

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SECRETARY MORTON PRAISES CONGRESS FOR TAKING FAST ACTION TO INCREASE PENALTIES FOR KILLING EAGLES

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today praised Congress for taking fast action toward increasing the Federal penalties for killing bald and golden eagles.

The House voted favorably February 7 on the recommendation of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee amendments to the Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 that would provide for maximum penalties of \$5,000 and one year imprisonment for subsequent offenses.

"After the deplorable eagle slaughters in Wyoming revealed last year, the present efforts indicate the continuing concern of the Congress for the preservation of our national bird," Secretary Morton said.

Congress became concerned with the possible extinction of the bald eagle as early as 1940. The Bald Eagle Protection Act of that year forbid the taking, selling, etc., of bald eagles or their parts unless under special permit. It provided for fines of not more than \$500 and imprisonment of not more than six months, or both. The preamble to the legislation proclaimed the bald eagle "no longer a mere bird of biological interest but a symbol of the American ideals of freedom."

The Department of the Interior had recommended enactment of legislation similar to that just passed by the House of Representatives. Under Secretary Pecora advised the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries in September that "increased penalties, together with a requirement of less specific criminal intent will serve to deter future violations of the Act."

The Bald Eagle Protection Act was amended in 1962, extending to the golden eagle those protections already afforded the bald eagle.

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