

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## U.S. TO PROPOSE RECLASSIFYING SPECIES LISTED UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES TREATY

The United States has provisionally asked the International Trade Convention on Endangered Species to change the status of 18 native birds and animals covered by the treaty. The proposals, which concern only the Convention and not the U.S. Endangered Species Act, will be published in the November 27, 1978, Federal Register.

Public comment and additional data are invited through February 15, 1979, and at a November 28 public meeting scheduled for 10 a.m. in Room 5160 of the Department of the Interior, 18th and C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. The meeting was previously announced in the November 1, 1978, Federal Register.

Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Director Robert Cook said changing the status of the native species would follow the Convention's strict criteria for listing and would place the species in the proper category as indicated by current biological and international trade data.

Cook promised intensive review and analysis would be given to information received during the comment period to make certain all data is as accurate as possible and all biological findings are based on solid evidence.

"Let me emphasize that these proposals can be withdrawn at any time until the member countries vote in Costa Rica on March 19-31, 1979," Cook said. "Further, most of the species involved are protected by other U.S. laws which also control their export."

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora controls, by permit, the import and export of species. The species are listed in appendices according to the degree of threat, including international commerce. The appendices can be changed only by majority vote of the 47 member countries.

Both an import and export permit are required for the international shipment of Appendix I species and can be issued only after a scientific authority has found no detriment to the species. For Appendix II species, only an export permit is required, with similar findings by a scientific authority.

The list of species proposed for reclassification differs in some respects, primarily as a result of new data, from the list published for comment by the Interior agency last May. Removal of the bobcat from Appendix II is among the new proposals. Additional data indicate that

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from 750,000 to 1 million bobcats are found in 34 States, whose conservation agencies control the harvest each year. Approximately 11,000 pelts were exported from May through December 1977, the latest date for which figures are available.

Included in the proposals for removal are the hybrid Mexican duck from Appendix I (species threatened with extinction), and the marsh hawk, trumpeter swan, Mearn's quail, kestrel, osprey, greater prairie chicken, and bobcat from Appendix II (species potentially threatened with extinction by international trade). International trade in these species is insignificant and their export is controlled under other laws.

The remaining proposals involve transferring species between Appendix I and Appendix II. Species being proposed for Appendix I status, which prohibits commercial trade, are the Guadalupe fur seal, American crocodile, Bolson tortoise, and the golden eagle population east of the Mississippi River.

Commercial trade is allowed in Appendix II species but is regulated or limited by the scientific authority in each nation which controls the number of export permits granted. Except for the American alligator, there is little or no international trade in the species being proposed for transfer to Appendix II. The species proposed include the Atlantic sturgeon, southern sea otter, Peale's peregrine falcon (not to be confused with other more threatened subspecies of peregrine falcons), the Alaska population of the bald eagle, the northern elephant seal, and the alligator.

A change in the status of the alligator from Appendix I to Appendix II could permit international commerce in this species. However, this would first require a modification in the regulations issued under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, which also protects the alligator. The Fish and Wildlife Service is currently considering such a change. Conservation measures taken over the past several years have brought a remarkable recovery for the alligator, now found in abundance in many parts of the country.

Finally, Cook said, there is insufficient biological and trade information to demonstrate that the lynx and river otter, whose pelts are in high demand, should be deleted from Appendix II. Currently the Endangered Species Scientific Authority limits exports of these species to States with approved management plans.

Comments and requests for information on the proposals should be addressed to the Director (WPO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Persons planning to attend the November 28 public meeting are asked to notify Ms. Joan Caton, Federal Wildlife Permit Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240, (703) 235-2418.

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