

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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## TWO FOREIGN CROCODILE SPECIES LISTED AS ENDANGERED; THREE-FOURTHS NOW PROTECTED

Two more crocodilians - the saltwater and American - have been brought under the protection of the U.S. Endangered Species Act, ending further commercial trade in this country in the products made from their hides such as shoes, boots, purses, briefcases, and other personal and household items.

The saltwater crocodile is one of the world's largest reptiles, growing longer than 20 feet and weighing several hundreds pounds. It ranges in coastal waters throughout Southeast Asia, including Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, Bangladesh, India, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. The saltwater crocodile population in Papua New Guinea was excluded from the listing because of the strict protection it is given in that country.

The Florida population of the American crocodile, which ranges from South Florida to the Keys, was listed as endangered in September 1975. The remaining populations of this species are found throughout the Caribbean Sea, and on the Pacific Coast of Central and South America from Mexico to Ecuador.

It is found in the countries of Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Belize.

Crocodilians are under increasing pressure everywhere from diminishing habitat and further losses caused by illegal hunting to supply the commercial market. More than 75 percent of the species and subspecies are now covered by U.S. law and all are listed under the 54-nation treaty, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Many of those listed by the Convention are in a category that allows commercial trade. Listing the crocodiles as endangered will prohibit such trade in those two species and also will make the host countries eligible to receive U.S. wildlife assistance and funding to help in their own conservation efforts.

Listing of the American crocodile (Crocodylus acutus) and the estuarine or saltwater crocodile (Crocodylus porosus) was published in the December 18 Federal Register by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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