



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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Elizabeth Lipscomb  
Charles Dane

202-208-5634  
703-358-1708

### U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE INITIATES KANGAROO STATUS REVIEW

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced initiation of a formal status review of three species of kangaroo classified as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act--the red, the western gray, and the eastern gray (except one subspecies that is classified as endangered).

The results of the review will be used to decide whether to maintain, modify, or repeal a "special rule" which currently allows importation of kangaroo products, or whether removing these species from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife should be considered.

The announcement is accompanied by the release of a Service report, "Review of Kangaroo Management--Australia, March 1990." That document indicates many kangaroo populations appear healthy, and recommends consideration be given to removing these species from the list of threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act.

The investigation was undertaken, in part, to consider concerns raised in a petition filed late last year by Greenpeace USA. The petition sought to reinstate a former ban on importation of kangaroo products into the United States. The petitioners contended management of the kangaroos by the Australian states was not effective and population data were inadequate.

In March 1990, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sent three professionals to Australia to obtain information and hear all Australian points of view regarding the issue. The team met with government scientists and representatives, as well as private individuals, businessmen, and conservation organizations. They also visited field sites and commercial facilities. The report compiled by the fact-finding group contains a number of recommendations including improved survey methods, better tagging and tracking of skins, and increased emphasis on investigation of wildlife crime.

The kangaroo family contains 54 separate species, 13 of which are listed by the United States government as endangered and 3 threatened. Members of the family include the three threatened kangaroo species, as well as wallaroos, rat-kangaroos, tree kangaroos, and wallabies. Although the red, western gray, and eastern gray species are listed as threatened by the United States, they are not considered endangered or threatened by the Australian government, with the exception of the subspecies of eastern gray kangaroo considered endangered by both governments.

Kangaroos are found throughout Australia. The red kangaroo occurs across the entire continent, the western gray kangaroo is found mainly across the southern part of Australia, and the eastern gray kangaroo occurs in the eastern three states with a limited extension into South Australia and Tasmania.

The Service listed these species of kangaroo as threatened in December 1974, with a special rule allowing for commercial import of kangaroos, their parts, and products once effective Australian management plans were established. In April 1981, the Service began allowing imports on a trial basis. In April 1983, the Service proposed to continue allowing imports, and to delist the three species. The Service subsequently published a rule allowing the continuation of imports, but withdrew its proposal to delist the species because of rapid population declines associated at the time with a prolonged and widespread drought in Australia. However, by 1987, the combined population estimates for the three species had essentially returned to the pre-drought numbers of over 18 million.

As part of the current status review, the Service is soliciting relevant data, comments, and any other information on the status of the three species and their management. Of particular interest is information on the detection of illegal trade, the magnitude of noncommercial harvest, and effects of recent floods. Comments concerning this status review and requests for copies of the Greenpeace petition or Service team report should be submitted to: Office of Scientific Authority, Room 725, Arlington Square, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240. For further information, contact Dr. Charles W. Dane, Chief, Office of Scientific Authority, at 703-358-1708.