while on a class field trip. Thanks to this picture going viral online, the cubs were rescued and transferred to a zoo in Nebraska. Credit: Michelle Giltner



Two men were fined \$25,000 for illegally shooting and killing a grizzly bear in Wyoming.



OLE works closely with the community and hunters to protect the endangered whooping crane. As a result, there was no human-caused whooping crane mortality in 2018.

grizzly bear. Both men pleaded guilty and were sentenced to a combined 10 years of unsupervised probation, 200 hours of community service, and nine years loss of their worldwide hunting privileges in accordance with the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. They were also ordered to pay \$27,000 in restitution to the WGF and forfeit the rifle used to kill the bear.

In another investigation involving the unlawful take of a grizzly bear, a defendant was re-tried and found guilty on three counts of the unlawful taking of a threatened species. In 2015, he was initially charged and found guilty of shooting and killing three grizzly bears that were on his property. He appealed his conviction and in 2017, an appellate court remanded the case back to the district court. In 2018, he was fined \$25,000 and sentenced to three years of probation.

Known as the rarest fish in the world, the Devils Hole pup fish is found only in a small area of southern Nevada. It is important because scientists study the pupfish's ability to adapt to adverse conditions since it survives in very warm water with a low oxygen content. In 2018, a defendant was sentenced to a year and a day in prison and ordered to pay \$13,565 in restitution for the killing of a Devils Hole pup fish when he broke into the Devils Hole enclosure and went swimming. He pleaded guilty to one count of taking an endangered species, one count of destruction of government property, and one count of felon in possession of a firearm.

Marine Mammal Protection Act Investigations

In addition to preventing walrus mortality, Service special agents are currently investigating a number of haul-out disturbance cases involving low flying aircraft and the killing and wasting of several walrus in the Bering Sea. In these haul-out cases, Service special agents use techniques such as remote cameras and GPS information to document the unlawful activity.

Illegal commercialization of marine mammal products, especially walrus ivory, is a major problem throughout Alaska. In 2018, Service special agents worked several illegal walrus ivory investigations. For example, a man from Juneau was charged on a 10-count felony indictment for violations of the Lacey Act and smuggling. The investigation revealed that the defendant had illegally exported unworked walrus ivory to

Indonesia. The ivory was then carved into sellable items, smuggled back into the United States, and sold as a part of his carving business. A plea agreement has been signed and sentencing in federal court is pending.

An Anchorage ivory carver and gift store owner was the focus of another covert ivory investigation. The subject, who is not an Alaska Native, carved ivory and bone products, falsely labeled them as authentic Alaska Native artwork, and sold the fraudulent items in his store. During the execution of a search warrant, Service special agents seized more than 400 pieces of illegal ivory and bone carvings. The store owner was indicted for a felony violation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA) and for misdemeanor violations of the MMPA.

Preventative Law Enforcement

Over the course of 2018, Service special agents worked closely with businesses and environmental consultants to prevent wildlife take and habitat loss in order to ease the frustration some businesses experience when working in areas that contain vulnerable wildlife and plant species. Throughout the country Service special agents took time to educate these entities into the importance of conservation.

Throughout the United States, Service special agents, with the assistance from state partners investigated the illegal take of many different species. Special agents used these investigations as an opportunity to build partnerships with the public and perform extensive community outreach to prevent the future take of these endangered or threatened species. For example, in the wolf and grizzly bear investigations, OLE staff met with local government officials and the public to explain wildlife laws in communities where cohabitating with wildlife predators can be stressful. Service special agents answered questions and clarified misnomers concerning wildlife laws and what actions the public may legally take when wolves or bears are on their property.

In addition to working with the public, businesses, and environmental consultants, the OLE makes working collaboratively with Native American conservation officers a priority. Yearly, the OLE co-hosts a training exercise with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. In June of 2018, 59 officers from 25 federally recognized tribes participated in training that included wildlife forensics, wildlife human attack



training, emotional intelligence, raptor feather identification, legal updates, Service and tribal joint investigation training, firearm qualifications, pepper spray and baton recertification, and scenario based non-lethal firearm training.

Service special agents also work proactively to ensure the survival of endangered species. One success involves the critically endangered whooping crane. From a low of just 15 birds in 1911, today there are more than 700 whooping cranes across the country. One migratory population winters along the Texas coast, which is a popular destination for waterfowl hunters. Many of these hunters come from out-of-state. Service special agents, TPWD game wardens, and national wildlife refuge federal wildlife officers spoke to hunters to educate them about the federal laws associated with illegally killing whooping cranes. For the third consecutive year, no whooping crane shootings were reported or detected.

In Alaska, polar bears moving inward have increased the potential for human-polar bear conflict. In 2018, Service special agents investigated a defense-of-life polar bear killing that occurred approximately 150 miles from the ocean in the interior of Alaska. To prevent mortalities, the Alaska OLE works with other Service programs to provide educational outreach opportunities. Service special agents attend local government events; Alaskan Native tribal meetings, often in remote villages; and government-to-government consultations to discuss how the Service and the ESA work in relation to polar bear. The Service also works to implement portions of the “Agreement Between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Russian Federation on the Conservation and Management of the Alaska-Chukotka Polar Bear Population.” Successes such as a polar bear hazing program and the education of tourists by local residents has helped keep human and polar bear interactions to a minimum.

In addition to many other species, Service special agents in Alaska worked tirelessly to protect live walrus. Loud noises or activity such as aircraft, vehicles, or humans on foot may agitate these animals. When startled, the herd may stampede, which can result in a major walrus mortality, particularly to the young calves. To prevent such mortalities, Service special agents worked proactively with the Eskimo

Walrus Commission, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Service’s Marine Mammals Management Office on programs to reduce haul-out disturbances. Service special agents also supported efforts of Alaskan Native communities to protect terrestrial haul-outs.

The cooperative efforts of Native Village of Point Lay and the Service is an excellent example of local engagement in conservation.

Indian Arts and Crafts Board Support

In addition to enforcing laws that protect fish, wildlife, and plants, the OLE investigates criminals who violate the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA). The OLE has dedicated two special agents whose work ultimately leads to the arrest, prosecution, and conviction of those who fraudulently produce or sell counterfeit American Indian and Alaskan Native (Indian) art and craftwork.

In 1935, the U.S. Congress established the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB), to promote Indian economic development through the expansion of the Indian art market. In 1990, the IACA was passed by Congress to counteract the growing sales of counterfeit Indian art. It is a truth-in-advertising law that prohibits the misrepresentation in the marketing of Indian art products, as Indian made, within the U.S. and protects authentic Indian artists from unfair competition caused by counterfeit Indian artwork. The law covers all Indian and Indian-style traditional and contemporary art produced after 1935 and expanded the powers of the IACB. In 2012, the OLE signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the IACB to conduct IACA criminal investigations.

Indians throughout the U.S. depend solely, or in large part, on their artwork as their source of income. Without the oversight of the IACB and the OLE’s investigative efforts, the marketplace would be flooded with cheap counterfeit items and there would be little or no market for Indians to sell their authentic hand-made products. Counterfeit Indian art negatively affects legitimate Indian artists, businesses, tribes, and economies; impacts Indian cultural and historical practices; and swindles the consumer. If this illegal activity is not policed, Indian artists will not be able to afford to create their art, which will result in the decline of Indian tradition, culture, and authentic art.



The Service's role in Indian art counterfeiting schemes is to investigate violations of "the misrepresentation of Indian produced goods and products." Other federal statutes are also investigated such as identity theft, mail fraud, wire fraud, smuggling, and money laundering. The OLE was selected to investigate these crimes because both entities have similar objectives such as enforcing commerce laws and regulations, and protecting consumers from purchasing illegal products.

Since the OLE began enforcing the IACA, investigations have been extensive and crimes have been documented in states such as Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Texas; and in countries such as China, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. The OLE investigates retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, counterfeiters, and smugglers who fraudulently produce and sell counterfeit Indian arts and crafts and investigation results are impressive.

OLE investigations have revealed that counterfeit Indian art networks use specialized hubs, across the nation, to distribute and market fraudulent Indian artwork. These illegal trade routes have evolved parallel to the hubs of production and distribution of legitimate Indian goods. Operating through complex webs of middlemen, perpetrators use the sales of counterfeit Indian art to undercut reputable competitors and investigations have shown that the illegal profit may be more than 200% over the cost it takes to create the counterfeit items. With these profits, the perpetrators take over reputable businesses and distribution channels to embed their operations, and their counterfeit products, in the Indian art industry. The millions of dollars that counterfeit Indian art networks generate each year support organized crime networks in the U.S. and are funneled to overseas operations.

Currently, the OLE is investigating several individual violators in addition to two separate multi-year, international, large-scale investigations. Both of the larger international investigations involve forgeries of Indian jewelry being mass-produced in the Philippines and fraudulently sold to unaware consumers at numerous retailers throughout the U.S. In one of these investigations, Operation Al Zuni, the fraudulent jewelry had a declared value of \$11 million, but at the retail level, the value would be substantially higher.

In 2018, several search warrants

were executed, multiple businesses and defendants indicted, and federal prosecutions obtained. Combined sentencing included more than \$13,500 in fines and restitution, six months in prison, and almost 10,000 pieces of fraudulent Indian jewelry were seized and removed from the market. In addition, Operation Al Zuni is directly responsible for ending the production and importation of fraudulent Indian jewelry by one family cartel and for another family to change their business practices and mark imported Indian-style jewelry in accordance to U.S. Government regulations.

Ultimately, counterfeit Indian products cheat Indian artists, businesses, and tribes, and the U.S. consumer. The following two additional examples show how unscrupulous businessmen con the public to buy their fraudulent Indian art. In 2018, a defendant was indicted by a New Mexico grand jury for wire fraud, mail fraud, and IACA violations. He is accused of counterfeiting multiple pieces of renowned Hopi artist Charles Loloma's jewelry and selling it on eBay, or through direct sales, for over \$400,000. Also, a separate man agreed to a pretrial diversion of six months for violating the IACA and is required to complete 50 hours of community service. He misrepresented himself to be Indian, and one of his pieces was purchased and used during the filming of a well-known movie that was set in the "Old West."

By enforcing the IACA, the Service is restoring trust with our local communities, protecting the sovereign rights of Indians nationwide, and protecting our nation by ensuring that imported Indian-style products are not fraudulently sold in the United States. Special agents and wildlife inspectors enforce federal statutes and work with our federal, state, tribal, and local authorities to ensure that Indians and their art, culture, economies, and traditions are protected for future generations.



Examples of counterfeit jewelry made in the Philippines and removed from the market during Operation Al Zuni.

VII. The Wildlife Inspection Program

2018 Wildlife Inspection Activity

Port of Entry	FY 2018 Shipments
<i>Designated Ports</i>	
Anchorage, AK	3,058
Atlanta, GA	2,721
Baltimore, MD	2,699
Boston, MA	8,403
Chicago, IL	8,516
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX	6,369
Honolulu, HI	3,129
Houston, TX	29,139
Los Angeles, CA	13,299
Louisville, KY	10,982
Memphis, TN	11,882
Miami, FL	789
New Orleans, LA	21,152
Newark, NJ	28,918
New York, NY	745
Portland, OR	5,959
San Francisco, CA	2,967
Seattle, WA	165,104
<i>Designated Ports</i>	18,617
<i>Non-designated Ports</i>	6,751
<i>Non-staffed Ports</i>	190,472
TOTAL	

The Service relies on the ESA and the Lacey Act as the primary domestic legislation to regulate U.S. wildlife imports and exports. These acts direct responsibility to the Service, through the DOI, for the regulation of imported and exported fish and wildlife. CITES is the major international agreement for the regulation of trade in wildlife and plants and in the U.S., CITES is implemented under the ESA.

The Service has a broad range of programs to enforce the provisions of the ESA, the Lacey Act, and CITES. These include the designation of specific ports of entry for wildlife, the staffing of these ports with wildlife inspectors to monitor wildlife shipments, the licensing of commercial wildlife importers and exporters, the development of a national computer system to analyze importation and exportation data, and the use of international intelligence to monitor wildlife trade.

Since the early 1970s, the Service has designated certain ports of entry for the importation and the exportation of wildlife. The concept of designated ports provides a funneling mechanism that consolidates wildlife shipments to a few specific locations in order to provide efficient service and reduce the cost to the public. The Service selects its designated ports based upon total cargo and wildlife traffic and geographical diversity. In addition, the Service recognized that under certain circumstances, it would be necessary to allow importers to use other ports for scientific purposes, or to alleviate economic hardship and minimize deterioration or loss. For these reasons, the Service created a Designated Port Exemption Permit.

In 1975, the Service assigned the first wildlife inspectors at designated ports to inspect and clear importations of wildlife. Prior to that time, special agents handled all import and export clearance duties in addition to their other responsibilities. By creating a staff of wildlife inspectors, the Service has developed full-time experts to address a specific need.

The Service periodically reviews the port system, and the number of wildlife inspectors, to ensure it is adequate and providing the best service to the U.S. public. Originally, the Service designated eight ports of entry for wildlife shipments and had a staff of 32 wildlife inspectors stationed at these ports. As the wildlife trade increased, staff and the number of wildlife ports of entry and exit needed

to increase as well. In 1985, as a result of a Congressional budget initiative, the Service increased the staff from 36 to 56 inspectors. At the end of 2018, the Service had approximately 125 wildlife inspectors stationed at 38 U.S. ports of entry.

The total estimated number of wildlife shipments has risen from around 45,000 (with a declared value of \$500 million) in 1980 to over 190,000 shipments (with a declared value of more than \$4.8 billion) in 2018. This is a significant increase: shipments of wildlife and wildlife products have increased by about 328 percent and the declared value of the shipments has increased by 860 percent.

Considering the small size of its law enforcement force, the Service is making important strides in intercepting illegal wildlife imports and exports. In 2018, a House Omnibus Appropriations Bill provided, “a \$2,000,000 increase for wildlife inspectors at ports currently without personnel, in order to deter illegal activities and to ensure that legal trade is not significantly slowed because of lack of Service personnel.” In addition, the U.S. Congress directed the OLE to perform an in-depth study on the Wildlife Inspection Program. Specifically, the OLE was to, “conduct an analysis of potential options for increasing the capacity of the wildlife port inspection program...it should include a detailed explanation of the existing program and potential options for enhancing the program.” An internationally recognized professional services company was awarded the contract and created three recommendation reports, which are being evaluated.

Training

Wildlife inspectors receive an initial seven-week basic training course at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Glynco, Georgia and 24 hours of in-service training annually. In addition to the basic training course, they are also required to complete a 10-week field training evaluation program.

To assist partner agencies, wildlife inspectors provide training events that explain general roles and responsibilities of the Service, wildlife laws and regulations, flora and fauna identification, smuggling methods, and seizure and chain-of-custody procedures. Wildlife inspectors routinely provide training to counterparts such as CBP officers and Agriculture specialists, DOS



A WICT inspects shipping packages for illegal wildlife at an international mail facility.



Wildlife inspectors use a handheld camera to inspect a shipment believed to contain non-declared venomous reptiles.



On the job, wildlife inspectors facilitate the legal trade, fight wildlife trafficking, and protect our country's natural resources.



A WICT sniff out illegal wildlife products at a U.S. international mail facility.

officials, HSI officers and agents, USPS inspectors, and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) officers. In addition, wildlife inspectors share their knowledge, skills, and abilities with international counterparts. In 2018, the Wildlife Border Inspection Training Program was created. This one-of-a-kind training was presented in Botswana, El Salvador, Ghana, and Thailand.

One-government Approach at the Border

Wildlife inspectors are our nation's frontline force to protect our country from illegal natural resources either entering or leaving the United States. They work side-by-side with officers from other federal agencies such as CBP, DOS, USPS, APHIS, and the DOJ to provide a "one-government" approach to import and export businesses.

CBP is the primary agency responsible for inspection and clearance of all goods imported into the United States. Before CBP officers will clear a shipment at designated ports, they refer each wildlife shipment to Service wildlife inspectors for inspection and clearance. At ports that do not have Service wildlife inspectors, CBP officers either clear wildlife shipments directly, take other appropriate action, or contact a Service wildlife inspector for guidance.

In addition, the Service works closely with the USDA and APHIS to ensure that all birds and certain mammals are quarantined prior to entering the United States. Service wildlife inspectors must coordinate inspections of these shipments with the USDA to ensure that wildlife laws, as well as quarantine laws, are properly enforced and that protection goals are being achieved. These laws must be enforced in order to prevent the spread of disease such as bird flu and Newcastle disease, which is a contagious and fatal illness that attacks the nervous system of birds. If allowed into the U.S., bird diseases could severely impact the U.S. poultry industry.

It is also necessary for the Service to communicate with foreign governments to coordinate the enforcement of CITES and Lacey Act violations predicated on foreign wildlife laws. While the Service has the authority to communicate directly with other CITES management authorities, it may become necessary to route communications through official diplomatic channels. In these circumstances, the DOS has been extremely helpful and cooperative.

Duties

Wildlife inspector duties include the examination of a shipment's documents, physical inspection of the contents of shipments, proper handling of seized property, and the administrative duties associated with the inspection, clearance, or seizure of wildlife imports and exports. In addition, they staff special enforcement task forces that conduct inspection blitzes at international mail processing facilities and other locations, or target specific enforcement problems, such as the import and sale of medicinal products made from endangered species. Outreach is also an important part of the job. Wildlife inspectors meet with customs brokers, trade associations, international travelers, and hunters to explain wildlife import and export rules and regulations. They are popular guest speakers at schools, nature centers, community conservation programs, and environmental fairs.

In addition to facilitating the legal trade, wildlife inspectors routinely examine shipments for smuggled wildlife and scrutinize paperwork for fraudulent trafficking schemes. Once an item is thought to be illegal, they dig deeper to uncover smuggling methods used to traffic a myriad of wildlife and plants.

Daily, they work with the Service's Forensics Lab, Wildlife Intelligence Unit, special agents, and their international counterparts to facilitate the legal wildlife trade and combat wildlife trafficking.

Wildlife Trafficking

The legal wildlife trade, and the world's natural resources, will continue to thrive only if international laws, regulations, and treaties are followed and enforced. The Service monitors and regulates the legal wildlife trade to ensure the sustainability of these natural resources. However, there is a worldwide criminal element to wildlife and billions are illegally traded on the black market. Due to this high illicit trade, many of the world's wildlife and plants are poached from the wild, smuggled internationally, and sold for profit. This black market is jeopardizing the legal trade and causing many species to become threatened, endangered, or extinct.

The following seizures illustrate the level of detail and sophistication that wildlife inspectors provide. These examples represent only a fraction of the work performed by wildlife inspectors in 2018 and highlight illegal activity from every continent except Antarctica.



No matter the location in the U.S., Service wildlife inspectors encounter illegal activity involving items from beauty products to live, and sometimes venomous, animals.

From Asia, illegal imports involved skin care products from Korea and hunting trophies from Pakistan. In Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, wildlife inspectors interdicted an undeclared shipment of 2,590 containers of salmon oil cream, which contained kaluga sturgeon caviar extract. The caviar cosmetics were discovered during a proactive inspection of an ocean cargo warehouse. The kaluga sturgeon is considered threatened under the ESA and is also protected by CITES. Wildlife inspectors seized the caviar cosmetics because the supplier did not possess the permits needed to prove the product was legally obtained. The caviar cosmetics had an invoiced value of \$20,440, but the retail value is actually closer to \$127,500.

In March 2018, a passenger arrived at San Francisco International Airport with eight hunting trophies from Pakistan, most of which were listed as CITES species that were allowed to be legally hunted. However, the passenger did not possess the correct CITES documentation to prove the legality. He did present an office memorandum, issued by the Pakistan Ministry of Climate Change, and explained that the foreign outfitter said this was sufficient. The wildlife inspector determined that the paperwork needed to be researched, held the hunting trophies, and contacted the government of Pakistan. The result was that the shipment needed both a CITES permit and the office memo, and it was determined that the office memo provided was fraudulent.

Two seizure examples represent live reptiles from the African countries of Egypt and Nigeria. Wildlife inspectors at the Port of New York interdicted and seized a commercial shipment of 150 live ornate spiny-tailed lizards, which were being unlawfully imported into the U.S. The specimens, highly prized in the pet trade, were exported as wild-caught Sudanese lizards; however, the wildlife inspectors knew that these lizards are not known to exist in the Sudan and are highly protected in neighboring countries. Working with the scientists at the Service's Forensics Lab, it was determined that the reptiles were genetically identified as a subspecies that only exists in the neighboring country of Egypt and Egypt has prohibited the exportation of native spiny-tailed lizards

since 1992. The investigation showed the Egyptian reptile dealer smuggled the specimens out of Egypt and obtained a CITES document from Sudan to ship them to the United States. The wildlife inspectors internally shared this information, which prevented the clearance of two similar shipments at the Port of Los Angeles. Their work also closed a smuggling gateway of illegal live reptiles.

In Houston, Texas, the OLE was notified by USDA of an attempted export of a live African spurred tortoise from Houston to Lagos, Nigeria using an express shipping carrier. A wildlife inspector went to the shipping facility and discovered the tortoise was shipped in a box labelled as "seeds" and had no declaration or permits. The tortoise was seized and a Service special agent interviewed the exporter. During the interview, it was discovered that the exporter had a sick child who was not getting better and the turtle was being sent to Nigeria to be sacrificed during an African traditional medicinal ritual. After the interview, the exporter abandoned the turtle to the Service.

Wildlife inspectors are always discovering new methods that wildlife is smuggled to evade detection. One emerging scheme, used to launder wildlife, is for the shipment to be declared as "captive bred." In reality, the animals have been poached in the wild, smuggled internationally to a different country, declared as captive bred, and attempted to be illegally imported into the U.S. using the falsified documents.

In the following examples, wildlife inspectors interdicted live animals such as blue tongue lizards from Australia and tarantulas and poison arrow dart frogs from Brazil. The animals had been marked as captive bred, but wildlife inspectors knew that these species were endemic to specific locations, which did not allow export for commercial purposes.

For instance, Australia does not permit the export of shingleback skinks, commonly known as blue tongue lizards. In Miami, Florida, wildlife inspectors knew about Australia's zero export and investigated the shipment. They examined the paperwork, discovered it was fraudulent, and rescued the reptiles from this illegal activity.

The same modus operandi was used for illegal shipments of tarantulas and frogs from Brazil. For all of these species,



A canine alerted to and saved wild turtles from being smuggled from the U.S.



The WICT inspects a boat for invasive and injurious species before it enters Alaska.



Canines trained to detect wildlife scents assist wildlife inspectors to inspect a greater number of packages for illegal wildlife and wildlife products.

Brazil does not allow export and each shipment was labeled as captive bred in a European city. In Washington State, at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, wildlife inspectors stopped an illegal shipment of 150 live white-banded tarantulas and 100 live salmon bird-eating tarantulas into the U.S. from Germany. Wildlife inspectors knew that both species are endemic only to Brazil, which does not allow export. It was determined that the parental stock had been poached from the wild in Brazil and illegally sent to the European Union. The subject abandoned the spiders to the Service and they were permanently loaned to a zoo.

Wildlife Inspection Canine Teams

The Service is only able to physically inspect a small percentage of wildlife imports and exports. To increase the interdiction of the wildlife and plants caught in the illegal wildlife trade, the OLE created the Wildlife Inspector Canine Teams (WICTs) in 2013. Wildlife inspector handlers, and their canine partners, work together to “sniff out” and interdict illegal wildlife products at the several U.S. ports of entry, work alongside wildlife inspectors during border operations, and demonstrate their skills at outreach events. All of the dogs are Labrador retrievers or Lab mixes, and most were rescued from shelters. The “ideal” dog is between one and three years of age; has a high food drive; and is energetic, nonaggressive, and outgoing. A dog’s career typically lasts until they are nine-years-old; however, they can continue to work as long as they are healthy and productive.

These professionally trained teams graduate from a comprehensive training program where they develop skills to detect wildlife product scents and are exposed to work environments such as air cargo warehouses, ocean containers, international mail facilities, and U.S. border crossings. In addition, the dogs are individually trained to detect the most common wildlife trafficked items, which are commonly seized at their duty station.

These teams expand the OLE’s inspection capabilities by allowing more shipments to be screened at a faster pace. Continuously, wildlife inspectors are able to discover and remove illegal shipments of wildlife that would not have been found without the canine’s abilities. Thanks to the diligence of wildlife inspectors and the WICTs, many successful

investigations were initiated that resulted in wildlife traffickers being sentenced for their crimes.

Border Operations and Targeted Inspections

Often wildlife inspectors will target specific locations or look for a specific species by performing border operations and proactive inspections. These inspections are performed to enforce federal and international wildlife laws at U.S. ports of entry including the U.S. border ports with Canada and Mexico. Border operations allow for the OLE to collaborate with Canadian and Mexican counterparts, which form strong working partnerships. The focus of the border operations depends on the location and the activity that usually occurs at that location. Proactive inspections usually result in the discovery of illegal wildlife and wildlife products that are in the import and export process.

For example, the OLE executed several border operations with Canadian counterparts at separate U.S.-Canada ports of entry. Annually, the OLE performs a joint border operation with Idaho Fish and Game conservation officers and ECCC officers in Eastport, Idaho. The operation occurs during the peak waterfowl hunting seasons in Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada. Over the past two years, this operation has resulted in more than \$12,000 collected for violations and the seizure of several hundred waterfowl that were being illegally imported.

During a three-day border operation at the Port of Grand Portage, Minnesota, the OLE worked with CBP, the MDNR, and Canada’s Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and the ECCC. The operation focused on hunter compliance and coincided with the opening of the Ontario, Canada fall bear season. Successes of the operation included more than 60 enforcement actions, 30 wildlife seizures, and officers were able to speak to hundreds of hunters concerning wildlife laws and safety practices.

In Alaska, the Anchorage wildlife inspection staff organized and led three, multi-day operations at the Port of Alcan, which is a land border port with Canada. In one operation that was worked with the NOAA and the Alaska State Troopers, commercial fish exports were targeted for inspection and resulted in the detection of several, over-quota, fishing violations. The second



and third operations, Operation Alcan Spring and Operation Alcan Fall 2018, were scheduled to coincide with the peak importation of trailered boats into Alaska and at the end of Alaska's non-resident hunting season.

It is vital to inspect boats entering Alaska to prevent the spread of injurious and invasive species such as zebra and quagga mussels, which can become a major threat to Alaska's native resources. The spring operation, worked with CBP and the USDA, focused on the detection and removal of such invasive species, and during the operation, none were detected. The fall operation was performed with Canada's ECCC, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canada Border Services Agency. Executed collaboratively with these Canadian counterparts, a number of wildlife violations were discovered and addressed.

At the Colombia Bridge Port of Entry in Laredo, Texas, wildlife inspectors conducted a multi-day operation with the assistance of the TPWD game wardens. By documenting and deterring the illegal importation of aquatic products, law enforcement officers disrupted illegal fishing activity at this U.S.-Mexico border port.

In Houston, Texas, Operation Patina was a proactive seaport inspection performed by wildlife inspectors and focused on commercial shipments of antiques from Belgium. During the operation, illegal products made with elephant ivory and sea turtle, hippopotamus tusks, and hunting trophies were discovered and removed from the marketplace.

At the Port of Los Angeles, proactive inspections discovered the illegal exports of live U.S. native wildlife. Successes include the rescue of 152 live U.S. native turtles including box, spotted, map, and wood turtle species. The packages were falsely declared and the majority of turtles were concealed in socks, wrapped with duct tape, and hidden among other items in the packages.

In the summer of 2018, Chicago wildlife inspectors conducted a week-long operation at the local express shipping facility. Operation Beanstalk took place with CBP during overnight hours and allowed the OLE to forge and foster relationships with CBP personnel and gain a clearer understanding of how that shipper operates their import and export business.

Outreach

In addition to their regular duties, wildlife inspectors and the WICTs participate in outreach activities. Throughout the country, they educate the public by working various types of events ranging from large public gatherings to small one-to-one meetings. They discuss the importance of facilitating the legal wildlife trade, fighting wildlife trafficking, the mission of the OLE and the Service, and career opportunities. No matter what they attend, the examples of seized wildlife products and canine demonstrations are always popular.

In 2018, examples of outreach efforts include participating at import and export business conferences, large public events, assisting Native Americans, and tactile learning events at educational institutions.

Wildlife inspectors regularly participate at meetings and events that are targeted specifically to those who import and export wildlife and wildlife products. Around the country, wildlife inspectors educate and inform a wide range of businesses and American citizens who ship wildlife items such as brokers, importers and exporters, hunters, musicians, travelers, and hobbyists. For example, in Chicago, wildlife inspectors participated at an event attended by the Chicago Customs Brokers Association and in Anaheim, California, wildlife inspectors spoke to more than 500 appraisers and antique dealers at the Advanced Business Valuation & International Appraisers Conference.

Community outreach included large public events at zoos in cities such as Honolulu, Hawaii and San Diego, California. At Balboa Park in Southern California, wildlife inspectors hosted a booth at the largest Earth Day event in the world. At least 60,000 people attended the event, many of whom stopped by and spoke to a wildlife inspector. These types of events provide the opportunity for wildlife inspectors to present educational awareness about wildlife trafficking and also what steps may be taken by the public in order to purchase only legal wildlife products.

Wildlife inspectors in Alaska are honored to assist and enforce federal laws established to protect Alaskan Natives. During the Alaska Federation of Natives annual meeting, wildlife inspectors worked a booth that was located near a popular native art exhibition. More than 5,000 delegates attended the meeting and



Wildlife inspectors seized illegal wildlife products during Operation Patina.



A wildlife inspector hosted an educational table at a public event. During outreach events, wildlife inspectors represent the Service explaining the important work of protecting natural resources.



At an international training event in Africa, a wildlife inspector shares her experience about how wildlife is trafficked across the world.



Two Anchorage wildlife inspectors traveled to Utqiagvik, Alaska to assist CBP in the clearance of international Inuit delegates who arrived in the U.S. to attend the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. The attendees of the bi-annual event bring a number of wildlife items covered by the Marine Mammal Protection Act's cultural exchange provision, which require special processing by the Service. The wildlife inspectors ensured the import of the needed marine mammal wildlife items was executed without issue.

the majority stopped by the Service's booth as they toured the event. The inspectors answered several questions about the Service's mission and the important work they perform.

In addition, they spoke at length about federal regulations such as the Indian IACA and how the Service strives to protect both the Indian artist and the consumer from fraudulent Indian products being sold as authentic.

Educating students is always rewarding. Young or mature, students are eager to learn about wildlife trafficking and how they may help to save animals. In every state, wildlife inspectors perform hundreds of hours at school outreach events. For instance, at only three events in El Paso, Texas more than 550 elementary school students got to touch seized wildlife products and speak to wildlife inspectors about the importance of their job.

Wildlife inspectors are passionate about their work and this carries through to what they do even while not on duty. In Brownsville, Texas, one wildlife inspector volunteered with three non-profit wildlife organizations and took teenage girls, who are cancer survivors, out on their first Texas turkey hunt. In Hawaii, wildlife inspectors took underprivileged children holiday shopping as part of the "Heroes and Helpers" Program.

In summary, the Service is doing an outstanding job of regulating wildlife imports and exports within the constraints of staff and funding. Most wildlife shipments are channeled through a few designated ports of entry where they are inspected and cleared by a well-trained staff of wildlife inspectors. Many violations are investigated by the wildlife inspectors; however those that may require an in-depth, criminal investigation are referred to an equally well-trained staff of special agents for investigation. The Service also works closely with other federal agencies, and with foreign governments, to enforce federal laws, foreign laws, and international treaties, which restrict wildlife trade.

The Service believes that it has a sound program for controlling the importation and exportation of wildlife and wildlife products. No systems of control is foolproof; however, the current program consisting of wildlife inspections at the ports, diligent investigation by special agents, and aggressive prosecutions by the Department of Justice are helping to create an effective deterrent to future violations.

VIII. Support to the Field

National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory

The primary mission of the Forensics Lab is to make species-specific identification of wildlife parts and products seized as evidence, and much like a police crime laboratory, try to match suspect, victim, and crime scene together through the examination and comparison of physical evidence. Because there are few wildlife forensic techniques available to make species-specific identifications, the Forensics Lab staff conducts extensive research to develop new identification methods.

In August of 2007, the Service opened the 17,000 square foot addition to the Forensics Lab, which includes modern veterinary pathology and genetics laboratories. The primary user groups for the Forensics Lab are Service special agents and wildlife inspectors, other federal agencies, state wildlife agencies, and the signatory countries to the CITES treaty.

Since opening in 1988, the Forensics Lab has received over 15,000 cases consisting of 115,000 evidence items. Of these cases, approximately 85 percent have been submitted by federal agencies, 10 percent by state agencies, and five percent from international agencies. Each case involves one or more submitted requests for the examination or comparison of specific evidence items. As such, each request has represented a commitment on the part of the Forensics Lab to provide expert witness testimony in a federal, state, or international court of law.

In addition to casework and research, Forensics Lab personnel continue to provide valuable Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) and forensic training to Service law enforcement officers and wildlife inspectors, and to law enforcement personnel from state and international wildlife law enforcement agencies. In 2018, Lab scientists provided wildlife CSI training to Namibian and Kenyan investigators, and additional training in ivory and timber ID techniques to Swiss, Peruvian, and Canadian officials.

In order to enhance the collection of evidence in timber smuggling cases, the Forensics Lab developed a more efficient means of sampling container shipments at ports of entry, thus enabling national and international “timber theft” investigators to properly collect and submit wood evidence to the Forensics Lab for species determination.

In support of the Forensics Lab’s continued status as an internationally accredited wildlife crime lab, Lab scientists provided expert guidance on several national wildlife crime committees; provided wildlife forensics presentations to 12 national and international meetings; and published nine peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals. In addition, the Lab director is also a voting member of the Council of Federal Forensic Laboratory Directors, which serves as a forensic advisory group to the Deputy Attorney General of the DOJ.

In order to develop specific analytical techniques, and then apply them to wildlife related cases, the Forensics Lab is organized into five analytical sections: Criminalistics, Genetics, Veterinary Pathology, Analytical Chemistry, and Morphology.

Criminalistics

Forensics Lab scientists in the Criminalistics Section use a wide range of scientific instruments to examine and compare items of trace evidence, as well as weapons, projectiles, and forged or altered documents.

Genetics

Forensics Lab scientists in the Genetics Section apply an extensive range of robotic extractors, sequencers, and DNA databases to identify the species source of blood, tissue, ivory, and horn samples, and to determine if submitted evidence samples came from the same animal source.

Veterinary Pathology

Forensics Lab scientists in the Veterinary Pathology Section utilize an extensive variety of medical pathology equipment, including x-ray analysis, CT-scanning, and histological processing of tissue samples to determine the cause of death of submitted carcasses.

Analytical Chemistry

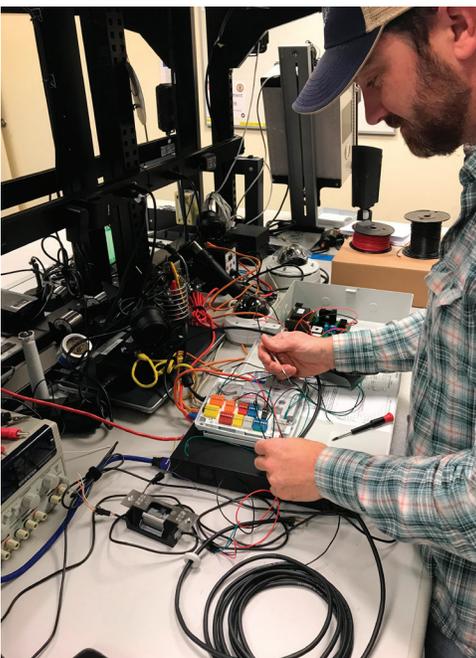
Forensics Lab scientists in the Analytical Chemistry Section utilize gas chromatographs and mass spectrographs to detect a wide range of pesticides and poisons in blood and tissue samples submitted by the pathology Forensics Lab staff to help determine cause of death.

Morphology

Forensics Lab scientists in the Morphology Section use hand magnifiers and microscopes (along with a collection of 60,000 “known” specimens and thoroughly researched ID protocols) to



Prior to pathologist's necropsy, a forensic ornithologist examines each bird carcass to identify the species and for cause of death determination.



A senior special agent wires a camera that will be used covertly in the field.



A forensic scientist samples tissue for species determination using DNA analysis.

identify wildlife parts and products back to the species of origin. This section is further divided into expert teams for identifying wood, bird, mammal, and reptile and amphibian evidence. In 2018, morphology scientists assisted in three warrant searches and conducted 3,836 photo identifications for probable cause seizures or for facilitating commerce.

In September of 2018, ground was broken for the construction of the Forensics Lab's new 14,000 square foot Morphology Center, which was designed to properly store and preserve the Lab's collection of 60,000 "known" reference comparison specimens.

Wildlife Intelligence Unit

In 2016, the OLE expanded its capacity to provide intelligence support to its investigations and interdiction efforts by creating its own Wildlife Intelligence Unit (WIU). The WIU began with the creation of a special agent in charge position to manage the unit and the absorption of several OLE employees who had previously been performing various intelligence functions.

The WIU is responsible for the collection and analysis of information on all aspects of wildlife trafficking to support OLE investigations, inspections, and smuggling interdiction efforts. Through the WIU, Service special agents have access to an expanding array of law enforcement tools and resources, which assist their efforts to identify and disrupt wildlife trafficking networks. Additionally, it maintains and is expanding a broad network of domestic and international contacts with conservation groups, trade associations, academia, non-governmental organizations, and other entities involved in, or concerned with, the wildlife trade.

The WIU initially acquired five contract employees, who were all retired DEA special agents and intelligence analysts with extensive experience in international criminal investigations, financial crimes, and interacting with the Intelligence Community. These contractors serve a critical role in providing strategic and operational guidance to assist in building the capacity of the unit to obtain, analyze, and disseminate intelligence in the furtherance of OLE investigations. This small cadre of contract specialists has already made itself a critical component of many of the OLE's most significant international investigations.

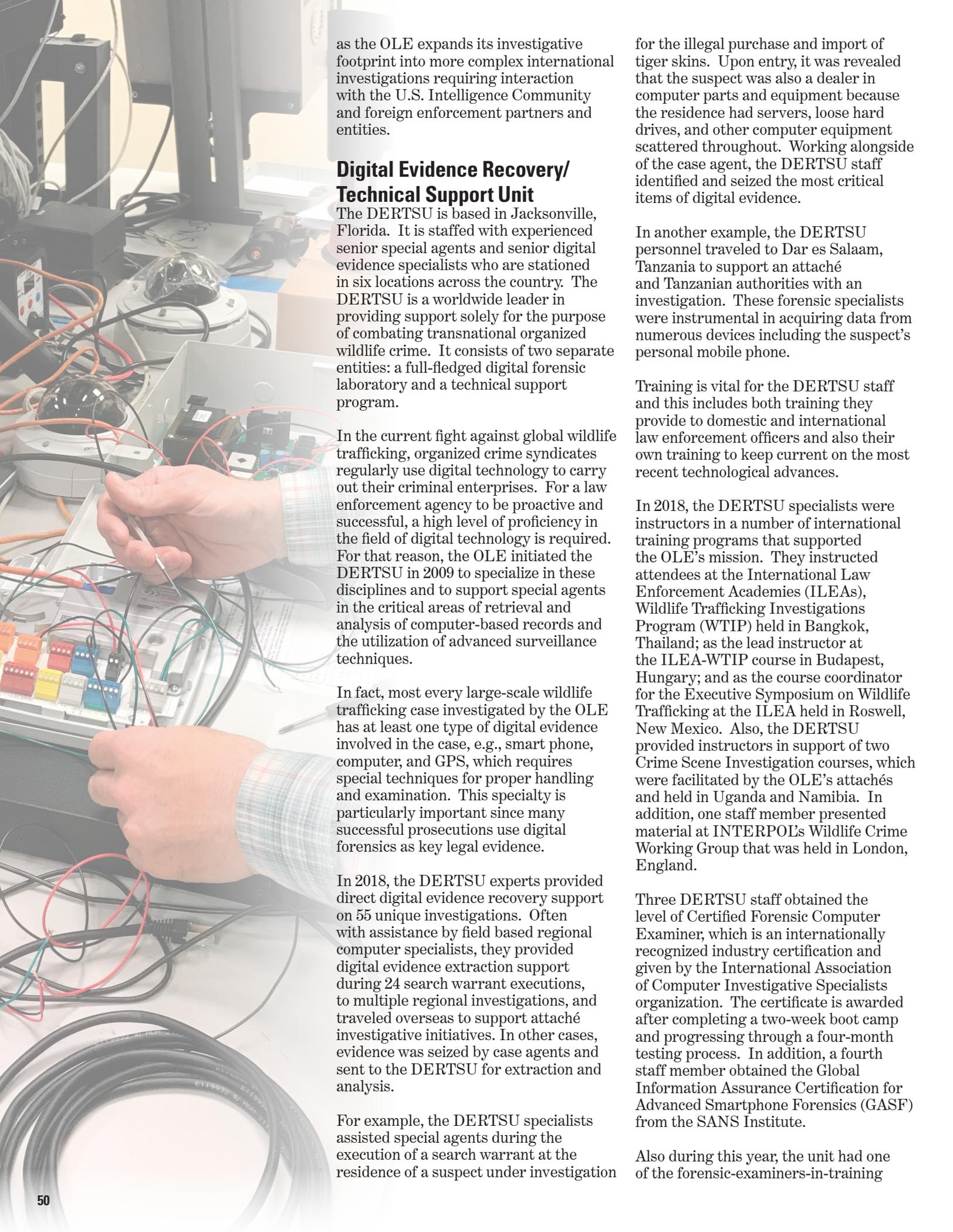
The WIU also coordinates information sharing and deconfliction efforts with other law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad. To perform this work, the unit has strategically stationed personnel at CBP's National Targeting Center (NTC) and Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center (CTAC). Similarly, two specialists have been stationed at DOJ's International Organized Crime Intelligence & Operations Center's (IOC-2) Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Fusion Center (OFC) and Special Operations Division (SOD).

The NTC employs state-of-the-art technology to detect and target in-transit international travelers, items, and containers in order to interdict items in the illegal international trade including wildlife. At the NTC, a Service senior special agent works closely with other agency counterparts to combat criminal networks that threaten wildlife populations and foreign stability, as well as U.S. national security.

An OLE intelligence research specialist stationed at CTAC coordinates with other law enforcement agencies to facilitate information sharing and leverage the collective resources of participating government agencies to prevent, deter, interdict, and investigate violations of U.S. import and export laws. The CTAC streamlines and enhances federal efforts with a focus on the importation, exportation, and trafficking of articles that pose a risk to health and safety, involve environmental crimes, and illicit wildlife in international commerce.

The IOC-2 was created "to disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal organizations posing the greatest threat to the United States" and is a subcomponent of the Attorney General's Organized Crime Council. The WIU has stationed intelligence research specialists at both the OFC and the SOD. They coordinate with counterparts representing 12 Federal Government agencies and the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency. Together, these agencies support law enforcement operations, coordinate multi-jurisdictional law enforcement operations, and provide operational funding.

The WIU will continue to expand and enhance its capabilities to support the investigative and interdiction efforts of the OLE and will remain nimble to adjust to shifting priorities and threats. The unit will also continue to expand its network of partners and cooperators



as the OLE expands its investigative footprint into more complex international investigations requiring interaction with the U.S. Intelligence Community and foreign enforcement partners and entities.

Digital Evidence Recovery/ Technical Support Unit

The DERTSU is based in Jacksonville, Florida. It is staffed with experienced senior special agents and senior digital evidence specialists who are stationed in six locations across the country. The DERTSU is a worldwide leader in providing support solely for the purpose of combating transnational organized wildlife crime. It consists of two separate entities: a full-fledged digital forensic laboratory and a technical support program.

In the current fight against global wildlife trafficking, organized crime syndicates regularly use digital technology to carry out their criminal enterprises. For a law enforcement agency to be proactive and successful, a high level of proficiency in the field of digital technology is required. For that reason, the OLE initiated the DERTSU in 2009 to specialize in these disciplines and to support special agents in the critical areas of retrieval and analysis of computer-based records and the utilization of advanced surveillance techniques.

In fact, most every large-scale wildlife trafficking case investigated by the OLE has at least one type of digital evidence involved in the case, e.g., smart phone, computer, and GPS, which requires special techniques for proper handling and examination. This specialty is particularly important since many successful prosecutions use digital forensics as key legal evidence.

In 2018, the DERTSU experts provided direct digital evidence recovery support on 55 unique investigations. Often with assistance by field based regional computer specialists, they provided digital evidence extraction support during 24 search warrant executions, to multiple regional investigations, and traveled overseas to support attaché investigative initiatives. In other cases, evidence was seized by case agents and sent to the DERTSU for extraction and analysis.

For example, the DERTSU specialists assisted special agents during the execution of a search warrant at the residence of a suspect under investigation

for the illegal purchase and import of tiger skins. Upon entry, it was revealed that the suspect was also a dealer in computer parts and equipment because the residence had servers, loose hard drives, and other computer equipment scattered throughout. Working alongside of the case agent, the DERTSU staff identified and seized the most critical items of digital evidence.

In another example, the DERTSU personnel traveled to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to support an attaché and Tanzanian authorities with an investigation. These forensic specialists were instrumental in acquiring data from numerous devices including the suspect's personal mobile phone.

Training is vital for the DERTSU staff and this includes both training they provide to domestic and international law enforcement officers and also their own training to keep current on the most recent technological advances.

In 2018, the DERTSU specialists were instructors in a number of international training programs that supported the OLE's mission. They instructed attendees at the International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEAs), Wildlife Trafficking Investigations Program (WTIP) held in Bangkok, Thailand; as the lead instructor at the ILEA-WTIP course in Budapest, Hungary; and as the course coordinator for the Executive Symposium on Wildlife Trafficking at the ILEA held in Roswell, New Mexico. Also, the DERTSU provided instructors in support of two Crime Scene Investigation courses, which were facilitated by the OLE's attachés and held in Uganda and Namibia. In addition, one staff member presented material at INTERPOL's Wildlife Crime Working Group that was held in London, England.

Three DERTSU staff obtained the level of Certified Forensic Computer Examiner, which is an internationally recognized industry certification and given by the International Association of Computer Investigative Specialists organization. The certificate is awarded after completing a two-week boot camp and progressing through a four-month testing process. In addition, a fourth staff member obtained the Global Information Assurance Certification for Advanced Smartphone Forensics (GASF) from the SANS Institute.

Also during this year, the unit had one of the forensic-examiners-in-training



A wildlife inspector teaches international counterparts in Ghana.



An attaché provides GPS training at a Marine Crime Scene Training.



An attaché demonstrates investigative methods using an elephant ivory tusk.



Graduates of the ICCA and NCLELA Academies in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

graduate to full time DERTSU staff member. This accomplishment was the result of completing numerous courses, receiving certifications, and working in the field under the guidance of a senior mentor.

Branch of Training and Inspection

Sharing the OLE's knowledge, skills, and abilities with domestic and international counterparts is paramount in the fight against global wildlife crime. Throughout 2018, the OLE continued to expand its training mission, which is managed by the Branch of Training and Inspection (BTI). A cumulative total of 622 training days were provided to 1,087 law enforcement officers during 69 international or domestic training missions. The focus of these trainings was to build capacity with international and domestic law enforcement partners, and advance U.S. Government interests through international cooperation.

Physically located at the FLETC in Glynco, Georgia, the BTI plans, coordinates, and manages comprehensive training for new and existing OLE staff, as well as national wildlife refuge, tribal, state, and international conservation law enforcement officers. To provide optimum training events, the BTI works closely with many private, state, and federal agencies such as the DOS, DOJ, CBP, DOI's International Technical Assistance Program, and the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC). Through this collaboration, the BTI leads the world in conservation law enforcement training.

In partnership with NACLEC, the OLE facilitates the National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy (NCLELA) and the International Conservation Chiefs Academy (ICCA). NCLELA's focus is to provide the practical skills and knowledge needed by those in executive-level conservation law enforcement leadership roles in federal or state agencies. The focus of the ICCA is to build collaborative capacity between international conservation law enforcement agencies in order to effectively combat illegal domestic and international wildlife trafficking. These programs are unprecedented forums for wildlife law enforcement officials and the curriculums have the similar focus of adaptive leadership, strategic planning, and shaping organizational culture. However, the ICCA adds programmatic management training in areas of wildlife

forensics, human-wildlife conflicts, illegal logging, illegal fishing and related trade, models of conservation, wildlife evidence management, green courts, and women in law enforcement.

In 2018, the OLE and NACLEC hosted three ICCAs and the fifth NCLELA class graduated. Since NCLELA's beginning in 2014, 33 of the 179 graduates, representing 48 states and Canada, have been promoted to positions of increased responsibility across North America.

Through the BTI, Service experts have also participated as instructors at the ILEAs for 17 consecutive years. These global academies are administered by the DOS and are held in Bangkok, Thailand; Budapest, Hungary; Gaborone, Botswana; Roswell, New Mexico; and San Salvador, El Salvador. In 2018, 23 OLE special agents and eight wildlife inspectors provided training to 448 foreign nationals from 66 countries at the ILEAs. At these academies, international wildlife law enforcement officers received high-quality training and technical assistance, built enforcement capability, and fostered relationships between U.S. law enforcement agencies and their international counterparts. ILEAs also provided the opportunity to build strong partnerships among regional countries, address common problems associated with criminal activity, and develop an extensive network of alumni who become the future leaders and decision makers in their respective countries. The collaboration developed by training together at the ILEAs is vital in the attempt to sustain the world's flora and fauna. For example, and as a result of the training, networks were developed between wildlife agencies across the sub-Saharan region of the African continent, Southeast Asia, and the U.S. to collectively combat the global demand placed on Africa's native wildlife.

In 2018, a new ILEA training was jointly initiated by the OLE and CBP and was a first of its kind for wildlife. The Wildlife Border Inspection Training Program was developed to provide technical skills and best practices for wildlife border port officers and was taught at the ILEAs in Botswana, El Salvador, Thailand, and the ILEA Regional Training Center in Accra, Ghana. These week-long training missions allowed wildlife inspectors and CBP officers to instruct, and learn from, their international counterparts in wildlife border interdiction techniques and wildlife trafficking. In addition, the OLE and CBP instructors performed an after-training wildlife port assessment at



two border ports in Benin and two ports in Namibia. These joint missions were highlighted by the DOS for their success and were praised by the ILEA Steering Group as a model for partnerships within the ILEA agency community.

The National Wildlife Repositories

The National Wildlife Property Repository (Repository) and National Eagle Repository (NER) are located near Denver, Colorado. The Repository is a unique facility that serves the OLE by receiving and storing wildlife and wildlife products seized and forfeited during OLE's investigation and inspection activities. No live wildlife is stored at the facility, but there are approximately 1.3 million items in inventory from whale products to rhino parts, mounted tigers to monkey skulls.

The NER supplies deceased eagles and eagle feathers and parts to enrolled members of federally recognized Native American tribes for religious and cultural use. The NER had another record breaking year keeping up with increasing numbers of both incoming eagles and applications. The NER lab staff evaluated 3,237 eagles and the administrative side processed and filled 2,532 orders. To accommodate the increased eagle volume, a new (third) freezer was installed, which is already near capacity. Also in 2018, staff members worked on the digitization, scanning, and uploading of current and legacy documents in preparation to migrate to an online ordering platform; participated in the review of the Tribal Consultation commentary; and attended the Native American Conservation Officer Training in Montana.

Staff at the Repository added 12,349 objects to the inventory and loaned or donated 4,646 items. To assist in the lending of property, a Scope of Collection Statement was written that specifically defines the collection and its use. Also, a new database is being created that will assist in the accuracy of the property collection and advance the Repository to a level on par with the Service's Forensics Lab and other DOI institutions that have similar collections.

Educating the public is vital in the effort to reduce the demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products. Educational content and messaging developed at the Repository was provided to students and the general public. For

example, during the Boulder County Parks, "World Ranger Day" event, youth participants completed wildlife identification activities and earned Junior Wildlife Inspector Badges. Repository staff also provided hands on learning opportunities to college and university students. Warren Tech College's Wildlife Forensics class and graduate students from Miami University's Human Dimensions of Conservation course returned for a second year to assist with eagle identification and evaluation. Internships developed for students with the University of Denver and Pikes Peak Community College included opportunities to work with the Repository's wildlife property collection.

To enhance learning opportunities, the Repository created a distance learning studio. It provides an innovative strategy to bring an awareness about wildlife trafficking to anyone who has access to the Internet. In 2018, the studio hosted 16 separate broadcast sessions that reached hundreds of students in remote locations. Also, in collaboration with National Conservation Training Center's broadcast studio, the repository hosted the "Human Dimensions and Environmental Education Update" webinar for Service personnel.

Providing tours of the Repository is another way to educate the public and facility tours comprise a large part of the Repository's educational mission. In 2018, 85 tours were provided to more than 1,200 participants. These tours were provided to visitors such as international and U.S. Government officials, congressional staffers, international law enforcement officers, and the general public.

The Repository staff also participated in outreach events, career fairs, and media interviews. The outreach and career events were attended by almost 1,400 people and staff provided interviews and background information to media outlets such as Lufthansa, Undark magazine, LA Times, the Ocean Agency, and National Geographic.

The repositories also use volunteers to assist in the day-to-day work. In 2018, 15 volunteers generously contributed 2,644 hours of work.

IX. Acronym Key

Full Partner Name	Acronym
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	ATF
Conservation Law Enforcement Officer	CLEO
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora	CITES
Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit	DERTSU
Endangered Species Act	ESA
Environment and Climate Change Canada	ECCC
Homeland Security Investigations	HSI
Indian Arts and Crafts Act	IACA
International Law Enforcement Academies	ILEA
Marine Mammal Protection Act	MMPA
Migratory Bird Treaty Act	MBTA
National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory	Forensic Lab
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA
National Park Service	NPS
Office of Law Enforcement	OLE
Transnational Organized Crime (Criminals)	TOC
United States Customs and Border Protection	CBP
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA
United States Department of Homeland Security	DHS
United States Department of Justice	DOJ
United States Department of State	DOS
United States Department of the Interior	DOI
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	Service
United States Forest Service	USFS
United States Postal Service	USPS
Wildlife Inspector Canine Team	WICT



U.S. Game Management Agents circa 1930s.

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