



# Department of Justice

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## **SELLER OF PROTECTED EAGLE FEATHERS SENTENCED**

### *Juvenile Golden Eagle Feathers Sold To Undercover Fish & Wildlife Service Agent*

Portland, Ore. — United States District Judge Anna J. Brown today sentenced Reginald Dale Akeen, also known as J.J. Lonelodge, 34, to serve 30 days home confinement, five years probation, and 250 hours of community service at a wildlife organization, for selling illegal migratory bird products, including a fan made of juvenile golden eagle feathers. Judge Brown also ordered Akeen to pay \$4,800 in restitution to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, which provides grants to carry out wetlands conservation projects for the benefit of migratory birds and other wildlife.

A federal grand jury indicted Akeen in March 2009. He pled guilty in December 2009 to a felony violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Akeen admitted that he offered to sell a fan made of juvenile golden eagle feathers, also known as “black and whites,” to a Fish and Wildlife Service undercover agent, and that he contacted an accomplice in Warm Springs, Oregon, who agreed to sell a nine-feather black and white fan. Akeen then accepted from the undercover agent \$1,750 in cash and bartered items for the fan, and arranged a meeting for his accomplice to hand-deliver the fan in Warm Springs. Akeen further admitted that from July through September 2007, he received \$4,800 from selling illegal migratory bird products.

Eagles and other protected migratory birds are viewed as sacred in many Native American cultures and the feathers of the birds are central to religious and spiritual Native American customs. By law, enrolled members of federally recognized Native American tribes are entitled to obtain permits to possess eagle parts for religious purposes, but federal law strictly prohibits the sale of bald and golden eagles or their feathers and parts under any circumstance. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates the National Eagle Repository, which collects eagles that die naturally, by accident or other means, to supply enrolled members of federally recognized tribes with eagle parts for religious use.

“We will not tolerate defilement of this great symbol of American strength, courage and freedom. Golden and bald eagles are a vital sign for all -- and are absolutely sacred among Native Americans,” said United States Attorney Dwight C. Holton. “Black market trade in feathers not only threatens the survival of eagle species, but desecrates this sacred symbol. We must and we will vigorously prosecute those who break the laws that protect these magnificent birds.”

“Native Americans have important cultural and religious customs and rights that can only be preserved and respected by enforcing laws that protect eagles and other birds and ban the sale of their feathers and parts,” said Paul Chang, Special Agent in Charge of Law Enforcement for the agency’s Pacific Region. “There are legal ways to obtain eagle feathers and parts and we are committed to helping tribal members acquire them through these methods.”

This case was the result of an investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service into the illegal killing of bald and golden eagles and other protected birds and the sale of their feathers and parts. The Fish and Wildlife Service conducted the investigation with the help and cooperation of state, federal, and tribal law enforcement agencies. The case was prosecuted by the Assistant U.S. Attorney Stacie Beckerman.

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