

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## UNITED STATES AND MEXICO SIGN WILDLIFE AGREEMENT

An agreement between the Republic of Mexico and the United States to study and manage wildlife common to both countries has been signed that sets forth five major areas of cooperation: protection of endangered species, management of migratory birds, wildlife research, law enforcement, and training.

Representatives from Mexico's wildlife agency, the Direccion General de la Fauna Silvestre (DGFS), met with representatives from the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and national conservation groups in Brownsville, Texas, on July 25-28 to outline plans. At the conclusion of the meeting, FWS Director Lynn A. Greenwalt and Ignacio Ibarrola Bejar, Director General of the DGFS, signed a protocol that outlines joint efforts to be undertaken by the two countries in the coming year. Annual meetings between the wildlife agencies began in 1975 with the creation of the U.S.-Mexico Joint Committee on Wildlife Conservation.

The United States and Mexico will initiate studies to determine the status of several endangered species in Mexico that once also occurred in the Southwestern United States. Two species, the Mexican wolf and the Mexican grizzly bear are extremely rare, and some

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authorities believe the Mexican grizzly may already be extinct. Another study will survey Baja California for sightings of the California condor, one of the world's rarest birds. Less than 40 of the birds exist in the wild in the mountains of southern California. Greenwalt said the condor is approaching the "ragged edge of disaster," but that he was encouraged by reported sightings of the bird in Baja California.

In another area, the United States and Mexico have expanded their aerial surveys of wintering waterfowl in Mexico. The United States and Canada have long cooperated in summer surveys of ducks and geese to determine nesting success. The increased winter counts help all three countries get a better picture of waterfowl population trends in North America. The data from Mexico are used each year to evaluate the previous migratory waterfowl hunting seasons. The DGFS has also agreed to adopt the bird banding system used by the United States and Canada, and will send a biologist to the FWS bird banding laboratory in Maryland for training.

Another game bird to be surveyed is the white-winged dove, which nests in the Southwestern United States and northern Mexico and winters in Central America. Biologists are concerned that the dove's habitat is decreasing because of agricultural development throughout its range.

Wildlife transplants between the United States and Mexico will continue. One of last year's biggest successes involved the transfer of 26 elk from the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma to an area in the State of Coahuila. The number of elk has increased to 35 and they will be released next year from a temporary enclosure. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has trapped white-tailed deer to help Mexico reestablish its population, and the Mexicans have trapped desert bighorn sheep to supplement Texas' population.

Also present at the meeting were representatives of the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation. Both groups will continue their participation in surveys of Mexico's wildlife. The National Wildlife Federation plans to translate several wildlife publications into Spanish and will establish a scholarship fund for Mexican biologists to receive advanced training in the United States.

Greenwalt said he was pleased with the progress made at the conference. "Wildlife knows no political boundaries, and effective management of this resource requires cooperation between our countries," he said.

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