



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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For Release November 1, 1983

WHO PAYS WILDLIFE'S WAY?  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE STUDYING SOURCES OF MONEY  
FOR STATE NONGAME PROGRAMS

Who foots the bill for fish and wildlife besides anglers and hunters?

Do the 83 million Americans who watch birds, photograph wildlife, and travel to national wildlife refuges support the objects of their affection as sportsmen do?

Will "wildlife lovers" become "wildlife backers"?

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is asking these questions as it investigates 18 potential sources of revenue that could be tapped to support State fish and wildlife programs.

This money would be used to support some of the nearly 3,700 wild invertebrate species, most of which are "nongame" species not sought by sportsmen. These animals do not carry special distinctions or protections, such as endangered and threatened species and marine mammals, and are not classed as feral species that have returned to the wild from their domestic state. Nongame species range from chipmunks and porcupines, for example, to herons and songbirds.

The effort to identify an equitable and effective source of public funds to foster the States' conservation of fish and wildlife, especially those species not ordinarily hunted, fished, or trapped, is required by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1980. The results, when presented to Congress, could lead to enactment of funding for this program, perhaps an excise tax similar to the "Pittman-Robertson" and "Dingell-Johnson" Federal aid programs. Under these programs, sportsmen have been financing the conservation of game and many nongame species for nearly five decades.

Although Federal income taxes and certain State taxes help to support some fish and wildlife management programs, sportsmen have traditionally carried the bulk of this financial responsibility. State fish and game management is supported largely by the States' sale of fishing and hunting licenses, and supplemented by the Federal excise taxes on fishing and hunting gear. In 1983, for example, nearly \$140 million was returned to the 50 States and Territories under the Federal aid programs, bolstering the \$484 million that fishermen and hunters paid for State licenses and permits during the preceding year.

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There is "spin-off" value for nongame species from the money that is spent for hunted species. Land acquired and developed with "Pittman-Robertson" funds provides habitat for shorebirds and cranes in addition to waterfowl, for instance; in a similar way, "Dingell-Johnson" funds support habitat for turtles, crawfish, and molluscs, as well as sport fish. Nongame species do lack a specific, comprehensive source of funds, however.

"It's time that Americans who do their hunting with binoculars instead of shotguns be given the opportunity to shoulder part of the financial responsibility for conserving fish and wildlife," says G. Ray Arnett, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. "Sportsmen have been quietly paying the excise taxes for State conservation programs for years -- to the tune of over \$1.5 billion since the Federal aid programs first began. People who don't hunt and fish but enjoy wildlife in other ways, from backyard bird feeders to outings on the National Wildlife Refuge System, must realize that their pastimes need their financial support, too."

A national survey by the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1980 estimated that \$6.6 billion is spent each year by non-hunters and non-anglers on equipment, travel, and related expenditures for fish and wildlife recreation. Of that total, for example, nearly \$1.2 billion is spent for binoculars and photographic equipment and \$517 million is devoted to bird feeding each year.

The potential sources of revenue that are currently being examined by the Fish and Wildlife Service for State nongame programs, include:

- Annual appropriations from general U.S. Treasury funds
- Fees on minerals extracted from Federal lands and waters
- Sale of "semi-postal" stamps whose cost would cover basic postage and a contribution to nongame programs
- User fees on selected Federal lands and waters
- A voluntary Federal income tax "checkoff"

The sources also include special taxes on:

- Wild bird seed
- Wild bird houses
- Wild bird feeders
- Wild bird waterers, birdbaths, and heaters
- Fur from wild animals
- Backpacking and camping equipment
- Off-road vehicles
- Binoculars, monoculars, and spotting scopes
- Wildlife identification books
- Recreational diving equipment
- Photographic equipment and film
- Travel trailers and campers
- Motorhomes

A complete listing of these potential sources of revenue for the support of fish and wildlife, principally nongame, as well as a more complete summary of the study by which the Fish and Wildlife Service has compiled this list, appears in the October 28, 1983, Federal Register. Comment by the public is invited until December 12, 1983, and should be submitted to the Chief, Division of Federal Aid, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. Copies of the Federal Register notice can also be obtained from this address. After public comment is received and reviewed, the Service must complete its study and present its final recommendations to Congressional committees by December 31, 1984.