

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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THREE KANGAROO SPECIES LISTED AS THREATENED

Three species of kangaroo--the red, eastern gray, and western gray-- have been determined to be "threatened species" and have been listed as such by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton announced today.

The listing becomes effective on January 29, 1975.

"I originally proposed in April 1974 that these three species of kangaroos be considered for listing as endangered species," Morton said, "but subsequent field investigations by Fish and Wildlife Service biologists and our personal contacts with the Australian Government assure me that the species involved are not presently in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future."

"The Australian Government is very concerned about its nation's symbol and has continued a total ban on exports of kangaroos and kangaroo products. Moreover, they are voluntarily going to add the three kangaroo species to an appendix of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which will automatically require strict export controls and permits certifying that any future commerce in these species of kangaroos will not be detrimental to the species. I heartily support this stand of the Australian Government."

"Threatened species" is one of two categories used in the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to describe an animal's condition relative to extinction. The other is "endangered species." A threatened species is one

(more)

likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. An endangered species is one which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Listing in either category allows the Secretary of the Interior to issue protective regulations to provide for the conservation of the species.

For the three species of kangaroos listed recently, the following regulations have been promulgated.

1. None of the three species of kangaroos may be imported into the United States for commercial purposes.

2. It is unlawful for any United States citizen to engage in commercial activity involving the three species. This includes delivering, receiving, carrying, transporting, or shipping in interstate or foreign commerce.

3. It is unlawful for any United States citizen to sell or offer for sale in interstate or foreign commerce any of the three species imported unlawfully.

4. The Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can permit commercial importing of any of the three species of kangaroos when the Australian Federal Government certifies to him that a particular Australian state has developed an effective sustained-yield program for harvesting the species, and that the taking of the animal will not be detrimental to the survival of that species or subspecies. If the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determines that an Australian state whose program was previously certified no longer maintains an effective sustained-yield program for the three species of kangaroo, he may issue regulations to prohibit any further commercial importation of the animals from that state.

Kangaroos were proposed for listing as an endangered species in April 1974, and public comments were sought for 60 days. During that time two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists spent five weeks in Australia gathering information on the animals from Federal and state officials, graziers, private businessmen, and conservationists. During this period the Australian Federal Government has maintained a strict ban on exporting these animals.

The information gathered indicates that none of the three species can be considered in danger of extinction according to the following five criteria: (1) condition of habitat, (2) overuse, (3) disease or predation, (4) regulatory mechanisms, and (5) other natural or man-made factors.

Concerning the loss of kangaroo habitat in Australia, the survey indicates it is substantial in total acreage but small in relation to the total kangaroo range. The species suffering most from loss of habitat is the western gray kangaroo because of ever-increasing expansion of agricultural interests in Western Australia. This poses a threat to the species and may result in its endangerment, but it does not imply extinction within the foreseeable future because the various states are well aware of the destruction of habitat and are taking steps to control it.

There is no evidence to suggest overuse of kangaroos on a species population basis nationwide. The trend throughout Australia is for better regulation of kangaroo harvests, and all states now have established annual quotas. The combined effects of drought and commercial harvest reduced kangaroo populations to low levels in some regions during the late 1960's, but the wet conditions prevailing during the past three years have benefited the kangaroo. Nevertheless, species such as the kangaroos, which have high commercial value and which have been heavily exploited, must be regarded as apt to become endangered unless adequate controls exist.

No problems with disease or predation were uncovered in the field investigation.

Many deficiencies remain in the gathering of population data that are needed for setting better control regulations; however, all the states have the necessary regulatory power to adequately control the harvest of kangaroos; all have competent resource managers and biologists who are trying to collect the data; and none wishes to see the animal driven to extinction. Regulations and management policies are not uniform among the states and nationwide coordination is necessary. This lack of coordination will not result in the extinction of any of the three kangaroo species within the foreseeable future, but it does pose a threat that could lead to endangerment if not corrected.

There are valid indications that the kangaroo hide industry will expand in future years, but such commercial activity need not be detrimental if adequate controls exist. There is ample reason to believe Australia is developing such controls. Preserves for sustaining kangaroo populations are lacking in number, but additional ones are being established each year. Also, substantial acreage exists in each state where hunting is prohibited or strictly controlled. Law enforcement efforts are difficult because of funding and staffing deficiencies, and this problem, if uncorrected, could eventually threaten the kangaroo with endangerment.

The supporting evidence for this decision is on file with the Office of Endangered Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240. Interested persons are invited to examine and discuss this information during normal business hours at Suite 800, 1612 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

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