

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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FISH AND WILDLIFE IMPORTATIONS NEARLY 80,000,000 LAST YEAR, INTERIOR DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Nearly 74,000,000 live fish and about 6,000,000 other animals were imported into the United States last year, the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reported today.

It is only in the past few years that records in any detail have been obtained at ports of entry. Federal regulations effective in 1966 require the reporting of incoming live fish and wildlife.

Last year's imports included 73,694,996 fish, 1,938,533 shellfish, 1,393,970 reptiles, 571,663 birds, 339,489 amphibians, and 116,341 mammals.

The total of 78,054,992 wildlife imports exceeded the 1968 figure of 67,188,442.

The Endangered Species Conservation Act signed by President Nixon on December 5 will affect future imports. The statute bars the import, except for certain educational and scientific purposes, of those species considered by the Secretary of the Interior as threatened with extinction.

The Federal Government also seeks to prevent irresponsible importation of infectious diseases such as hoof and mouth disease and harmful species such as fruit bats, mongooses, red whiskered bulbuls and walking catfish.

Live fish importations were mostly tropical fish for home aquariums. The reptiles included large numbers of lizards, snakes and turtles--species frequently favored as pets and often valuable in scientific experiments.

Frogs and toads, used primarily in educational research, comprised most of the amphibians. Of the mammals, 99,668 were primates. Many of the primates were rhesus monkeys from Southeast Asia, which are used in medical research.

The Port of New York continues as the principal port of entry, followed in importance by Miami, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. These four ports had over 90 percent of the importations.