



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PERMITS TO BE REQUIRED FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN PARROTS AND RELATED BIRDS;  
OTHER ACTIONS REGARDING INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE TREATY ANNOUNCED

The United States will require permits for international trade in parrots, macaws, cockatoos, and related birds in accordance with a recent amendment to an international wildlife treaty, Eugene Hester, acting deputy director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today. The United States is, however, asking the other nations that participate in the treaty to reconsider the amendment at the earliest possible opportunity, he said.

The amendment added most species of psittacine birds (parrots and parrot-like birds of the order Psittaciformes) to the list of species whose trade is controlled under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES is a 71-nation treaty whose purpose it is to prevent the endangerment or extinction of species from excessive international commerce.

The listing, which has been controversial among U.S. bird breeders and dealers, resulted from concern that massive international trade is a threat to many psittacine species. Many species of parrots look alike to non-experts, making it difficult to distinguish protected species whose trade is prohibited, from legally traded species. The CITES listing is intended to provide better information for customs officials on the identity and legality of birds shipped in international commerce.

Under the listing, importers of psittacine birds will be required to obtain a permit or certificate from the nation from which the birds are exported before they can be brought into the United States. Exporters in this country will have to obtain a certificate from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The only species for which permits and certificates will not be required are the "budgie" or parakeet (Melopsittacus undulatus) commonly sold in the United States, and the cockatiel (Nymphicus hollandicus). The CITES requirements concern only import and export and have no direct effect on breeding or commerce of psittacine birds within the United States.

The proposal to add the entire order of psittacine birds to Appendix II was adopted at the most recent meeting of CITES nations in March 1981. The United States opposed the proposal on the grounds that control of trade in threatened species is better achieved by providing training and identification aids to customs officials than by broadly listing all species that are not threatened. The United States favored a proposal to list 21 potentially threatened psittacine species and another 13 species that are similar in appearance to threatened species.

The United States had the option, until June 6, 1981, to exempt itself from complying with the Appendix II listing, but decided to honor the CITES requirements. An exemption would do little to relieve U.S. importers from the need to obtain foreign export permits because another U.S. law, the Lacey Act, makes it a Federal offense to import into the United States any wildlife taken or exported in violation of foreign conservation laws, including CITES permit requirements. About 84 percent of psittacine birds currently imported into the United States originate in CITES nations.

An exemption would also do little to help exporters in this country, because receiving countries that are members of CITES will not accept shipments from any other nation unless they are accompanied by either CITES permits or documents that contain information equivalent to that required in CITES permits.

The United States remains concerned that the mass listing of psittacine birds raises serious questions regarding the purposes and implementation of CITES, and is requesting that the listing be reconsidered during the review of CITES appendices to be concluded during the next meeting of party countries, scheduled for 1983.

The U.S. decision to require permits for psittacine birds was published in the September 4, 1981, Federal Register, and took effect on that date. This document also contains information on changes in CITES listings for a number of other species. International dealers and tourists who may be importing or exporting wildlife or wildlife products should be aware of the changes in CITES listings.

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