

Office of Law Enforcement

Accomplishments 2016

*Protecting the Nation's Wildlife
and Plant Resources*



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, working with others, conserves, protects, and enhances fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. As part of this mission, the Service – through the Office of Law Enforcement – is responsible for enforcing U.S. and international laws, regulations, and treaties that protect wildlife and plant resources.

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Front Cover photo: Green Sea Turtle Grazing Seagrass. Photo Credit: By R Lindgren /Wikimedia Commons

Back Cover photo: The endangered “iʻi” is a species of Hawaiian honeycreeper and a recognizable symbol of Hawaii. Photo Credit: By Ludovic Hirlimann / Wikimedia Commons

Message from the Chief

In the last four years, two United States Presidents have signed Executive Orders to strengthen United States and global enforcement efforts to address transnational organized crime involving wildlife trafficking. On behalf of the men and women who serve in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement, I want to thank this administration for prioritizing the law enforcement effort to combat illegal wildlife trafficking here in the United States and globally.

In 2016, cases of both iconic and lesser known wildlife illegally taken or smuggled in the United States included orangutans, sea turtles, elephants, tigers, rhinos, Dall sheep, moose, caribou, grizzly bear, bald and golden eagles, whooping cranes, waterfowl, freshwater turtles, white tail and mule deer, elk, mountain lions, elvers, corals, seahorses, and bats. All of the wildlife listed were illegally killed and/or smuggled by suspect(s) for financial gain.



Photo: Tracey Woody

A few of the schemes the arrested poachers, traffickers, and smugglers used included smuggling carving(s) made from elephant ivory smuggled through the United States Postal Service, declaring the ivory as “RESIN CARVINGS” valued at a fraction of the actual selling price. Fresh water turtles concealed in snow boots, live turtles taped to the smuggler’s legs and groin, and more than a 1,000 turtles were discovered hidden in boots and cereal boxes in suitcases destined from the United States to China. One smuggler was charged with trafficking 15 separate rhinoceros horns, worth an estimated \$2.4 million dollars, and hid the rhino horns in luggage. An unlicensed guide operated as an illegal outfitter, whose clients illegally killed 17 bull elk and a mountain lion, in part covered up the scheme by instructing his clients to purchase other licenses. One trafficker shipped squirrel monkey blood and falsely labeled the blood as human blood to evade Service regulations.

In 2016, we pursued over 10,000 wildlife crime investigations resulting in over \$21 million in fines, over \$2 million in civil penalties, and 46 years in prison; we inspected 183,080 shipments of wildlife and wildlife products entering or leaving the United States; examined 2,605 pieces of evidence; and trained hundreds of other federal, state, tribal, and international conservation law enforcement professionals. Our focus remains on devastating threats to these resources such as the illegal trade, unlawful commercial exploitation, injurious species, habitat destruction and degradation, environmental contaminants, and industrial hazards.

I cannot thank enough the state and tribal game wardens, conservation officers, and game rangers; federal and international enforcement partners; and the numerous federal, state, and county prosecutors who work closely with us to prevent the illegal trade in fish, wildlife, and plants in the United States and in other countries. But my biggest and continued thanks to the women and men in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Office of Law Enforcement, now stationed globally, for their dedication to the mission of this agency. It is truly rewarding to work with a group of professionals and friends who exhibit such dedication and passion to our mission, and a solid commitment to the protection of our wildlife resources.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Willie Woody'.

William C. Woody
Chief, Office of Law Enforcement





#JoinTheHerd
"PLEASE BE IVORY FREE."
MAGGIE Q

#JoinTheHerd
"EVERY 15 MINUTES AN ELEPHANT
IS KILLED FOR ITS TUSKS."
MICHAEL CUDLITZ



WHEN THE BUYING STOPS, THE KILLING CAN TOO
WILDAID 

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WILDAID 



Spotlight 2016

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) continues to support wildlife conservation worldwide and prevent the illegal exploitation of species already on the brink of extinction. In 2016, OLE accomplished impressive casework both in the United States and with international counterparts, expanded investigative coordination and training overseas, created the International Conservation Chiefs Academy, facilitated U.S. consumer demand reduction efforts, continued to build capacity at home and abroad, and received several awards including the prestigious Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal for excellence in government service.

Operation Crash

Stopping the illegal wildlife trade is a priority for the OLE. In 2011, Operation Crash was initiated as an ongoing effort to detect, deter, and prosecute those engaged in the illegal killing of rhinoceros and the unlawful trafficking of rhino horns and elephant ivory. Five years later, Operation Crash has proven to be an enormous success, bringing wildlife traffickers to justice and protecting rhinos in the process.

Operation Crash, named after a group of rhinos called a “crash,” is investigated by Service special agents that are assigned to the Special Investigations Unit. To date, this operation has secured the arrest and successful prosecution of numerous



OLE Chief William C. Woody ignites the pyre at the San Diego Zoo rhinoceros horn burn. Photo: USFWS

PHOTOS PREVIOUS PAGES:

The photo collage highlights the outstanding work of the OLE across the country and overseas. Pictures were taken at national and international law enforcement trainings, press conferences, award ceremonies, multi-agency law enforcement meetings, museums, and the rhinoceros horn burn in San Diego, California. The four celebrity billboards (shown in the middle) were part of the consumer demand reduction campaign messaging with WildAid.

Photos: DOI, USFWS, and WildAid

individuals or businesses and the disruption of several smuggling networks. In addition, a total of 34 years of prison and \$7.5 million in fines and restitution have been imposed by the courts. In 2016 alone, seven individuals or businesses were sentenced for their roles in rhino horn and elephant ivory smuggling.

In June of 2016, a senior auction official at a Beverly Hills auction house was sentenced to prison for one year and one day and ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine for conspiring to smuggle rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory, and coral from the U.S. This was a landmark sentence because it was the first case concerning a major auction house. It was also a very complex case to investigate and bring to prosecution.

During the investigation, special agents discovered the subject falsified customs forms by stating that rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory items were made of bone, wood, or plastic; he and his co-conspirators used third-party shippers to avoid being detected themselves; instructed the shippers to re-ship the items from the U.S. without the required forms or permits; provided packing materials to foreign buyers to assist them in smuggling the wildlife products from the U.S.; sold protected wildlife items to foreign buyers; and also smuggled protected wildlife into the U.S. that was sold at auction to members of the conspiracy.

To catch the defendant in action, an undercover special agent approached the subject about the potential sale of a carving,

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which was made from rhinoceros horn. Despite knowing that it was not a genuine antique, the subject and his co-conspirators accepted the carving for consignment, advertised its sale to foreign clients in China, and put the carving on the cover of his gallery's catalog. The subject auctioned the carving for \$230,000 selling it to another undercover Service special agent. To assist with the smuggling of the carving from the U.S., the subject offered to make a false invoice to show the product was made of plastic and cost \$108. In total, the estimated market value of the illegal wildlife products, sold by the defendant, was at least \$1 million.

A separate case involved the arrest, extradition, and sentencing of a third Irish Traveler. The Irish Travelers, a group also known as the "Rathkeale Rovers," are suspected in numerous rhinoceros horn thefts across Europe. The investigation discovered that the subject, and two co-defendants, created false bills of sale in an attempt to make the illegal purchase of the horns appear legal and conspired to traffic in black rhinoceros horns. In addition, they used a "straw buyer" to purchase two black rhinoceros horns from a taxidermist in Texas, took the horns across state lines to New York, and then illegally sold those horns, along with two additional horns. The defendant pleaded guilty and admitted to participating in a conspiracy to

travel to and within the U.S. where he purchased and resold rhinoceros horns to private individuals, or consigned the horns to U.S. auction houses knowing that the interstate purchase and sale of the horns was illegal.

He was arrested by United Kingdom law enforcement at Holyhead Sea Port in the U.K. as he disembarked a ferry from Dublin, Ireland. The arrest and extradition was due to the teamwork led by Service OLE, and with the assistance of the U.S. Department



At a gala award dinner, OLE Deputy Chief Ed Grace and the Operation Crash team received the 2016 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal - People's Choice Award presented by the Partnership for Public Service. The "Sammie" is considered the "Oscar" for excellence in government service. Photo: USFWS



A sample of the elephant ivory products and rhino horn libation cups seized from a Canadian antiques dealer during Operation Crash. Photo: USFWS



The baby black rhino shown above was the first calf born on community land in over 25 years. Funds garnered by Operation Crash helped to establish the Sera Rhino Sanctuary, a black rhino sanctuary in Kenya. Photo: Ian Craig

of Justice (DOJ), and law enforcement officials of the Durham Constabulary Police Force, the Irish Garda, and INTERPOL. In January of 2016, the subject was sentenced in federal court to 12 months in prison for conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act in relation to illegal rhinoceros horn trafficking.

Other impressive sentencings that occurred this year include an art dealer from San Francisco, a Canadian antiques dealer, and a taxidermist from Iowa. The art dealer was sentenced to one year and two days in prison followed by three years of supervised release, fined \$10,000, and banned for three years from working in the art and antique business for his role in knowingly selling black rhinoceros horns across state lines. The Canadian antiques dealer was sentenced to two years in prison, two years of supervised release, ordered to forfeit \$1 million and 304 pieces of carved ivory, and banned from the wildlife trade for his role in smuggling 16 rhinoceros horn libation cups from the U.S. to China. The taxidermist was sentenced to 27 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for illegally trafficking in black rhino horn. All of these cases involved intricate illegal activities and were highly complex investigations.

The work of Service special agents has not only led to numerous wildlife traffickers being sentenced to prison, but seized assets from Operation Crash, directed to the Service's Rhino Tiger Conservation Fund, benefit rhinoceroses in the wild. During a case in California, special agents seized gold bars, cash, and jewelry. A judge directed those confiscated assets be used to help save wild rhinos. Funds were provided to three projects in Africa: a security and monitoring workshop that focused on using modern technology to protect Africa's and Asia's rhinos; a black rhino reintroduction program at the Sera Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya; and a project to fortify the ecosystem in North Luangwa that will protect Zambia's only black rhino population. All of these programs have been successful; however, the birth of a black rhino at the Sera Wildlife Conservancy's in March of 2016 was significant since it was the first black rhino born on community land in northern Kenya in over 25 years. Although countless rhinos have been slaughtered for the illegal horn trade, the efforts of the Operation Crash special agents, and the DOJ, along with funds derived from seized illegal assets are supporting the survival of this species.



OLE Chief Woody and David Hubbard, SAC of the International Operations Unit, attended an elephant ivory and rhino horn burning in Kenya. Photo: DOI



An attendee of the Native American Conservation Officer training participates in the firearms qualification course. Photo: USFWS



The Service's Forensic Lab was able to determine the ivory dust discovered at a band saw was from threatened African elephants. The surveillance photo shows the ivory smugglers checking in the eight suitcases used in their attempt to smuggle ivory from Tanzania to China. The saw was used to cut the ivory into pieces small enough to fit inside of the suitcases.

Photos: USFWS

Special Agent Attachés

In 2016, the Service continued to build upon its highly successful special agent attaché program by deploying two additional attachés at U.S. embassies in Beijing, China and Libreville, Gabon. These new attachés join the existing cadre stationed in Bangkok, Thailand; Gaborone, Botswana; Lima, Peru; and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The program has increased efforts to build wildlife law enforcement capacity in regions where high levels of wildlife poaching and trafficking occur. In the short time since these agents have been positioned, they have strengthened enforcement and expanded international cooperation throughout the regions of Central and Southern Africa, Central and South America, and Asia. They have also assisted in wildlife trafficking investigations by providing investigative expertise and technical assistance to local governments; trained and built capacity with international counterparts; increased coordination among government agencies; and supported Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) throughout their areas of responsibility.

In partnership with U.S. government and local law enforcement, the attachés were instrumental in successful investigations and prosecutions of transnational criminal organizations that drive wildlife trafficking. An example of success through international collaboration is a Service-led operation, which ended in the arrest of three Chinese nationals who attempted to smuggle eight suitcases of African elephant ivory from Tanzania to China. Through shared

intelligence, the three smugglers were intercepted by Swiss authorities at the Zurich Airport.

In support of this investigation, the Tanzania National Transnational Serious Crime Investigation Unit requested assistance from Service attachés. Special agents from the Service's Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit (DERTSU) worked with Tanzanian investigators to create digital images of numerous mobile devices and computers. In addition, Service agents extracted video coverage from the airport computers that documented the subjects entering the airport in Tanzania with eight suitcases, assisted by corrupt officials. Additionally, the Service's National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (Lab) assisted with the DNA analysis of a white powder that was gathered from a band saw seized from one of the subject's business location. Forensics scientists determined the powder was tusk particles from the threatened African elephant. Subsequently, it was discovered that the band saw was used to cut the ivory in preparation for transport to overseas buyers.

By stationing these experts around the world in strategic international locations, the Service has bolstered ongoing international partnerships to protect the world's wildlife from poaching and illegal trade. The Service continues to work with the U.S. Department of State (DOS) to place additional special agent attachés.

2016 Investigative Statistics

Investigative Caseload *

Statute	Cases
African Elephant	40
Conspiracy	51
Eagle Protection	180
Endangered	
Species	6,741
False Statements	23
Lacey Act	1,644
Marine Mammal	
Protection	304
Migratory Bird Stamp	13
Migratory Bird Treaty	520
Other Federal Laws	76
Rhino Tiger Labeling	20
Smuggling	101
State Laws	131
Wild Bird	
Conservation	52
Total	10,350

* This table reflects investigative cases worked by Service special agents and wildlife inspectors during FY 2016

Annual Penalty Statistics *

Fines	\$21.3M
Prison (years)	46
Probation (years)	387
Civil Penalties	\$2.3M
Other Negotiated Payments	\$5.3M

M = million



A Service senior special agent instructs Tanzanian officers in crime scene investigation (CSI) techniques.
Photo: USFWS

International and Domestic Training

Throughout 2016, OLE continued to expand its training mission. A cumulative total of 900 training days were provided to almost 3,400 law enforcement officers during 168 international or domestic training missions. The focus of these trainings was to build capacity with international and domestic law enforcement partners while advancing U.S. interests through international cooperation.

Sharing OLE's knowledge, skills, and abilities is paramount in the fight against global wildlife crime. In 2016, 22 special agents and eight wildlife inspectors provided training to 230 foreign nationals from 26 countries. The International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEA) is one of the many educational institutions OLE participates in by sending staff as instructors. At the ILEAs, international wildlife law enforcement officers receive high-quality training and technical assistance, build enforcement capability, and foster relationships between U.S. law enforcement agencies with their international counterparts. They also provide the opportunity to build strong partnerships among regional countries, to address common problems associated with criminal activity, and to develop an extensive network of alumni who become the future leaders and decision makers in their respective countries. For example, and as a result of the training, networks have been developed between wildlife agencies across the sub-Saharan region of the African continent, and the U.S., to collectively combat the global demand placed on Africa's native wildlife.

In 2016, two ILEA Wildlife Investigator Training Courses were provided in Gaborone, Botswana and three in Bangkok, Thailand. In attendance were conservation law enforcement personnel from Angola, Botswana, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Laos, Malawi, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mozambique, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. The intensive two-week trainings included both classroom studies and mock investigations.

Service special agents, including the Thailand attaché, participated in the second DOS's Marine Crime Scene Investigations training that was held in the Philippines. This highly successful course trained 35 officials from the Philippines's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the National Bureau of Investigation, the National Police, and the Coast Guard. Special agents shared their expertise concerning hands-on crime scene processing techniques, on both land and in the marine environment.

Other international training and workshops included a Wildlife Trafficking Workshop in Cali, Columbia; a Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network Workshop in Nassau, Bahamas; a Counter Wildlife Trafficking Law Enforcement and Species Identification Capacity Building Workshop in Taiwan; a South African Wildlife College Advanced Ranger Course in Kruger National Park; and a Protected Species Workshop in Mexico City, Mexico. In addition, OLE hosted law enforcement counterparts from several countries including Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Canada, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Gabon, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, the Philippines, Uganda, and Vietnam.

For over 20 years, OLE in the Mountain-Prairie Region, with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, has cohosted the Native American Conservation Officer training. In 2016, 48 officers represented 14 tribes from Arizona, California, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. The 40-hours of instruction included waterfowl identification, firearms training and qualification, defensive tactics training, legal and investigative training, conservation officer ethics training, meth lab awareness for first responders, pepper spray and baton certification, and law enforcement body armor safety.

In 2016, 42 new OLE special agents graduated from the Special Agent Basic School (SABS) program - the largest class ever to attend and graduate. Special agents learned specific laws, policies, and procedures needed to be successful in their careers. Instruction was provided both in the classroom and through practical field exercises.

Twenty-two new wildlife inspectors also graduated from the Wildlife Inspector Basic School (WIBS). Similar to SABS, attendees received classroom and on-the-job skills training. In addition to presentations and lectures centered on wildlife laws, they also received training on evidence protocols, document examination, wildlife and wildlife products identification, interviewing skills, law enforcement driving skills, venomous reptile handling, and cultural sensitivity.

The Service also welcomed four additional canine and wildlife inspector teams. Training for the K-9s included commonly smuggled wildlife scents. Training for their partner wildlife inspector included K-9 training techniques, K-9 maintenance



The Service graduated four new wildlife detector dogs. They are shown with their wildlife inspector handlers. Photo: USFWS

and health, team safety, and management techniques. In 2016, the Service had seven K-9 and wildlife inspector handler teams.

State Chiefs Leadership Academy and the International Conservation Chief Academy

The third National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy (NCLELA) class graduated in September 2016 and the first class of the newly created International Conservation Chiefs Academy (ICCA) graduated in October of 2016. These one-of-a-kind academies were both held at the Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

A historical precedent was set during the third week of the NCLELA when instruction overlapped with the first week of the ICCA. Thirty-four participants from 12 African countries joined with 35 conservation law enforcement officers from 30 U.S. states. Federal, state, and international wildlife law enforcement officials were able to build professional foundations and collaborate with leaders who are engaged in the fight against wildlife trafficking on a global basis.

NCLELA's goal is to prepare new conservation law enforcement executives to carry out their job responsibilities effectively in a rapidly changing world. The focus is to provide the practical skills and knowledge needed by those in executive-level conservation law enforcement leadership roles in federal or state agencies. The goal of the ICCA is to build collaborative capacity between international conservation law enforcement agencies with the focus to combat illegal domestic and international wildlife trafficking. These programs are unprecedented forums for the managers of wildlife law enforcement programs and are student-centered with a high degree of student involvement.

Training for both programs were similar with topics that included adaptive leadership, wildlife forensics, human-wildlife conflicts, systems thinking, leading change, shaping organizational culture, strategic planning, liability, and surviving and succeeding as an executive.

In addition to classroom and field practical exercises, participants of both academies toured the historic sites in Washington, D.C. and attended an event at the headquarters of the National Geographic titled, "Stories from the Frontline." ICCA participants also were treated to a tour of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Property Repository (Repository) in Denver, Colorado.



ICCA and NCLELA participants toured Washington, D.C. and attended an event at the National Geographic headquarters. Photos: USFWS

BELOW: OLE attended CITES meetings in Switzerland and South Africa. Photo: USFWS



OLE, in partnership with the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC), provided the instruction and facilitated the ICCA, and the DOS, Bureau of International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs funded this international training. ICCA participants represented Botswana, Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia.

NCLELA's participants represented Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Since NCLELA's beginning in 2014, 22 of the 107 graduates have been promoted to positions of increased responsibility across the country. Congratulations to the following graduates, from the first two classes, on their promotions within their respective agencies: Curtis Brown, to Colonel of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; Tom Grohol, to Chief of the Pennsylvania Game Commission; Rick Olson, to Chief of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources; Rodmen Smith, to Colonel of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Kevin Davis, to Chief of Staff, Law Enforcement Division of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Bernard Chastain, to Major (Deputy Director) of the Alaska Wildlife Troopers; Jonathan Cornish, to Colonel of the Maine Marine Patrol; Nathan Erdman, Lt. Colonel with the Oklahoma

Department of Wildlife Conservation; Jeff Samorajczak, to Administrative Captain with the Connecticut State Environmental Conservation Police; Dave Bess, to Chief of Law Enforcement of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Justin J. Shirley, to Captain of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources; and Walter Rabon, to Deputy Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Christy Wurster, to Assistant Chief of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Michael Perry, to Assistant Commissioner of the New Mexico State Land Office over Field Division; Mark Leslie, to Regional Manager with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Benny Pryor, to Protection Regional Supervisor with the Missouri Department of Conservation; Drew Aydelotte, to Chief of the Delaware Natural Resources Police; Brian Smith, to Lt. Colonel of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission; and Robert Kersey, to Major of the Maryland Natural Resources Police.

From the last class, Nathaniel Arnold was promoted to the Deputy Chief of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Mike Mitchell from Lt. to Assistant Commander, Texas Parks and Wildlife; and Russell Duckworth, from District Supervisor to Regional Supervisor, Missouri Department of Conservation.

U.S. Demand Reduction

In 2016, OLE facilitated several exciting wildlife product demand reduction events and continued to provide educational outreach to thousands across the country. In partnership with the San Diego Zoo Global, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, WildAid, and the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance (USWTA), OLE held its first burn of illegal rhinoceros horn, began a nationwide communication campaign to reduce wildlife trafficking, and assisted in the production of a Discovery Communications public service announcement (PSA) and a short educational film with JetBlue Airways Corporation.

Confiscated rhino horn, worth an estimated \$1 million on the black market, was symbolically burnt at an event co-hosted with San Diego Zoo Global and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Items included whole horns, ornate objects carved from horns, and items falsely marketed as medicinals. The Service acquired these rhinoceros horn products through seizures associated with illegal activity. Many of the products were seized during federal search warrant executions, while other products were seized as they were being smuggled into or from the U.S. at ports of entry. The burn signified the

U.S. commitment to end the illegal rhino horn trade, the severe poaching threat to rhinoceroses, and the overall wildlife trafficking crisis. Media coverage included a live social media feed that was watched by viewers around the world.

The Service and WildAid implemented a U.S. consumer education and awareness campaign to benefit wildlife conservation by reducing demand for illegal wildlife and illegal wildlife products. The campaign was designed to cultivate awareness among U.S. travelers and consumers that their purchasing power can influence the wildlife trade. The key messages of the campaign are: the U.S. is one of largest illegal wildlife markets in the world; Americans care about wildlife conservation but know little about wildlife trafficking; wildlife trafficking affects U.S. species as well as

were also streamed over social media reaching millions around the world. The celebrity ambassador in Atlanta was Michael Cudlitz, star of the television show, *The Walking Dead*. Actor, photographer, and musician Keegan Allen was the celebrity ambassador at the Los Angeles event. In addition, WildAid, OLE, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and airport leadership spoke and gave interviews to the press. Service K-9s Viper (in Atlanta) and Lockett (in Los Angeles) also demonstrated their wildlife detection abilities and Service wildlife inspectors hosted tables of seized wildlife products.

The celebrity billboards are displayed in four major U.S. airports, on highways in California, in shopping malls, and at urban bus shelters in Boston and Chicago. To date, the campaign has received over \$2



Congressional staffers from the Senate and House Committee on Appropriations watched the inspection of a coral shipment in Miami, Florida. Photo: USFWS

international species; wildlife trafficking impacts conservation, welfare, disease, and invasive species; all wildlife products must be declared upon entering the U.S.; many products sold abroad may need permits or may be considered illegal in the U.S.; and new ivory bans will assist law enforcement in sending poachers, traffickers, and sellers to prosecution when items are bought, sold, and transported illegally.

The campaign was launched via joint press conferences held in the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta and the Los Angeles International Airports. Service and WildAid leadership, with WildAid's celebrity ambassadors, spoke at the events where they highlighted the celebrity billboards and PSAs, an infographic, and a Website that was created to house all of the visuals and products created during the campaign. The events

million in donated advertising space and almost 3 million people have personally viewed the messaging.

OLE also assisted the Service and the USWTA with producing two films to reach new audiences and empower consumers to be good stewards of our planet's wildlife. A Discovery Communications film crew used items from the Repository to create professional storefronts that were filmed in the production of a PSA. This PSA, narrated by actor Edward Norton, airs on Discovery's vast array of networks. JetBlue produced a film that is shown on its flights to the Caribbean. It encourages travelers to protect the beauty and wildlife of the Caribbean and explains that some wildlife products would be illegal to bring into the U.S. These partnerships leverage the creative talents of these leading

companies and enable the U.S. government to reach tens of millions of consumers with important messages to help combat the illegal wildlife trade.

Along with these specialized events, OLE continued to perform demand reduction work on a daily basis. Across the country, OLE staff presented educational materials that highlighted the illegal wildlife trade and the work of the Service. These outreach events happened at an array of public places and institutions such as zoos, schools, and at international, federal, state, tribal, and local agencies. In addition, both U.S. and international visitors toured the property repositories, the Lab, and various ports of entry learning from OLE professionals. For example, OLE at the Miami Port hosted a visit for congressional staffers from the Senate and House Committee on Appropriations. The Special Agent in Charge of the Southeast Region, and the port's wildlife inspectors, explained their roles in combating wildlife trafficking; demonstrated the Miami K-9 and wildlife inspector handler team skills; and also allowed the group to witness the actual inspection and clearance of a coral shipment. Other outreach included working with the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, Illinois. Service wildlife inspectors seized an illegal shipment of the rare and internationally protected arapaima fish. It is important to the Service that OLE work closely with zoos and aquariums to ensure that any seized live animals receive the best possible care. In this case, 102 juvenile arapaima fish were donated to the Shedd Aquarium. OLE, working with the aquarium, put out a press release explaining what happens to seized live wildlife.

The National Targeting Initiative

The National Targeting Initiative (NTI) is an OLE program that was created in 2015 as part of an interagency effort between the Service and CBP. Through the NTI, Service OLE has access to advanced cargo targeting systems to locate and interdict shipments containing illegal wildlife.

The first year of the NTI was highly successful. Building upon this success, the NTI continued to alert OLE front-line field staff to potential wildlife trafficking. Through NTI intelligence, OLE was able to remove illegal wildlife products from reaching the hands of the receiving smugglers. Examples of such illegal wildlife included live reptiles, sturgeon caviar, whale and squid products, rosewood, coral, and ivory.

Caviar is a commonly trafficked wildlife product. Using the NTI, OLE in Miami, Florida was able to seize 82 pounds of caviar

from an undeclared, commercial shipment that was sent on a passenger cruise ship from the European Union. Other caviar seizures from across the country included a commercial air-cargo shipment that was valued at over \$1,000.

The NTI also led to the seizure of some unusual wildlife products. Across the country, wildlife inspectors seized items such as a whale eardrum, 635 pounds of canned squid in ink, snail egg caviar, and newly manufactured dinner knives with endangered Brazilian rosewood handles. Importers who shipped the squid and knives were both marked as repeat wildlife product violators.

Coral, ivory, and totoaba swim bladders are in high demand throughout the world. In Miami, OLE seized 63 pieces of jewelry made with coral and mother of pearl. Miami also received an alert concerning a shipment that was declared as "Used Furniture." A physical inspection discovered over 100 items made with elephant ivory, sea turtle shells, and mother of pearl.



Totoaba fish bladders are worth thousands of dollars on the black market.
Photo: USFWS

In 2016, NTI information led to the identification of 55 cargo shipments containing illegal or non-declared wildlife. The NTI also supported an array of wildlife trafficking investigations, enabling Service law enforcement to efficiently hone in on the activities of traffickers.

International Trade Data System

The International Trade Data System (ITDS) creates a "one-government" approach for the trade industry. ITDS is being facilitated by CBP, with their Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) serving as the single window portal. It creates a "one-stop" internet interface for the import and export trade by combining the data and document collection procedures of over 100 agencies that have a regulatory, trade promotion, or a statistical role in international trade. Currently, importers and exporters must receive clearance

from multiple agencies in order to move a shipment internationally. This involves providing the same information multiple times via different forms and processes.

The system, which is being designed and deployed over a multi-year period, promises to improve Service oversight of wildlife trade from both a resource protection and customer service standpoint. ITDS will provide the core technological infrastructure for future Service wildlife inspection and smuggling interception operations and an infrastructure that is an absolute prerequisite for improving program performance in preventing global wildlife trafficking and facilitating legal wildlife trade.

Full participation in this project endeavors to assist Service wildlife inspectors to identify imports and exports that pose the greatest risk of containing illegal wildlife. Access to data on most U.S. imports and exports would better position the Service to intercept illegal shipments that enter, or attempt to exit, at ports not staffed by Service wildlife inspectors and also those shipments that have been waved through the system, by other agencies, without Service knowledge. With ITDS data and communications capabilities, wildlife inspectors would be able to screen shipments nationwide and stop those that may be in violation of wildlife protection laws. Service enforcement efforts could also benefit from improved communications and intelligence sharing with CBP and other federal agencies that regulate trade and police the Nation's borders. In addition, the Border Interagency Executive Council (BIEC) was formally established to develop policies and processes to enhance coordination across border-management agencies.

In 2016, the following accomplishments were completed: the Service signed a MOA with CBP allowing for access to TECS, the Service and CBP have successfully conducted end-to-end messaging between ACE and eDecs, and OLE-IT diligently worked with CBP to receive sample import message sets in order to begin the design of eDecs to receive data and images from ACE. In addition, Service senior wildlife inspectors submitted the final version of the ITDS Implementation Guide to CBP in advance of the import pilot; submitted requirements to CBP to flag the Schedule B (the export equivalent to the tariff schedule) for Service export clearance requirements; finalized the tariff flags for imports that will trigger mandatory filing of Service data in ACE; finalized the Service Export Message Set; and also coded eDecs messages to the trade for communication between eDecs and ACE.



Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

OLE was represented at both the 66th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in Geneva, Switzerland and also at the 17th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) in Johannesburg, South Africa. At these international wildlife meetings, topics of discussion included suspension of trade; quotas and range state issues relative to trade in various species such as African elephants, southern white rhinos, pangolins, cheetahs, African ebony and mahoganies, various reptiles, and paddlefish and sturgeon; and the protection of numerous species including pangolins, African grey parrots, and nautilus. In addition, the U.S. helped convene the Second Global Meeting of Wildlife Enforcement Networks that brought together more than 20 regional organizations who shared best practices and pledged to enhance cooperation among enforcement organizations.

12 Spotlight 2016

Recognition for Excellence

The Samuel J. Heyman (Sammie) Service to America Medal is considered the "Oscar" for excellence in government service. In 2016, 32 finalists were chosen from more than 350 nominations for this prestigious award. The Partnership for Public Service selected the category winners, but the highest award, the People's Choice Award, was chosen via a public vote. Tens of thousands voted online choosing OLE's Deputy Chief, Ed Grace, and the Operation Crash team as the winner. In addition to the special agents who comprised the Operation Crash team, the staff of the Lab and DERTSU, who played major roles in the success of the complex operation, were acknowledged through this prestigious award. Specifically, all were recognized for their dedication and outstanding law enforcement work for infiltrating and investigating the black market trading of rhino horn and elephant ivory and referring over 30 criminals for prosecution.

In addition, OLE staff across the country received numerous awards for their excellence. Examples include an award from the Environment and Climate Change Canada, Wildlife Enforcement Directorate to a Service special agent for her outstanding contribution to the investigation, apprehension, and successful prosecution of North America's largest turtle trafficker; the Humane Society of the United States, Humane Law Enforcement Award presented OLE in Alaska an award for the investigation and prosecution of an operation that concerned illegal big game hunting; the Harold D. Hettrick Investigative Excellence Award was presented to a special agent from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; special agents received a U.S. Attorney's Award for the District of Connecticut for their outstanding work that documented the live trapping and shooting of several hawks; the Officer of the Year award for the Northeast Region of the Service was



presented to a special agent for her work that resulted in the first felony conviction related to the import or use of illegal timber and the largest criminal fine ever (\$13 million) under the Lacey Act; the Southeast Region's dive team was awarded the Outstanding Law Enforcement Officers of the Year for their work with commercial poaching of protected marine life; and the New York State Environmental Conservation Police presented an award to special agents for their role in an illegal shark fin investigation.

In addition, OLE's Branch of Training and Inspection named the award that is presented to the outstanding student at each WIBS after Supervisory Wildlife Inspector Mike Osborn. SWI Osborn served as a wildlife inspector for almost 40 years and was an instructor at nearly every SABS and WIBS since the 1980s.

The third graduating class of the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Academy at the National Conservation Training Center – September 2016.

First Row L to R: Jason Decoskey (PA); Shelley Hammonds (TN); April Dombrowski (WI); Douglas Messeck (DE); Eric Lundin (CT); Frank Mcgee (CO); Joshua Hurst (AZ); Chad Jones (TX); Robert Kersey, Jr. (MD); Leighland Arehart (OH); Randy Stark (NACLEC); William C. Woody (USFWS, Chief)

Second Row L to R: Thomas Caifa (NY); Scott Dalebout (UT); Brian Elkins (TN); Glenn Tucker (AR); Greg Salo (MN); Dan Hesket (KS); Wade Hamilton (MI); DJ Riley (SC)

Third Row L to R: Scott Rice (MO); Christopher Lewis (AL); Wade Farrar (OK); Michael Mitchell (TX); Scott Winkelman (ND); Percy E. Griffin, III (FL)

Fourth Row L to R: Nathaniel Arnold (CA); Christopher Wright (ID); Thomas Barnard (GA)

Fifth Row L to R: Ty Jackson (NM); Adam Gormely (ME); David Dungan (IN); Brian Smith (FL); Alan Osterland (WY); George Scribner (VT); Mark Carey (SC)

Sixth Row: Dan Chadwick (WA)



Pacific Region

Special agents, wildlife inspectors, and support personnel in the Pacific Region are responsible for federal wildlife law enforcement in the largest and most unique Region within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), in this Region, enforces federal regulations from Saipan to eastern Idaho and from American Samoa to the border with Canada. This immense area is nearly 30,000 square miles and includes multiple time zones, both sides of the International Date Line, and the equator.

Service officers strive to strengthen federal, state, tribal, and local enforcement partnerships while simultaneously working daily to resolve conflicts, promote compliance with conservation laws, and respond to inquiries from the public. Law enforcement professionals also endeavor to complete the Service's mission in ways that demonstrate a deep respect and appreciation for the diverse cultural and organic resources across the Region.

The Region's diverse ecosystem includes high deserts, alpine and glacial terrains, tropical forests, coral atolls, and also the deepest oceanic trench on the planet. The Region is home to 67 national wildlife refuges, 15 hatcheries, five national monuments, and over 500 species protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Due to the vastness of the Region, there are many challenges inherent to working in the Pacific Northwest, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands. These challenges include travel distances, invasive species, rapid growth of "green" energy, and the commercialization of the many protected species that exist in the Region. OLE will continue to prioritize the interdiction of trans-Pacific wildlife smuggling and the monitoring of wildlife trade at three designated ports (Honolulu, Portland,



An Idaho farmer flooded his cornfield and allowed hunters to shoot ducks over the baited field. A hidden camera captured a hunter in the baited cornfield. Photos: Ducks Credit: Senior Conservation Officer Brian Marek / Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Hunter Credit: Kurt Stieglitz / Idaho Fish and Game Regional Investigator



and Seattle), the Port at Guam, and also at numerous ports of entry along the northern border.

Accomplishments

Service special agents of this Region, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), initiated an investigation that resulted in Hawaiian Accessories, Inc., its owner, and four other defendants being sentenced to a total of six months of incarceration, 16 years of probation, 22 months of home detention, 100 hours of community service, and \$100,500 in fines. They also surrendered 200 pieces of black coral, walrus ivory, whale ivory, and proboscidean ivory valued at over \$100,000. The investigation discovered the subjects purchased raw walrus tusks and whale teeth from Alaska, smuggled them to the Philippines to be carved into fishhook jewelry pendants, smuggled the carved pieces back to Hawaii, and fraudulently sold those pieces as genuine, locally made Hawaiian pieces of art. In

addition, they also smuggled black coral carvings from Mexico into Hawaii, and also bought and sold raw and carved ivory and bone products to and from undercover agents. The indictment listed 21 charges in violation of the Lacey Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and ESA. Included in the charges were conspiracy, smuggling on import and export, Lacey Act trafficking, and Lacey Act false labeling for commerce of products derived from illegally acquired walrus, whale, elephant, and black coral.

Operation Kingsnake was responsible for two additional convictions in 2016. In total, the two defendants were sentenced to seven years of probation with special conditions; ordered to pay \$10,000 to the Lacey Act Reward Fund and \$1,000 to the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust; and complete 500 hours of community service. They pleaded guilty to 16 Lacey

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:
Operation Pongo resulted in two men sentenced to prison for smuggling orangutan skulls.
Photo: USFWS



Gary L. Young became the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) for the Pacific Region in October 2012. As SAC, he has continued to manage the Service OLE operations in the northwest and the Pacific, including the OLE response to the unprecedented illegal takeover and occupation of a National Wildlife Refuge in January 2016. Young's 34-year conservation law enforcement career started in 1982 as a boat operator for the Texas Parks and Wildlife law enforcement division and in 1984, he was appointed as a Texas state game warden. In 1993, Young joined the Service as a special agent. In 1998, he was selected as the Resident Agent in Charge (RAC) in Fairbanks, Alaska; in 2000, he moved to San Antonio, Texas as the RAC for south and west Texas; and in 2009, he returned to Alaska as Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the Alaska Region in Anchorage remaining there until being promoted as the SAC position in the Pacific Region. SAC Young earned a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice from Texas State University in 1982.

Act violations that involved the illegal collection, transport, and receipt of 59 snakes collected from, and protected by, various states including New Jersey, California, and Oregon.

Operation Pongo (pongo is the genus for orangutan) was initiated by the special agents of this Region after a package from Malaysia containing a mandible from an endangered helmeted hornbill was interdicted by wildlife inspectors. During the course of the investigation, it was discovered that since 2004, two Malaysian nationals had smuggled almost \$95,000 worth of endangered wildlife into the U.S. including orangutan skulls, bear claws, macaque skulls, helmeted hornbill skulls, a rhinoceros hornbill head, a babirusa skull, a langur skull, and a dugong rib. Working in an undercover capacity, special agents communicated with the defendants and purchased illegal wildlife products from them. The two subjects traveled to Portland, Oregon to meet an associate, but were greeted and arrested by special agents. The subjects pleaded guilty and were immediately sentenced to a total of six months of prison, one year of supervised release, and 240 hours of community service. In addition, another subject also pleaded guilty to smuggling orangutan skulls, and other protected wildlife, from Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia into the U.S. This subject was sentenced to serve five years of probation and pay \$25,000 to the Lacey Act Reward Fund. Also assisting with this operation was the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) legal attaché in Kuala Lumpur, NOAA, Bureau of Land Management, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, and the Service's Office of International Affairs.

A repeat wildlife smuggling violator was sentenced to serve 30 days in jail and forfeit the remaining collection of her illegally imported wildlife, which was valued at over \$15,000. The veterinarian, taxidermist, and importer smuggled various primates, civets, penguins, slow lorises, hornbills, wolves, and several other species into the U.S. and then supplied the illegal wildlife products to two taxidermy and oddity shops in San Francisco, California and Portland, Oregon. A Service special agent discovered the subject routinely supplied the stores with threatened, endangered, and CITES protected species. Over \$30,000 worth of illegal wildlife imports were sold or offered for sale on consignment.



Special agents photographed one of the subjects from Operation Hawaiian WildWeb attempting to illegally sell a walrus tooth. Photo: USFWS



The California kingsnake is often illegally taken from the wild and sold for profit. Photo: USFWS

In Boise, Idaho, a subject was sentenced to 15 days in jail, placed on a three-year probation, fined \$40,000, ordered to serve 200 hours of community service, and had his hunting and fishing privileges revoked. A jury found him guilty of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act including charges of conspiracy to bait and placing bait for migratory birds. At the conclusion of the seven-day jury trial, the judge found the subject's prolonged, illegal baiting contributed to changes in migratory flight patterns of ducks and geese and negatively affected nearby public hunting areas. The subject boasted to Idaho Fish and Game wardens that he had over 200,000 ducks in the baited field during the 2013 hunting season and several hunters testified that they were able to take their limits of ducks in under an hour in the subject's cornfield. The farmer had placed bait in a cornfield on his farm for the purpose to allow others to hunt over the bait, specifically for ducks, and also flooded the cornfield so hunters could shoot ducks over the baited field.

In response to an OLE investigation that was initiated in 2011, Hawaiian Electric voluntarily transferred \$200,000 to the state of Hawaii, which the state used to rebuild a predator proof enclosure in the prime habitat of the critically endangered Oahu tree snails. It is hoped that this enclosure will save the species from extinction in the wild. Since that investigation, and in response to other efforts by Honolulu-based agents over the last 15 years, the company also announced a number of actions including the 2016 creation and staffing of an internal “Protected Species Program.” This program will develop and implement pro-active measures to prevent adverse effects to endangered seabirds, water birds, bats, snails, and plants throughout all of the company holdings and activities statewide. In addition, the company

spent \$4 million to retrofit the lighting at all of the company facilities. The new lighting will help to prevent the take of seabirds and other wildlife that are drawn to the lights.

In addition to enforcing wildlife laws and regulations, OLE of this Region responded to the unprecedented takeover of a national wildlife refuge (NWR). In January of 2016, an armed group of individuals illegally occupied the headquarters facility for the Malheur NWR for 41 days. Regional OLE, with assistance from special agents from other regions, worked with Refuge law enforcement, the FBI, and countless other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety of those who lived in the surrounding areas. Service OLE continues to work with the Refuge and

the U.S. Attorney’s office in support of the prosecution of those responsible for the illegal occupation.

Community outreach and education is also a priority for OLE in the Pacific Region. Not only did they provide several training presentations to other federal, state, and tribal law enforcement partners, but they also took part in other outreach events like the Festival of Pacific Arts (FESTPAC). FESTPAC is the largest gathering of Pacific island nations and is sometimes known as the “Olympics” of Pacific arts and culture because it is held in a different location every four years. This year, Guam hosted representatives and visitors from 27 Pacific island nations.



Oahu tree snails like this *Achatinella mustelina* are known as *kāhuli*—the singing Hawaiian snails of historic *mo’olelo*, chants, and poetry preserved in Hawaiian language newspapers of the 18th to 19th century. Even though the history is continued by cultural practitioners today, much of our cultural knowledge of *kāhuli* has already been lost. Hawaii-based OLE personnel are working with others to save the last surviving native snails. Photo: USFWS



Seabirds like the endangered Hawaiian petrel (left) and the threatened Newell’s shearwater (right) known in the Hawaiian language as *‘ua’u* and *‘a’o*, respectively, are benefitting from the retrofitting of outdoor lights as the result of long-term efforts by Hawaii-based OLE personnel. Hawaii OLE investigations culminated in the first ever translocations of both of these species in 2015 and 2016 to an area on Kaua’i that is protected from predators. On Kaua’i, the last remaining wild colonies of both of these species are declining rapidly. The translocations, made possible by plea agreements signed in 2010, may save the species from extirpation or even extinction. Photos: USFWS



Service OLE in Redmond, Washington led a multi-agency export inspection operation at the Point Roberts Port of Entry where over 400 vehicles were inspected. Point Roberts is an exclave of the U.S. and it can only be reached by sea or air. Service special agents and wildlife inspectors travelled on a U.S. Coast Guard vessel to the island. Other participating agencies included the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Environment and Climate Change Canada, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Photos: USFWS



Southwest Region

Wildlife law enforcement efforts in the Southwest Region are coordinated with state game and fish agencies and with federal counterparts. Special agents and wildlife inspectors in the Region provide law enforcement support to more than 45 national wildlife refuges, 25 national parks, 20 national forests, over 30 million square miles of other federal and state lands, over 100 distinct Native American tribal areas, and 24 U.S. Customs and Border Protection ports of entry.

The Region covers the states of Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas and shares over 1,650 miles of border with Mexico. The Region contains diverse fish and wildlife resources, including over 250 species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It encompasses habitats that range from lowland deserts and seemingly endless plains to Gulf Coast beaches and towering mountain peaks.

Challenges in the Region, range from protecting endangered Mexican gray wolves to foiling interstate trafficking of wildlife ranging from freshwater fish to big game species. Enforcement work includes promoting compliance under federal wildlife laws by oil and gas producers, and other industries, whose activities affect protected birds; inspecting wildlife imports and exports at two designated ports (Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston) and five border crossings (Nogales, Arizona; and Brownsville, El Paso, Laredo, and Tornillo, Texas); and partnering with Service biologists to address issues affecting protected species and their habitat.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

The endangered whooping crane is protected under the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Photo: USFWS



The Mexican wolf is the rarest subspecies of gray wolf in North America. Once common throughout portions of the southwestern U. S., it was all but eliminated from the wild by the 1970s. Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

Service special agents of this Region, with the assistance of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and OLE from the Pacific Southwest Region, led an investigation into the smuggling of orangutan skulls. The investigation began after a Service wildlife inspector in San Francisco interdicted a package that was shipped from Indonesia and addressed to a professional reptile breeder in Texas. The inspector screened the contents using an x-ray machine and determined the shipment contained two non-declared primate skulls. A subsequent morphology examination determined the skulls to be orangutan, which is listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and protected under the ESA. The following month, Service special agents in Texas conducted a controlled delivery of the skulls and executed a search warrant at the subject's residence where he also operated an Internet-based wildlife



Two orangutan skulls were smuggled from Indonesia to Texas. Photo: USFWS



Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Nicholas Chavez has managed Service law enforcement operations in the Southwest Region for the past ten years. He started with the agency as a cooperative education student in 1988 and worked as a wildlife inspector in Boston, Massachusetts, and El Paso, Texas. He became a special agent in 1994 and conducted criminal investigations of wildlife crimes in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and El Paso and Brownsville, Texas. After working at OLE's headquarters, he became the Assistant Special Agent in Charge in the Midwest Region, a position he held until moving to his current position. Chavez earned a Bachelor of Science in wildlife science with a minor in criminal justice and Master of Science in wildlife science from New Mexico State University.



This red-tailed hawk died after ingesting rice poisoned with insecticide.
Photo: USFWS

business that bred, sold, and traded several species of reptiles, including venomous snakes. The warrant resulted in the discovery of several other animal skulls and bones, and also 30 human skulls - it was later determined that the human skulls had been purchased legally for his personal collection. The subject pleaded guilty to one count of smuggling two orangutan skulls into the U.S. and was sentenced to three years of probation and fined \$2,500.

A Service special agent, with a TPWD game warden, investigated a large number of dead and dying songbirds and raptors after TPWD officials received reports of numerous dead and dying birds on and near a rice farm. Game wardens suspected the birds were poisoned and contacted OLE special agents. The investigation led to a rice farmer who confessed to poisoning his rice field to kill cowbirds and blackbirds. The farmer was charged by criminal information with one count of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). He pleaded guilty to illegally killing 65 brown-headed cowbirds and four red-tailed hawks. The dead birds were collected and field necropsies found rice in their digestive tract. The farmer admitted to ordering his workers to mix a barrel of rice with a pesticide and directing the workers to spread the poisoned rice on a recently harvested rice field for the purpose of killing birds. A forensic analysis on the rice and birds revealed the presence of Dicrotophos, which is an organophosphate inhibitor used as an insecticide. The farmer was sentenced to pay a \$10,000 community service payment to the TPWD's Operation Game Thief program and to serve two years of probation.

Service special agents must be prepared for any situation. One case involved a

subject who was convicted and sentenced for several heinous crimes including animal cruelty for his torture of 49 MBTA protected birds. The subject was previously convicted on first-degree murder, kidnapping, aggravated assault, endangerment, manufacturing prohibited weapons, reckless burning, first-degree burglary, identity theft, and criminal damage. In his final sentencing, the subject received one year of incarceration to be served concurrently. This animal cruelty sentence added 10 years to his current 17-year federal sentence for domestic terrorism charges.

Special Agents of this Region assisted with Operation Journey, a Service OLE investigation focused on international wildlife trafficking. As a result of this operation, a Corpus Christi taxidermist and hunting guide pleaded guilty for violating the Lacey Act, the ESA, and the MBTA. The investigation discovered that the subject was the owner of Alive Again Recreations (a taxidermy business) and Global Game Birds (GGB). Through GGB, the subject offered hunting trips in Argentina, Peru, Scotland, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand to hunt rarely seen bird species. Over a three-year period and from hunting trips to Peru, Argentina, and New Zealand, he brought back over 80 protected birds including Andean ruddy ducks, torrent ducks, comb ducks, and Pacific black ducks to the U.S. He was sentenced to pay a \$2,500 community service payment to the Lacey Act Reward Fund, serve five years of probation, and abandon more than 60 species of bird mounts from the illegally killed birds.

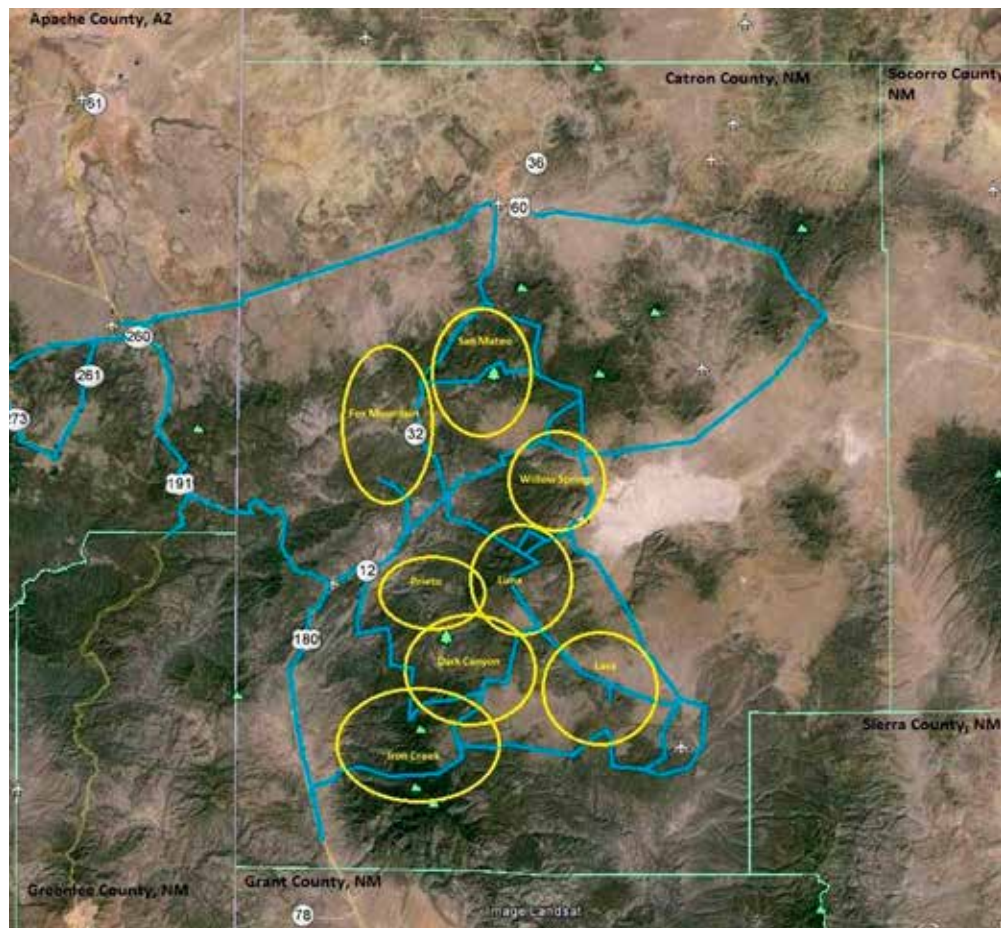
The Airborne Hunting Act prohibits the take or harassment of wildlife from aircraft, except when protecting wildlife, livestock, and human health or safety.

In Arizona, two men admitted, in a plea agreement, to using a Robinson 44 helicopter to harass a pronghorn antelope even though they knew the proximity of the helicopter would disturb the wildlife. Originally investigated by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the case was completed by OLE and the U.S. Attorney's Office. A U.S. magistrate judge deferred sentencing for four years to allow the defendants to demonstrate good conduct. During this deferral period, the men may not seek or obtain a hunting permit, engage in any hunting activity, and may not operate a helicopter in Arizona.

Law enforcement of this Region not only enforce wildlife laws, but also protect wildlife species such as the endangered whooping crane. The tallest flying birds in North America, whooping cranes are a conservation success story, particularly due to enforcement efforts attributed to protection under the ESA and the MBTA. From a low of just 15 birds in 1941, today there are more than 600 whooping cranes in two migrating populations (Wood Buffalo, Canada, to Texas and Wisconsin to Florida), two non-migrating wild populations (Florida and Louisiana), and at zoos around North America. To ensure the whooping cranes' population continues to grow, OLE takes proactive operator measures to protect these magnificent birds and also enforces their take.

Also in 2016, special agents conducted a waterfowl enforcement operation in the critical habitat of whooping cranes along the Texas Coast. The operation was designed to educate hunters as to the existence of whooping cranes in the area and the laws that protect them. Special agents spoke to over 75 hunters who had come to hunt from all over the country. Most of the hunters were unaware that hunting in the whooping crane's critical habitat and shooting cranes and geese in that area was illegal. They also worked with a whooping crane recovery coordinator to create strategies to avoid whooping crane losses during duck hunting season.

With TPWD game wardens, special agents investigated and brought a hunter to prosecution for shooting and killing two whooping cranes. The subject pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years of federal probation, 200-hours community service, and ordered to pay \$25,815 in restitution – \$12,907.50 to the International Crane Foundation and \$12,907.50 to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. Also as part of



To protect the Mexican gray wolf, special agents patrolled areas known to have these wolves during the elk and deer rifle hunting season. The yellow circles represent general location of established wolf packs within the Apache and Gila National Forests and the blue lines represent general paths taken by special agents during patrols. Photo: USFWS

his probation, the subject is prohibited from owning or possessing firearms, ammunition, or any other dangerous weapon, and prohibited from hunting or fishing anywhere in the U.S.

The successful reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf is also a priority for OLE. With the U.S. Forest Service and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Service special agents completed a three week "Overt Mexican Gray Wolf Enforcement Patrol and Surveillance" that occurred inside of the Gila National Forest, Apache Sitgraves National Forest, and other areas within Arizona and New Mexico. The patrols scheduled during periods when big game hunts (elk and deer rifle) were occurring within known wolf ranges. During the patrols, law enforcement officers and special agents spoke with hunters to notify them of the presence of the wolves as well as to show an overt presence of OLE in the area.

Other proactive work to save wildlife and their habitats included working

with power companies to reduce wildlife take, with wildlife centers to create new nests for Cooper's hawks and saving owl eggs, with New Mexico State University to create an avian management and protection plan, with a golf course to save an eagle family, and with a land developer concerning the clearing of cedar trees in the golden cheek warbler's habitat.



Two Arizona men admitted to using a Robinson 44 helicopter to knowingly harass a pronghorn antelope, which is a federal offense. Photo: USFWS



Midwest Region

The Midwest Region consists of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. This part of the country is known for its Great Lakes (Erie, Huron, Michigan, and Superior) and “big rivers,” including large portions of both the Mississippi and Missouri. The Region is home to scores of federally protected species, including 41 listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Close coordination on natural resource law enforcement issues occurs with all eight states. Service officers in the Region also work closely with multiple federal agencies such as the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, 20 tribal conservation agencies, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. Special agents provide investigative assistance to officers at the 54 national wildlife refuges managed by the Region and on other public lands in the Midwest. The Region’s wildlife inspectors (stationed in Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Port Huron) address wildlife trade issues at 39 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) ports of entry.

Investigations conducted in the Region vary greatly. Agents work with state officers, and other partners, to expose individuals or companies whose illegal commercial activities threaten the viability of fish, wildlife, and plant resources in the Midwest. They investigate the take of eagles, freshwater fish, and other protected species; police migratory game bird hunting; and investigate the interstate trafficking of illegally taken big game species.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

A Kentucky man was sentenced to 10 months in prison, one year of supervised release, and ordered to pay over \$80,000 in restitution for logging and selling valuable walnut trees from the land of an absentee landowner. Photo: Copperzine / Wikimedia Commons



An antiques dealer knowingly sold more than \$200,000 worth of elephant ivory products domestically and internationally. He falsely labeled the smugglerd ivory as “resin carvings.” Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

OLE in this Region had an effective year in the interdiction of elephant ivory. These discoveries and investigations led to the successful prosecution of smugglers and those who knowingly profited from the illegal wildlife market. The following four cases began by the interdiction of smuggled elephant ivory discovered by either a Service wildlife inspector or a wildlife inspector working in collaboration with a CBP officer in Chicago. The estimated value of illegal wildlife products in these cases is \$2 million. Sentencing totals equal six weeks of incarceration, seven years of probation, 350 hours of community service, and over \$600,000 in fines.

In 2006, a St. Cloud State University professor and owner of an online business known as “Crouching Dragon Antiques” was identified as the leader of a criminal scheme who illegally purchased, smuggled, and sold elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn items. Service

special agents identified almost 400 individual transactions where the subject obtained, smuggled, and sold elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn, whale teeth, and mother-of-pearl items valued in excess of \$1.2 million. Many of these items were initially smuggled from France and the United Kingdom into the U.S. and then smuggled to Shanghai, China where they were sold to the highest bidder at a number of Chinese auction houses. The subject held an honorary position with one of those major Chinese auction houses and utilized that relationship to consign illegal wildlife at higher than normal reserve prices. He also utilized co-conspirators to shill bid on his items to run-up prices. He pleaded guilty to smuggling and violating the Lacey Act and the ESA. In addition to probation and community service, he was sentenced to pay a \$500,000 fine to the Lacey Act Reward Fund.

Another smuggler and online business owner was fined \$100,000 for smuggling



Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Greg Jackson has managed Service law enforcement operations in the Midwest Region since 2007. A native of Minnesota, he started his federal law enforcement career with the U.S. Customs Service in that state in 1991. He joined the Service as a special agent in 1995, and worked for six years as a criminal investigator in Jefferson City, Missouri and Madison, Wisconsin. In 2001, he became a senior special agent in the program's headquarters office, where he was promoted to serve as SAC of the Branch of Investigations in 2003. He was promoted to the Division Chief for Law Enforcement Operations in 2005. Jackson holds an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from Bemidji State University in Bemidji, Minnesota.

elephant ivory from the U.S. in violation of the Lacey Act and the ESA. An antiques dealer by trade, he held auctions several times a year in Minnesota and also on-line. To be more lucrative, he moved into selling elephant ivory and admitted to knowingly selling more than \$200,000 worth of ivory products domestically and internationally. He used online advertising to target buyers located in Asia and third-party shippers so that he would not have to ship the ivory internationally. He falsely labeled one elephant ivory carving as a "resin carving," and valued it at \$30 when he knew the object was elephant ivory and valued at a much higher amount.

The owner of a St. Louis, Missouri company named "Fast Food Ivory," and a collector of ivory antiques, was sentenced to two years of probation and fined \$3,000 for illegally exporting six packages that contained 26 elephant ivory carvings valued at \$155,000 to China. Experts at the Service's National Forensics Laboratory were able to lift the subject's fingerprint from the underside of the tape used to seal one of the packages. U.S. postal inspectors assisted in securing additional evidence that included surveillance footage of the subject mailing one of the illegal packages at a U.S. post office and the credit card used to ship one of the illegal packages. During a covert conversation with special agents, the subject admitted to possessing an express mail label from one of the illegal packages.

The final ivory case involved a Chinese national who sold ivory on eBay labeled as "ox bone." He paid a \$1,025 violation notice and abandoned 29 elephant and walrus ivory carvings.

This Region is ranked as one of the top areas in the nation for producing trophy white-tail, buck deer and is a renowned hunting destination for these deer. Since white-tail deer are an important natural resource, hunting is carefully managed by each state's conservation law enforcement program. Part of the management involves the restriction on the number of out-of-state hunters who are allowed to hunt white-tail deer in these states. Those who illegally hunt trophy deer undermine the states' management efforts and deprive those who hunt ethically and legally the opportunity to take trophy deer. In 2016, special agents, with their state counterparts, brought several hunters to justice. In total, 10 years of probation were sentenced, over \$40,000 in fines imposed, and involved the transport of

live and dead deer from the Midwest to states such as Alabama, Florida, and Pennsylvania. One investigation involved a subject who trafficked 11 captive-bred white-tailed deer from Missouri to Florida in violation of Missouri law, Florida law, federal agriculture laws, and the Lacey Act. Special agents obtained a confession from the subject, interviewed the co-conspirator in Florida, located the U-Haul trailer used to transport the deer, and obtained credit card records that documented the date of the illegal transfer of the deer. Not only was the subject fined \$30,000, he also had to forfeit the value of his pickup truck (\$5,000); received one year of probation; perform 40 hours of community service; and publish an article, and pay for a half-page advertisement, regarding chronic wasting disease, in the Missouri Department of Conservation Association Newsletter.



The Midwest Region is ranked as one of the top areas in the nation for hunting white-tailed deer. Special agents investigate numerous deer trafficking cases annually. Due to diseases such as chronic wasting disease, it is vital that deer are not transported across state lines. Photo: Ken Thomas / Wikimedia Commons

Enforcing laws to protect fresh water fish is also a priority for OLE of this Region. One investigation, with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, resulted in a Missouri man sentenced on two counts of wildlife trafficking and two counts of false labelling under the Lacey Act for illegally transporting and falsely labeling and selling blue tilapia. In areas where blue tilapia, a non-native fish, has been released, they have caused significant damage to the native ecosystems by competing with native species for spawning areas, food, and space. The subject was sentenced to 24 months of probation and ordered to pay \$11,040 in fines and restitution.

Operation Roadhouse was a multi-year, complex, and covert operation focused on the illegal purchase, take, transport, and distribution of paddlefish eggs that were taken in Missouri and transported in interstate commerce. To date, over 120 subjects have been prosecuted due to this operation for Lacey Act violations. In 2016, four additional subjects went to court. Three of the subjects were sentenced to two years of probation, and the fourth subject received three years of probation. One had to forfeit his Mercedes-Benz van.

In addition to fish and wildlife, OLE also enforces conservation law that pertains to plants. An investigation, with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, resulted in a Kentucky man being sentenced to 10 months in prison, one year of supervised release, and ordered to pay over \$80,000 in restitution for logging and selling valuable walnut trees from the land of an absentee landowner. His actions included hiring a crew to harvest timber; marketing the logs to buyers, and selling the timber to two separate buyers for almost \$85,000. The veneer logs were initially sold to an Indiana-based company who then sold the veneers to foreign countries including Austria, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Portugal, and Spain. The remaining logs were sold and transported to a Kentucky-based flooring company. The subject of the investigation has a history of repeat timber theft, and other violations, across multiple counties of northern Indiana. In addition, he was previously indicted on three counts including wire fraud, mail fraud, and violating the Lacey Act.



U.S. paddlefish from Missouri are poached for their roe, which is sold on the black market for caviar products. During Operation Roadhouse, Service special agents seized the fish, roe, and jars of roe that were ready for sale. Photos: USFWS





Southeast Region

The Southeast Region extends from the Appalachian Mountains south to the Caribbean, west to the Ozarks, and includes the southern half of the Mississippi River basin. Special agents conduct investigations in 10 states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Region contains 23 percent of the endangered and threatened species in the United States; 26 percent of the U.S. coastline; over 20 percent of U.S. hunting and fishing license holders; and over 25 percent of the Nation's population.

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) in the Southeast maintains relationships and coordinates enforcement activities with state counterparts as well as with federal officers at almost 130 national wildlife refuges, 70 national parks, and 40 national forests. Wildlife inspectors monitor wildlife trade and intercept smuggled wildlife at five designated ports: Miami, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Louisville, Kentucky; and Memphis, Tennessee. (The latter two are hubs for major international express delivery companies.) Service inspectors also work out of Tampa, Florida, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Investigations prioritize crimes involving mainly violations of the Endangered Species Act, Lacey Act, and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Special agents in this Region work cooperatively with

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

The Southeast Region investigated numerous deer cases that discovered the illegal take and interstate transport of deer. This illegal activity costs each state valuable natural resources and spreads diseases such as chronic wasting disease (CWD). CWD affects all members of the cervid family including deer, elk, and moose.

Photo: USFWS



Operation Longtooth discovered over 250 successful elephant ivory smuggling efforts from the U.S. to China. Photo: USFWS

states to enforce migratory game bird hunting regulations and investigations of large-scale wildlife trafficking. Rapid population growth, which is predicted for the Region over the next two decades, represents a major challenge for both the enforcement program and for wildlife conservation.

Accomplishments

The Southeast Region has conducted many high priority investigations and inspections while continuing to support Service, federal, state, and foreign partners whenever possible. In 2016, special agents of this region were involved in 2,927 open investigations - 1,852 were new cases.

Due to the location, special agents of this Region investigate a variety of wildlife trafficking cases such as elephant ivory smuggling, Native American cultural artifacts poaching; American ginseng poaching; illegal marine life activity such as live coral poaching and illegal fishing; deer trafficking; and numerous migratory bird law violations.

In 2016, several subjects were sentenced in federal court as a result of the diligent casework of these officers. One such case was Operation Longtooth, a Service led, multi-year, multi-agency, international, and complex undercover operation executed with the Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. Postal Inspection Service; and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) that focused on the international and domestic "supply side" in the black market trade of elephant ivory. The operation began when CBP officers, in Miami, Florida, referred two packages to a Service wildlife inspector who determined the packages contained elephant ivory. The contents were falsely declared, valued at \$60 U.S. dollars (USD), addressed to a recipient in Guangdong, China, and had a return address to a residence in Dania, Florida. Federal law enforcement was able to identify the subject despite his attempts to elude nationwide enforcement efforts by utilizing numerous false identities, and using false sender and destination information.



Luis Santiago has been the Special Agent in Charge for law enforcement operations in the Southeast Region since 2011. Originally from Puerto Rico, Luis joined the Service as a wildlife inspector in Miami in 1986, working in both Miami and the Honolulu ports of entry. He became a special agent in 1995 and conducted criminal investigations for the Service in Miami, Florida. He was then stationed in Puerto Rico from 1996-2001. After working as a senior special agent in the program's headquarters office from 2001-2004, he became the Resident Agent in Charge for Central and Northern Florida, and served in this supervisory position until being promoted to Assistant Special Agent in Charge in the Southeast in 2007. Santiago holds a Bachelor of Science in biology from the University of Puerto Rico, completed the Senior Executive Fellows program at Harvard University in 2011, and is also a graduate from the Advance Leadership Development Program, Cohort VI.

Service special agents identified and photographed the elephant ivory carvings, and secured additional evidence documenting export activity to China. The inter-agency team also identified and inspected six additional export shipments created by the subject, which were all falsely labeled as wood or resin carvings, but actually contained elephant ivory carvings. As the investigation progressed, Service special agents were able to connect over 250 successful elephant ivory smuggling efforts by the subject from the U.S. to China and also linked numerous auction companies and Chinese nationals that assisted with his smuggling scheme. In 2016, the defendant was sentenced 12 months of house arrest with electronic monitoring, three years of supervised release, and 100 hours of community service for smuggling elephant ivory from the U.S. to China. Two more subjects under this comprehensive investigation are in various stages of prosecution.

Enforcing federal laws that protect the cultural heritage of Native Americans is also important to OLE of this Region. In 2016, seven defendants were sentenced in federal court for violations against the Native American Graves Protection Repatriation Act and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. Service special agents, with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, discovered an illegal excavation and sale of Native American cultural artifacts from USACE property in north Mississippi. The investigation, which began in 2012 and continued through 2016, resulted in the successful federal prosecution of five defendants on felony counts and two defendants on misdemeanor counts of conspiring or aiding and abetting to excavate and

remove archaeological resources and Native American artifacts located on designated historic public lands. In total, these subjects received 14 months of incarceration, 17 years of federal probation that also prohibits any of the defendants from entering any USACE property including navigable waterways, \$30,350 in fines, and 2½ years of home detention.

This Region continues to see an increase in the poaching of American ginseng. Due to its popularity as an active ingredient in "Traditional Asian Medicinals" and herbal medicine, and its unique habitat requirements, this native North American wild plant is under constant threat of over-exploitation, commercialization, and illegal harvest on federal lands. Ginseng has been overharvested and is now considered "rare" in the U.S. and Canada; therefore, it is quite valuable on the black market.

In 2016, Service special agents conducted several ginseng investigations. In one case, special agents documented federal



Poaching of wild North American ginseng is a serious conservation issue. Poachers sell illegally taken wild ginseng on the black market for use in herbal and Traditional Asian Medicinals.
Photo: USFWS



The Archaeological Resources Protection Act "...secures, for the present and future benefit of the American people, the protection of archaeological resources and sites, which are on public lands and Indian lands..." The picture on the left shows a hole dug by defendants searching for artifacts. The picture on the right shows an artifact that was seized during the investigation. Photos: USFWS

law violations across multiple states and tracked the illegal sale of the poached ginseng to customers in the U.S. and in South Korea.

Between 2011 and 2014, Operation Man Root discovered that a Tennessee man illegally bought and sold ginseng in Tennessee, North Carolina, and in other states. Throughout this period, the subject purchased over 50 pounds of fresh ginseng, black bear gallbladders, and bear meat from an undercover Service special agent, paying over \$9,600. In 2016, the subject was sentenced to three-years of supervised probation and 100 hours of community service.

A second ginseng case successfully prosecuted 45 defendants from seven states and two foreign countries. In total, these defendants received 218 months of incarceration, 210 months of suspended sentences, 162 months of probation, 64 months of community service, and over \$209,000 in federal and state fines. During this joint undercover investigation with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR), 430 pounds of wild ginseng roots were seized, and subsequently sold at an auction for \$150,000. The proceeds, equally shared between the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and the GADNR, were used to conserve, protect, and enhance the survival of wild American ginseng, including promoting and educating parties about the legal harvest, purchase, sale, recording, and transporting of ginseng.

Operation Rock Bottom has been a multi-year, undercover operation involving the illegal harvest and sale of various marine life from the national parks, national marine sanctuaries, the Service's refuges, and other protected areas in or surrounding the Florida Keys, south Florida, and Puerto Rico. The operation was named after the way in which corals are illegally chiseled from the ocean floor with large pieces of live rock attached. Targets have ranged the entire span of the industry and have included initial harvesters, wholesalers, retailers, smugglers, and public aquarium officials. To date, the ongoing investigation has led to the execution of 12 search warrants and 24 subjects or businesses have been criminally charged. Subjects were convicted for felony conspiracy, obstruction of justice, and for violating the Lacey Act. Sentencing totals included almost 10 years of incarceration, 24 years of probation, \$111,000 in criminal fines, and the forfeiture of three boats, two vehicles, and numerous commercial fishing licenses worth several hundred thousand dollars.



Conservation Law Enforcement Officers (CLEOs) are assigned to Florida and work cooperatively with state and local water patrols, and the U.S. Coast Guard, to educate the public and enforce regulations to protect manatees. In 2016, CLEOs issued 356 violation notices and warnings, logged 885 hours on water patrol, and saved a woman who had fallen out of her kayak wearing an unzipped and oversized life jacket. Photo: USFWS



A Mississippi man was sentenced to pay a \$30,000 fine for the illegal take of migratory birds. The investigation discovered that the subject planted corn on his duck impoundment and drove his ATV through his cornfield to knock down stocks of corn thus spreading grains throughout the impoundment. The photos show the flooded cornfield from the air and a sampling of the illegally taken ducks. Photos: Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks



The photo shows one of the men shooting a captured red-tailed hawk. The men ran a quail hunting business and trapped the raptors so they would not kill the quails. The raptors are lured into the trap by caging a live animal underneath the floor of the main trap. The raptor is caught after it enters the cage to eat the bait. The investigation resulted in three South Carolina men being sentenced to pay a total of \$77,000 and banned from hunting for one year. Over 30 raptor carcasses were retrieved. Photo: USFWS



Northeast Region

The Northeast Region stretches up the eastern seaboard from the mid-Atlantic to New England, encompassing 13 States: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia. More than 70 million people, about a quarter of the nation's population, live within this area, which is also "home" to more than 100 federally protected endangered and threatened species and wildlife habitats ranging from northern forest, rolling mountains, and coastal plains to freshwater marshes, barrier beaches, and coastal islands.

Service special agents of this Region work with investigative partners in state fish and game agencies and with federal officers who police the Region's more than 500,000 acres of wildlife refuges and other public lands. Wildlife inspectors are stationed at eight U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) ports of entry in the Region, including New York and Newark, which together process nearly one third of all U.S. wildlife trade. Inspection services are also provided at the designated ports of Boston and Baltimore, three locations on the Canadian border (Buffalo and Champlain, New York; and Calais, Maine), and at the Washington Dulles International Airport.

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) in the Northeast Region focuses on investigations of large-scale illegal commercialization of federal and state protected species. Some of this work involves foreign or U.S. species moving



Ivory from elephants, narwhals, and a hippopotamus, valued at over \$180,000, was seized from an upstate New York antique dealer. Photo: USFWS

in the global black market wildlife trade. Challenges also include interstate trafficking in wildlife, injurious species, and habitat modification.

Accomplishments

A two-year, OLE investigation, with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), resulted with an upstate New York antique dealer being sentenced in the Western District of New York and ordered to pay a \$30,000 fine directed to the Lacey Act Reward Fund. In court, the defendant pleaded guilty to a felony Lacey Act charge for smuggling two elephant tusks, which were subsequently sold in interstate commerce.

The investigation began when law enforcement officers from Environment and Climate Change Canada contacted Service OLE concerning a U.S. resident who had purchased elephant tusks from an auction house in Quebec and transported them to Niagara Falls, Ontario. Service special agents took

the case and discovered that in 2013, the subject knowingly illegally transported these two elephant tusks from Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada into the U.S. through the Port of Buffalo, New York, violating the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Lacey Act. Later in 2013, the defendant sold those tusks, along with four additional tusks for \$50,000 U.S. dollars (USD). At no time did the defendant apply for, or receive, a permit under the ESA authorizing the importation, delivery, receipt, transportation, or sale of elephant ivory. In addition to those six elephant tusks, the investigation discovered the defendant also trafficked three additional elephant tusks, seven narwhal tusks, four elephant ivory carvings, a hippopotamus ivory carving, and a coral carving. The total value of the known wildlife, trafficked in interstate and international commerce by the defendant, was over \$180,000 USD. The defendant also surrendered an additional 180 elephant ivory carvings, valued at \$175,000 USD, to the NYSDEC.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

OLE in the Northeast Region investigates several eagle cases every year. In 2016, one case resulted in a New York produce farmer being sentenced for the take of three bald eagles that died after eating meat poisoned by the farmer to kill coyotes.

Photo: Dave Menke /USFWS



Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Honnie Gordon has led the law enforcement operations for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife in the Northeast since August 2013. A native of Pennsylvania, SAC Gordon has 30 years in federal law enforcement beginning her career in 1987 as a criminal investigator. She joined the Service as a special agent in 1994 and worked as a criminal investigator in Arizona, Florida, and Georgia. In 2000, she was detailed to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center as an instructor and in 2002, she became a senior special agent at the program's headquarters. In 2003, Gordon was promoted to the special agent in charge for the Branch of Training and Inspection and later served as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge in the Mountain-Prairie region from 2006 until her promotion to SAC in the Northeast Region. Prior to joining the Service, she worked as a criminal investigator with the United States Forest Service, in Louisiana and Virginia, and with the U.S. Customs Service in Laredo and San Antonio, Texas. Gordon earned a Bachelor of Science in biology and a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Marietta College in 1984.



Subjects attempted to smuggle turtles from the U.S. in a variety of ways including hiding them in boxes marked as automobile parts. The photo on the left shows a wood turtle that was poached from the wild and hidden in a box to be smuggled from the U.S. The picture on the right shows eastern box turtles that were taken from the wild in West Virginia and seized by special agents before they could be smuggled out of the country. Photos: USFWS

An investigation, by a special agent of this Region, resulted in a Virginia man pleading guilty to making and submitting false labels for animal blood that was transported internationally. The subject's company, a human and animal blood products brokerage company, would receive orders from biomedical research companies for specific quantities of human blood, animal blood, and products. The company would then process these orders by packaging and exporting the blood products from the U.S. The subject admitted to knowingly shipping falsely labeled animal blood, as human blood, to evade Service regulations and enforcement actions - the accurate labels were sent in separate FedEx envelopes, which were not subject to any government inspection. The investigation discovered

that from January 2014 through May 2016, his company internationally shipped squirrel monkey blood products, which is protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). On one occasion, the subject explained the smuggling logistics to a covert Service special agent. He believed the agent was actually a client from a Canadian company. In both an email and during a telephone conversation, the subject explained the shipment would arrive with "human blood" written on the labels and that the "squirrel monkey blood" labels would arrive at the same time in a separate FedEx letter package.

In addition, Service special agents collaboratively worked with South Korean counterparts. Based on information uncovered during the investigation, South Korean law enforcement officials investigated subjects who were associated with these unlawful activities. On November 2, 2016, the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency arrested a Korean subject, and owner of Biomedex Korea, for violations of the Korean Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act, Wildlife Protection and Management Act, and customs law. The Korean subject admitted that from 2008 to 2016, she smuggled animal blood plasma and serum, labeled as "human blood" over 260 times into South Korea from the U.S.



Squirrel monkey blood was falsely labeled as "human blood" and illegally shipped domestically and internationally. Photo: USFWS

Operation Broken Glass is a Service-led investigation that was worked in collaboration with the Maine Marine Patrol; South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement

Division; New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Law Enforcement; Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Conservation Police; Virginia Marine Resources Commission Police; Service Refuge Law Enforcement; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Law Enforcement; Massachusetts Environmental Police; Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Law Enforcement; New York State Environmental Conservation Police; New Hampshire Fish and Game, Division of Law Enforcement; Maryland Natural Resources Police; North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission, Division of Law Enforcement; Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; Yarmouth, Massachusetts Division of Natural Resources; North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Police Department; the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission; and the U.S. Department of Justice, Environmental Crimes Section. As a result of the multi-jurisdictional investigation into the illegal trafficking of American eels, so far seven subjects have pleaded guilty in federal district court in Maine, and another three subjects have pleaded guilty in federal court in South Carolina. Combined, these 10 subjects trafficked more than \$2.6 million worth of juvenile American eels from the U.S. to Asia.

The operation is significant since the American eel is a unique and economically important species in river systems in every state along the U.S. east coast. For example, in Maine, eels are a major revenue source and marine resource. American eels are being poached from the eastern U.S. and



American eels may be sold to Asian buyers for over \$2,000 a pound.
Photo: USFWS

smuggled to Asia because the Japanese and European eels have been overfished to meet the high consumer demand as a popular food source in Asia. Harvesters and exporters of American eels in the U.S. can receive over \$2,000 per pound from Asian buyers. The subjects pleaded guilty to trafficking in violation of the Lacey Act and admitted they illegally harvested, sold, transported, or exported eels knowing the wildlife had been poached. In addition, they used falsified paperwork that showed the eels had been legally obtained from waters in Maine and Florida. This investigation highlights an unparalleled collaboration of federal and state law enforcement and will be used as a model for future investigations.

A multi-year OLE investigation concerning domestic reptile collection and trafficking in Pennsylvania, and neighboring states, resulted in the conviction of 15 defendants on federal and state charges to include misdemeanor and felony violations of the Lacey Act. The defendants admitted to the unlawful collection, transportation, sale, and receipt of reptiles and amphibians collected from the wild in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and New Jersey for the commercial market. Species in this investigation included wild populations of Eastern box turtles, North American wood turtles, Gulf Coast box turtles, three-toed box turtles, ornate box turtles, Florida box turtles, spotted turtles, mud turtles, musk turtles, a desert tortoise, copperhead snakes, tiger salamanders, and marbled salamanders. Combined, their sentencing included 30 days prison, \$45,596 in fines, six years of probation, and 150 hours of community service.

A Service investigation into the death of hundreds of migratory birds at a West Virginia wind energy generation plant resulted in a successful prosecution. On February 12, 2016, the wind energy generation company, AES Laurel Mountain, was sentenced for violating two counts of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The sentencing was based on a previous plea agreement. The investigation documented the take of nearly 500 migratory birds due to the company's failure to follow best management practices related to lighting. AES Laurel Mountain was sentenced to pay \$30,000 and agreed to perform community service by making a \$48,300 payment to the West Virginia Land Trust.



The blackpoll warbler is one of many species of migratory birds killed due to a wind energy company's failure to follow best management practices related to lighting at the facility. Of the 483 migratory birds killed at the facility, 308 of those birds were blackpoll warblers.
Photo: USFWS



A joint Service investigation, with Connecticut Environmental Police and Service Refuge Law Enforcement, resulted in two subjects pleading guilty in federal district court in Connecticut to the trapping and killing of hawks. Through the use of surveillance cameras, the investigation revealed that two racing pigeon enthusiasts were systematically trapping and shooting hawks on their property. One of the subjects was sentenced to a one-year of probation, 90 hours community service, and fined \$5,500. The second subject has not yet been sentenced. The subjects agreed to refer to the hawk trap as a "breeding cage" if law enforcement inquired. The investigators received an award from the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut for their outstanding efforts.
Photo: USFWS



Mountain-Prairie Region

Eight states comprise the Mountain-Prairie Region: Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. Its lands include the short grass prairies of the Great Plains to the east as well as the Rocky Mountains and parts of the inter-mountain west beyond the Continental Divide. The Region's Prairie Coteau, an area in eastern Montana and the Dakotas, features ponds and wetlands left by the last glacier that are among the most important nesting habitat for waterfowl in North America.

The Region is home to nearly 100 federally threatened and endangered species and an array of other federal and state protected species. Its predominantly semi-arid to arid climate makes existing surface waters all the more vital for wildlife. The natural resources in the Region are under significant pressure from many different resource exploration and production activities. The Rocky Mountains are well known for big game species such as moose, elk, mule deer, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. The Service's special agents in this Region work closely with federal, state, and Canadian counterparts to ensure future generations of hunters and wildlife viewers have opportunities to enjoy these majestic creatures.

Iconic species in the Region include the grizzly bear, gray wolf, golden and bald eagle, greater sage grouse, and whooping crane. Service special agents investigate violations committed by industries or individuals whose activities conflict with federal wildlife laws. Wildlife inspectors are stationed in the Region to police wildlife trade at the international airport in Denver and along an extensive expanse of the Nation's northern border. The Region also manages the Service's National Wildlife Property and Eagle Repositories.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

Over the course of a two and a half year investigation, special agents of the Mountain-Prairie Region have documented the illegal trafficking of over 100 eagles, mostly golden eagles. Photo: NPS



An investigation into "restricted use poisons" discovered that two subjects injected a banned carbamate pesticide into a cow carcass in an attempt to kill coyotes. At least one bald eagle was killed by ingesting the poison. The jug of poison and hypodermic needles were discovered during the execution of a federal search warrant. Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

Special agents in this Region investigated two separate cases that involved the illegal application of "restricted use poisons." The first case, worked jointly with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal (SRST) Game and Fish Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, concerned a ranch owner whose employees, at his direction, improperly applied 20 tons of Rozol, an anti-coagulant rodenticide, to over 5,000 acres of land within the external boundary of, and on adjacent lands belonging to, the SRST. He admitted to spreading the poison in an attempt to kill prairie dogs; however, over 50 golden and bald eagles died after ingesting the poisoned prairie dogs.

The second case, investigated jointly with the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department (SDGFPS), concerned two defendants who intentionally misused the pesticide Furadan 4F. Their actions resulted in the secondary poisoning of at least one bald eagle. Service special agents, with SDGFPS and the Sheriff of Sanborn County, executed two federal search warrants at the residence of each defendant. A jug of suspected Furadan 4F, a banned carbamate pesticide, and four hypodermic needles were recovered from one of the residences. A subsequent interview revealed the second subject had knowingly injected the Furadan 4F into cow carcasses in an effort to kill predators such as coyotes. The defendants pleaded guilty to violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, Rodenticide Act. One subject, who already had a prior federal tax evasion sentence, was sentenced for the unlawful take of a bald eagle and the unlawful use of pesticide. He received nine months in custody and one year of supervised release with a condition that he must pay \$2,500 in restitution. The other subject was fined \$2,500 in restitution for the death of the bald eagle; however, he was found indigent to pay the fine.

Additional eagle cases that occurred in this Region in 2016 included a husband and wife who killed eagles on the Crow Indian Reservation; a member of the Ute Tribe who confessed to shooting eagles; a member of the Uintah and Ouray Agency, and convicted felon, who killed a bald eagle; and a Utah man who was sentenced to one year in jail for killing several bald eagles. At the sentencing for the husband and wife who killed eagles on the Crow Indian Reservation, the judge stated she was skeptical the birds were killed for cultural purposes, but more likely to profit from the sale of the bird's feathers – the profit used to support their methamphetamine and marijuana drug addictions. The wife received three years of probation and her husband received five years of probation and ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution. The Service's Forensics Lab not only confirmed the cause of death supporting the confession of one of the subjects, but also the analysis of blood collected as evidence discovered that actually multiple eagles had been killed.



Steve Oberholtzer is the Special Agent in Charge for the law enforcement program in the Service's Mountain-Prairie Region, where he oversees investigations and inspections in eight states and manages the Service's National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repositories. Before taking on the challenges of his current position, Oberholtzer worked as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for Alaska and held special agent (criminal investigator) positions in Virginia, Maryland, California, and Ohio. He started his career with the Service as a wildlife inspector in 1989, working in this capacity in both New York City and Alaska. Oberholtzer holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from the University of Massachusetts and served 4-years active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1981-1985.



In 2016, Service special agents investigated 28 grizzly bear deaths. Photos: USFWS

Also, during this year, the long term investigation into the illegal killing and trafficking of eagles and their parts continued. Fifty-one potential subjects throughout the region have been documented to have violated the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), BGEPA, Endangered Species Act (ESA), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Lacey Act. To date, this case has documented the illegal trafficking of in excess of 100 eagles (primarily golden eagles), dozens of hawk and owl species, and over twenty other species of protected migratory birds.

Grizzly bears are protected by federal and state law and classified as a threatened species. In 2016, 28 grizzly bear death investigations were opened and charges were filed by the U.S. Department of Justice in three. All of the defendants were found guilty of violating the ESA. Two of the defendants were each sentenced to six months of incarceration and ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution to Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The first defendant shot a "yearling" near his home, moved the dead bear to a different location, and never notified the authorities; the second defendant pursued a bear away from a campground to shoot and kill it even though the bear was not posing an immediate threat; and the third defendant



harassed a bear with his pickup truck within the boundaries of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana.

Special agents and wildlife inspectors of this Region engage in multi-agency operations to ensure wildlife imported and exported is in compliance with the laws of the United States, Canada, North Dakota, and Montana. One operation in 2016 took place at the border ports of Portal and Pembina, North Dakota. Service OLE, with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCA) conservation officers, North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGFD) wardens, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers, and U.S. Department of Agriculture specialists inspected wildlife imports and exports. During the operation, a total of 312 declaration forms were filed for waterfowl, upland game, big game, and CITES species. Violations to the MBTA, ESA, and Lacey Act were documented. Due to chronic wasting disease concerns, NDGFD refused entry of moose trophies that included any

remaining brain tissue inside the skullcap. In addition, ECCA gathered intelligence concerning the unlawful gifting, possession limit violations, commercialization, and wanton and waste violations of migratory game birds. Enforcement actions ranged from product abandonment to the issuance of violation notices.

Working with energy companies is vitally important not only to protect wildlife and their habitats, but also to improve service reliability to consumers by reducing outages and fires caused by avian electrocutions and collisions with power lines and equipment.

One company spent \$17 million to develop and implement a conservation plan to reduce migratory bird mortalities at their oil production facility in Wyoming. The money will be spent to remove inactive power lines, raptor proof active power lines, and incorporate bird exclusion measures at its wastewater facilities. Another power company in Montana implemented a statewide Avian Protection Plan to reduce the take of migratory birds throughout the state. Rural electric cooperatives in Montana manage 56,000 miles of energized line and 22 cooperatives have promised to implement the measures detailed in the plan.

In 2016, the National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repository was very active. The Wildlife Property Repository maintained 1,264,780 pieces of property,



Service OLE in this Region work with energy companies to protect wildlife and to reduce power outages and fires caused by avian electrocutions and collisions with power lines and equipment.

Photo: USFWS

destroyed 57,300 pieces of property, and transferred 6,008 pieces for educational or law enforcement use. Sixty tours were provided to 826 individuals such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director; Representative Jason Chaffetz, Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform; CITES delegates from China; and leadership staff from the World Wildlife Fund, the Audubon Society, and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Twenty-six media interviews and tours were conducted, including ABC, CNN, Crime Watch Daily, Discovery Communications,

National Geographic Channel, NBC, San Diego Zoo Global, WildAid, and live coverage with E. W. Scripps TV news program, "The Now."

The Eagle Repository received a total of 2,736 whole eagles and eagle parts; 2,273 were bald eagles and 463 were golden eagles. A total of 3,957 orders were filled – 2,600 for eagle feathers and eagle parts and 1,357 for whole eagle orders. In addition, there were 3,942 new requests - 1,013 for bald eagles, 1,577 for golden eagles, and 1,352 for other species.



In 2016, the National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repository provided 26 media interviews. Discovery Communications, the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance, and the Service created a "wildlife trafficking" public service announcement. The picture on the top is one of the sets created by property stored at the Repository and the picture below shows SAC Steve Obenholtzer being interviewed for the production.

Photos: USFWS



Alaska Region

The Alaska Region encompasses over 223 million acres of federal lands. Sixteen national wildlife refuges (NWR), as well as multiple national parks and preserves, are managed in the interests of resource conservation. The state, which features intact ecosystems and robust fish and wildlife populations, provides multi-billion dollar commercial fisheries, sought after hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities, sustainable local food systems, cultural resources, and unparalleled ecotourism opportunities.

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) in Alaska helps safeguard scores of federally protected species including eight listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Several ESA protected species in Alaska, such as the polar bear and the Steller's eider, are impacted by subsistence hunting and industrial development, which require significant outreach, education, and enforcement from the Service's law enforcement program.

In addition to safeguarding federally protected species, Service OLE in Alaska works collaboratively with state counterparts to stop illegal commercial big game hunting operations and with Alaskan Native communities concerning subsistence enforcement issues. Service special agents conduct investigations and oversee compliance matters from the Arctic tundra to the Aleutian coastline.

Stationed in Anchorage, the Region's wildlife inspectors monitor trade at five of the state's U.S. Customs and Border Protection ports of entry.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

Dall sheep are considered a prize in big game hunting. Special agents in Alaska investigate several big game operations every year. These investigations usually take place in remote areas and agents use a variety of travel methods to get to those locations. Photo: NPS



Law enforcement flew to a remote area where illegal guiding and take of big game animals such as grizzly bears and Dall sheep was taking place. Once they arrived, they executed a federal warrant and conducted numerous interviews.
Photo: USFWS

Unlawful commercial exploitation of wildlife is a major focus for investigative work. Service law enforcement in the Region has a long history of successful partnerships with the Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) and with other federal, state, and local conservation enforcement agencies. Enforcement challenges include protecting migratory birds and marine mammals such as walrus, polar bear, and sea otter.

Accomplishments

In 2016, Service special agents in Alaska concluded and initiated several multi-agency, large-scale, commercial big game guiding investigations. The final defendants of Operation Bruin were prosecuted and Service agents opened new big game guiding cases with law enforcement officers from the National Park Service (NPS) and AWT.

Operation Bruin was a big game guiding case that primarily involved the illegal take of brown bears and mountain goats near Haines, Alaska. This cooperative investigation, with Canadian authorities and the AWT, resulted in the final defendants being prosecuted for their involvement with two guiding businesses that provided 18 illegal hunts valued at \$195,000. An assistant guide was sentenced

in Alaska State Court to one year of probation, fined \$20,000 with \$16,000 suspended, and ordered to forfeit an "all-terrain vehicle" to the state of Alaska. Two hunting clients were each sentenced to one year of probation and fined \$5,000 and \$10,000 respectively for federal Lacey Act violations. The final defendant, another client, paid a \$5,000 federal Lacey Act violation notice.



Special agents participated in a multi-agency, helicopter patrol detail to enforce hunting regulations north of the Arctic Circle. Photo: USFWS



Ryan Noel became the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) in Alaska in 2014. He began his career with the Service in 1997 as an assistant refuge manager and refuge officer at Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge. He then worked in management positions in South Carolina and Colorado before joining the Office of Law Enforcement as a special agent in 2004. As an agent, Ryan was stationed in Nashville, Tennessee where he worked migratory bird and Lacey Act cases before opening a new office in Knoxville. In the Smokey Mountains, he worked with federal and state partners to curtail the trafficking of American ginseng and black bears. In 2009, Ryan became the Resident Agent in Charge for Tennessee and Kentucky. In 2012, he was selected as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Alaska Region where he served until 2014 when he became the SAC. Ryan is a native of Pennsylvania where he grew up hunting and fishing in the coal-mining region of the Allegheny Mountains. He graduated with degrees in wildlife technology from Penn State University and biology from Slippery Rock University.

Alaska special agents, working jointly with the NPS and the AWT, served a search warrant at a remote lodge and interviewed a number of individuals throughout Alaska concerning the illegal guiding and taking of big game animals including grizzly bear and Dall sheep. Since the lodge is located in such a remote location, access could only be accomplished by Service aircraft. Additionally, a warrant and numerous interviews were conducted throughout the contiguous U.S.

Alaska special agents also participated in a multi-agency, helicopter-patrol detail with law enforcement from the AWT, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Service's Refuge program. The detail was based out of a small village north of the Arctic Circle and resulted in the issuance of violation notices to various hunters. In addition, the detail provided the opportunity for Alaska law enforcement to speak directly to numerous moose hunters and guides about hunting regulations.

Due to pressing conservation needs, Alaska special agents and agent-pilots worked with federal wildlife officers to conduct brown bear, moose, caribou, black tail deer, mountain goat, and sheep patrols on Alaskan refuges. These patrols were conducted on the ground and by air, and focused on four separate NWRs. During one of the patrols, agents and officers collected evidence and investigated a big game guide who had illegally deforested an area on the Kanuti NWR to create an airstrip.

Protecting the natural resources of Alaska, as well as working closely with the Alaskan Natives, is paramount to OLE in this Region. Federal and state regulations protect natural resources for Alaskan Natives ensuring not only that they will be able to continue with their subsistence hunting, but also that handicrafts labeled and sold as Alaskan Native products are truly created by Alaska's indigenous peoples. Alaskan Natives use marine resources to meet their physical, nutritional, spiritual, and cultural needs. Walrus and polar bear are important cultural and subsistence species for Alaskan Natives. In their cash-limited environment, Alaskan Natives need the profit from the sale of handicrafts to support their lifestyles.

For the first time in Alaska, four southeast Alaska individuals and businesses were investigated and

prosecuted for violations of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA). During the two-year, covert investigation, special agents discovered that the subjects had misrepresented and fraudulently sold bone art carvings labeled as Alaskan Native artwork, when, in fact, they were not made by Alaskan Natives. Three of four defendants pleaded guilty, received probation of up to five years, and each paid up to \$8,000 in fines and restitution. The fourth defendant was found not guilty at a trial.

Alaska special agents investigated a number of marine mammal cases including a storeowner who pleaded guilty for attempting to sell two walrus tusks, valued at \$7,900; a non-Alaskan Native who offered for sale a polar bear, sea otter, and seal hide blanket as an Alaskan Native made product; and another subject who pleaded guilty to illegally selling a polar bear hide. In total, these subjects received five years of probation and were fined \$9,000. Future prosecutions are pending.

Due to decreasing sea ice in the Arctic, Pacific walrus have been forming large haul-outs on the Northwest coast of Alaska, which are highly susceptible to disturbance and stampeding. To avert major walrus mortality events, Alaska agents worked proactively with Native groups, and other agencies, to protect



An example of falsely labeled artwork that was being sold as an authentic Alaskan Native handicraft.

Photo: USFWS

walrus haul-outs around Alaska from disturbance. For example, special agents worked with the Service's Marine Mammals Management program and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) to limit disturbances at a newly formed walrus haul-out near Cape Greig, Alaska. The haul-out, which consisted of as many as 3000 animals, was located within the boundaries of a busy commercial salmon-fishing district in Bristol Bay, Alaska. Agents requested, and the ADF&G agreed, to move the fishing boundary one mile further away from the walrus haul-out, thus helping to prevent walrus mortality.

In addition to protecting against disturbance at walrus haul-outs, Alaska special agents investigate individuals responsible for mortalities caused by disturbances and hunting at walrus haul-outs. Four individuals from Point Hope, Alaska were arraigned in U.S. District Court in Fairbanks, Alaska for their 2015 activities related to the wasteful take of walrus and causing a stampede at a haul-out near Cape Lisburne, Alaska that killed as many as 25 walrus last year. The U.S. Attorney's Office and Service special agents are working with the Native Village of Point Hope to ensure that the case adjudication benefits conservation and the protection of walrus haul-outs in the future.

Near Nome, Alaska, special agents investigated the killing and wasting of more than a dozen walrus in the Bering Sea and agents continue to support Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC) efforts to conserve walrus. Alaska agents participated in the EWC's annual meeting by presenting a report that detailed cooperative enforcement efforts that occurred



Walrus wastefully killed for their ivory.
Photo: USFWS

between the Service and the EWC. Also in 2016 and working to support Alaskan Natives, special agents worked with the Alaska region's Native affairs specialist to create the curriculum for a law enforcement specific Native relations training;

participated in several government-to-government consultations with Native groups concerning mandated polar bear quotas in northern Alaska; and helped draft a new Alaskan Native Relations Policy.



Alaska special agents not only investigate crime that involves polar bears, but also work with indigenous people and the Russian Federation to protect them. In 2016, special agents participated in a bilateral polar bear meeting with representatives from the Russian Federation and Alaskan Native organizations. They worked to implement an allowed quota of polar bear take from the Chukchi Sea population, which is shared by the United States and Russia. Photo: USFWS



There are five special agent pilots stationed in Alaska. They are needed to reach remote locations where illegal hunting and wildlife crime occur. Photo: USFWS



Pacific Southwest Region

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) special agents in the Pacific Southwest investigate wildlife crimes in California and Nevada as well as the Klamath Basin. They are responsible for one of the most ecologically diverse areas in the United States. Their “beats” range from arid sand dunes and snow-capped crags in the high Sierras to rich farmland and rain-soaked redwood forests. This incredibly diverse geography provides habitat for a vast array of wildlife, including more than 309 federally threatened and endangered animal species.

Service special agents work cooperatively with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the Nevada Department of Wildlife, and with other federal and state entities to enforce wildlife laws on more than 19 national forests, 28 national parks, 46 national wildlife refuges, and more than 63 million acres of other public lands and state-protected areas. The Region’s wildlife inspectors monitor wildlife trade at some of the busiest land, sea, and air border crossings in the world including San Ysidro, the largest land border crossing in the country, and Los Angeles, one of the two busiest U.S. ports for the importation of wildlife shipments.

Conservation enforcement issues in the Region range from the growing impact

of renewable energy projects on wildlife resources to illegal trade in wildlife and products that include global and state wildlife resources barred from import, export, or commercial exploitation. Partnership efforts with the states and other federal agencies include joint investigations, cooperative training, and compliance outreach. Service special agents help train and initiate wildlife trafficking investigations with the state of California’s new illegal wildlife trafficking unit, which was established in 2016 after passage of the state’s ban on ivory sales.

Accomplishments

The casework of special agents in this Region is as diverse as the landscape they work in. In 2016, they investigated a variety of cases including turtle, fish, Asian songbirds, elephant ivory, and cactus smuggling; marine mammal harassment; habitat destruction; and continued to be proactive working with power companies to protect wildlife.

A husband and wife pleaded guilty to smuggling and conspiracy charges for their role in an attempt to smuggle 911 sea turtle eggs hidden in coolers under layers of ice, fish, and shrimp. The couple did not smuggle the eggs themselves, but did arrange for another person to drive the concealed eggs from Mexico into the U.S. at the southern California border. For their role, they were sentenced in federal court to a total of one year of prison and ordered to pay \$18,000 in restitution. The black market trade of wildlife products may be very lucrative. In this case, the 61 pounds of these olive ridley and Kemp’s ridley sea turtle eggs could have been sold on the black market for approximately \$2,500-\$5,000.

The subject of a four-year OLE manhunt led by agents of this Region, with assistance from OLE’s Intel Unit; the U.S. Department of Justice; Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) attachés in Mexico City; the Mexican Federal Police; U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); and Interpol, was finally brought to justice for offenses involving felony wildlife trafficking and other crimes.



A world-renowned pool cue maker was sentenced to four months of home confinement and fined \$10,000 for trafficking in elephant ivory products.

Photos: USFWS

The subject, his wife, and their company were initially charged in 2009 for illegal trafficking in the rare arapaima fish, a “mega fish” that can grow to more than 10 feet long and weigh over 400 pounds. In 2010, the wife pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor count and was sentenced to 21 months of probation and fined \$1,500 for smuggling arapaima. At that time, the husband fled the U.S. after prosecutors filed additional charges against him since he continued to illegally export fish while free on bond. Service special agents continued to track him as he traveled around Europe, to Israel, and finally to Mexico, where he was arrested and imprisoned for several months before being extradited to the U.S. During his flight from law enforcement, he often changed his appearance in order to avoid being detected and arrested. In 2016, he was sentenced in the U.S. to 366 days in prison. The company was ordered to pay a special assessment and terminate its California corporate status.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

A subject violated her probation by harassing sea otters. Part of her probation was to stay 100 yards away from whales and 50 yards away from sea otters. She was witnessed as close as 10 feet away as she pursued a sea otter and a pup. The judge fined the subject \$2,000, extended supervision by a year, modified probation to include “all marine mammals,” and is prohibited from using any small boat or motor craft in Monterey Harbor except for emergency purposes.

Photo: Matt Knoth / Wikimedia Commons



Jill Birchell has been the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of California and Nevada since 2011. A 30-year veteran officer, she has worked in four Service Regions from Alaska to the Southwest to Washington, DC. She has investigated or overseen a wide variety of investigations, including big game hunting guides in Alaska, industrial take of eagles and other protected birds, endangered species take and habitat destruction cases, wildlife smuggling, and timber cases under the Lacey Act plant amendments of 2008. She also served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Alaska U.S. Attorney's office for wildlife prosecutions as a collateral duty to her special agent field duties. She started her career with the Service as a wildlife inspector in Detroit, Michigan. SAC Birchell has a Bachelor of Science in wildlife management from the Ohio State University and a J.D. from the University of Detroit Mercy, School of Law.

Service special agents, HSI, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Internal Revenue Service executed two search and arrest warrants on a California man, and his business, that engaged in the international trafficking of wildlife products including coral, elephant ivory, hornbill, leopard, rhino, and tiger. The investigation discovered these products were exported from the U.S. to Australia, China, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, and Russia. The subject was sentenced to three months in custody followed by three months of home confinement, two years of supervised release, fined \$20,000, and ordered to pay \$20,000 in restitution for trafficking in elephant ivory.

In 2016, special agents and wildlife inspectors caught an elephant ivory smuggler who attempted to take four elephant ivory carvings in his baggage. Special agents and CPB officers intercepted the California man just as he was about to board a plane to China. He was fined \$5,000, received three-years of probation, and was ordered to perform 60 hours of community service.

Following a joint investigation with CDFW, a Service OLE investigation resulted in a real estate developer being sentenced in federal court for one felony count of securities fraud and one misdemeanor count of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The charges stemmed from a 2012 investigation, which revealed that the defendant fraudulently altered two conservation bank payment receipts in the amount of \$2,250,000 and \$908,500. This fraud allowed him to obtain false grading permits for a commercial development venture that significantly impaired the habitats of endangered wildlife. The developer, and his company, were sentenced to four months of home detention, one year of probation, 100 hours of community service, \$350,000 in restitution, and were ordered to purchase a 107-acre conservation easement that was valued at \$3,000,000. The subject was also charged with forgery, under state law, and paid an additional \$650,000 in restitution.

Smuggling is not only limited to animals, native plant species are also poached and smuggled from the U.S. to overseas buyers. One cactus smuggler, from Nevada, was sentenced to three years of supervised release and fined \$65,640 for his role in smuggling over \$100,000 worth of cactus plants to more than 25 different countries. The CITES protected cacti were also falsely labeled as pottery and other various items.

Wind power companies, while generating increasing amounts of energy, have also killed or injured migratory birds including golden eagles. The Service and OLE strive to work cooperatively with energy companies, but also pursue enforcement action under federal wildlife statutes when appropriate. Throughout 2016, the Service entered into innovative settlement agreements with wind energy developers. These agreements address the past, unpermitted, avian take and also ensure further protection of golden eagles and other birds at several wind farms in California and Nevada. A total of five settlements, reached in late 2015 and 2016, have addressed legacy and interim eagle take at 16 separate wind energy facilities. Of those, 10 wind energy facilities have applied for eagle take permits - six had already applied for permits at the time settlement discussions commenced. In addition, wind energy facilities have committed



The owner of a Hollywood, California retail store signed two plea agreements, one for the store and one for the owner. The subjects were repeat offenders who would receive illegal commercial shipments of various insects, frogs, and CITES protected bats and seahorses. Special agents performed a controlled package delivery and the owner agreed to a search of the property. In the plea agreement, the owner agreed to pay a \$20,000 fine, receive two years of probation for the store, and perform 200 hours of community service for the owner. The picture shows numerous bats that were illegally shipped and received by the store and its owner.
Photo: USFWS



A complex, international, turtle smuggling investigation, with assistance from Environment and Climate Change Canada, resulted in the smuggler sentenced to almost five years in prison and ordered to pay over \$17,000 in restitution to reimburse the organizations that cared for the seized turtles. On the day of his arrest, the smuggler had 51 turtles taped to his legs and groin area and another 1000 turtles were concealed in socks, boots, and cereal boxes, and hidden inside of checked luggage destined for China. Far left Photo: Environment and Climate Change Canada. Center and Right Photos: USFWS

to spend a minimum of \$2,080,000 over the next four years on research and development for avian detection and deterrent technologies. They have also paid \$65,000 in civil penalties.

Service special agents can find themselves in life threatening situations while enforcing federal laws. In 2016, a California man pleaded guilty to one count of assaulting a federal officer. In 2012, the subject had pointed a pistol at an OLE agent, who was lawfully conducting an ESA habitat destruction investigation on private property, and then refused to lower his gun despite the agent's repeated instruction to do so. At his sentencing, the judge ordered the subject to four years of probation, four months of home detention, a \$10,000 fine, and a total firearm possession prohibition during his probation.



A defendant was found guilty of smuggling 27 Asian songbirds after a jury deliberated for only 30 minutes. In an attempt to get past law enforcement, the birds were wrapped in aluminum foil or newspaper, and hidden within clothing inside of his luggage. Special agents discovered he had an extensive travel history documenting at least 14 separate trips between the U.S. and Vietnam. Photo: USFWS



Deep gullies were caused by grading activities on the project known as Dublin Ranch North and in violation of the Endangered Species Act. The sediment from these gullies washed into a breeding pond for the endangered California tiger salamander and red-legged frogs. The real estate development company, and its president, was ordered to pay \$1 million in restitution for securities fraud and wildlife violations. In addition, the judge included an order to provide a 107-acre conservation easement valued at \$3 million. Photo: USFWS



A Kemp's ridley turtle laying eggs. A husband and wife were sentenced to prison and fined in federal court for smuggling over 900 sea turtle eggs including those from Kemp's ridley turtles. Photo: NPS



Wildlife Inspection Program

The Office of Law Enforcement's (OLE) wildlife inspection program provides the Nation's frontline defense against illegal wildlife trafficking. Service wildlife inspectors uphold the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and enforce U.S. laws that regulate wildlife imports and exports.

In FY 2016, wildlife inspectors policed wildlife trade at 18 designated ports and 19 border or other locations. They examined over 183,000 shipments, monitoring a \$6.3 billion legal trade for compliance with wildlife laws.

Wildlife Detector Dog Program

In 2016, the wildlife inspector and canine teams at the ports of Miami, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; and Los Angeles, California continued to inspect air and ocean cargo and international mail shipments to detect wildlife smuggling. In April, the Service added four additional wildlife detector dog teams that were stationed at Anchorage, Alaska; Honolulu, Hawaii; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Houston, Texas. These "K-9" teams are able to examine a greater volume of international cargo. As a result of their work, new investigations were created, which led to arrests and prosecutions.

Their work is impressive. For example, in one week, K-9 "Dutton" and her handler inspected and seized 22,450 Indian peafowl feathers in violation of CITES and inspected a declared shipment of live reptiles, venomous scorpions, and spiders discovering multiple International Air Transport Association violations. They also inspected and seized 11 furniture pieces with mother of pearl inlaid boxes in violation of the Endangered Species



In K-9 "Hanna's" first four months on duty, she sniffed out 35 pounds of giant clam meat and three pounds of stony coral, which resulted in enforcement actions. Through the K-9 program, wildlife inspectors are able to inspect greater numbers of imports and exports. For example, over a two day reporting period, Hanna inspected approximately 3,050 parcels. Photo: USFWS

Act (ESA) and failure to have a wildlife import/export license. The live reptile and invertebrate shipment highlights that wildlife inspectors must be ready for the unusual and are often in life threatening situations. During transport, two venomous scorpions escaped the container because they were not shipped correctly. The wildlife inspectors acted quickly and caught the escaped scorpions before they injured anyone.

Inspection Accomplishments

Wildlife inspectors continue to monitor the legal import/export wildlife trade, and interdict and seize illegal wildlife and wildlife products entering and leaving the U.S. In 2016, totals from the Southeast Region illustrate the necessity and activity of the wildlife inspection program. In the Southeast Region, the total number of inspected shipments was 40,677; the total number of physical inspections was 6,609; and the declared value of wildlife products was \$831,601,327.

Wildlife products enter and exit the U.S. at every port of entry. The following highlights a fraction of wildlife products that were seized for being shipped illegally or incorrectly.

In Seattle, Washington, wildlife inspectors discovered and seized 1,013 kilograms of illegal dried shark fins that were in transit to Hong Kong. The illegal wildlife product was valued at \$37,644.

A wildlife inspector in Laredo, Texas seized 32 dead iguanas to be sold as meat. The meat was hidden in a compartment of the subject's vehicle and was discovered by x-ray detection. The subject admitted to importing iguana meat and selling it to restaurants in either Dallas or Houston.



Thirty-two dead iguanas were discovered via x-ray technology. Photo: USFWS

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

A Service wildlife inspector shows a piece of seized elephant ivory to the attendees at the Service's and WildAid's demand reduction press conference at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Photo: WildAid

2016 Wildlife Inspection Activity

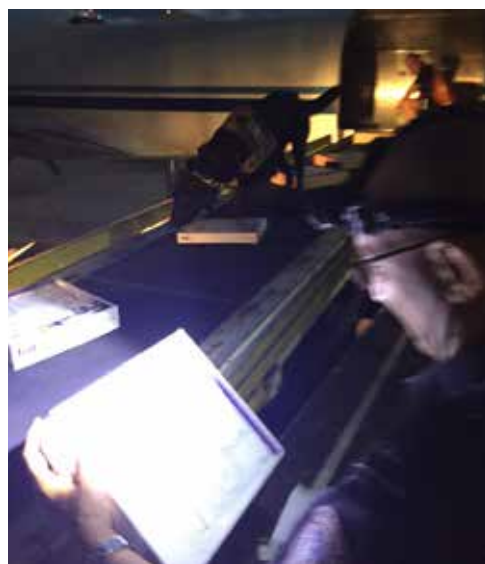
Port of Entry Shipments

Designated Ports

Anchorage, AK	3,573
Atlanta, GA	4,364
Baltimore, MD	3,125
Boston, MA	2,953
Chicago, IL	7,982
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX	8,446
Honolulu, HI	4,723
Houston, TX	2,959
Los Angeles, CA	27,513
Louisville, KY	9,597
Memphis, TN	13,042
Miami, FL	11,657
New Orleans, LA	679
Newark, NJ	18,563
New York, NY	29,433
Portland, OR	679
San Francisco, CA	5,873
Seattle, WA	3,228
Designated Ports	158,389
Non-designated Ports	18,776
Non-staffed Ports	5,915
TOTAL	183,080

In Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) alerted a wildlife inspector that a passenger from Cameroon had bush meat hidden in their baggage. It was determined that the one kilogram of bush meat was pangolin and originated from the historic range of the endangered Temnick's ground pangolin.

In addition to working with federal partners, wildlife inspectors also work with state agencies primarily when the export of wildlife is involved. For example, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry suspended the certification authority from a



K-9 "Smokey" inspects packages in Puerto Rico. Photo: USFWS

laboratory that had routinely provided turtle farmers with a state required Certificate of Inspection certifying that turtles were free from salmonella when often the turtles were infected. Service wildlife inspectors, at the Port of New Orleans, seized a shipment of red-eared slider turtles when they noticed the



A micro-raptor fossil of a prehistoric bird from China was discovered by a Service wildlife inspector during a routine inspection in Louisville, Kentucky. The seizure led to an arrest and prosecution by CBP for illegally importing dinosaur fossils. In addition, after CBP returned the fossil to China, they presented the wildlife inspector with an award citing "the excellent example of inter-agency cooperation." Photo: USCBP



A Service K-9 "Lockett" in Los Angeles intercepted a smuggled shipment of taxidermied sharks. Thirteen sharks, comprised of at least four species, were discovered while searching an ocean cargo shipment of shells that had been selected for inspection by the National Targeting Initiative. Photo: USFWS

accompanying Certificate of Inspection was invalid because it had been issued from that suspended laboratory. They also alerted other Service wildlife inspectors about a specific strain of salmonella that had been linked to turtle farms in Louisiana. This seizure, and their quick action to alert the field, prevented the possible spread of salmonella from these infected turtles.

Wildlife inspectors and special agents in Alaska participated in two joint inspection details with the state of Alaska, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Marine Fisheries Service at the Alcan border port this year. The details focused on wildlife traffickers, hunters, and boats infested with the injurious zebra mussel. The details resulted in numerous seizures of whale baleen and bone, bird parts, and hunted wildlife. Several of the seizures resulted in continuing investigations. Wildlife inspectors also participated in a joint intelligence gathering and public awareness operation with the USDA in Anchorage, Alaska where they visited 24 businesses that deal in Traditional Asian Medicinals or other products that incorporate animal products.

Wildlife inspectors in Burlingame, California responded to a call from CBP at the San Francisco Air Mail Facility regarding two separate parcels destined for Hong Kong from a false address in San Francisco. The parcels contained 28 live adult wood turtles



At the Port of Newark, Service wildlife inspectors along with CBP and a Wildlife Conservation Society herpetologist, coordinated the capture of a loose Binocellate cobra aboard an ocean vessel. The cobra was found during a sweep for drugs in the cargo hold area located in the lower deck and had "hitchhiked" aboard the vessel.

Photo: USFWS

and four live juvenile wood turtles that were bound in tightly tied socks and hidden inside of cloth snake bags. The smuggled turtles were marked as "ceramic figurines" on the declaration paperwork.

The role of a wildlife inspector is vast. By stopping illegal shipments and intercepting smuggled wildlife, they keep the country safe from invasive species and possible diseases.

Partnerships and Compliance Outreach

Wildlife inspectors also work closely with CBP and other federal inspection agencies. At many ports, they provide cross training to these officers as well as international counterparts. One such training took place in American Samoa. Hawaii-based wildlife inspectors, along with law enforcement officers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), trained American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife resources officers on the boarding and inspection of ferries and various fishing vessels as well as passenger and cargo screening at Pago Pago International Airport.



An elephant ivory carving that was illegally imported from China was seized by a Detroit wildlife inspector.

Photo: USFWS



Ninety endangered giant pangasius were imported into the Port of Chicago from Thailand as part of a commercial shipment of live tropical fish.

Photo: USFWS

At the Santa Teresa Port of Entry in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, wildlife inspectors participated in a USDA operation where they interdicted and seized illegal elephant products.



A wildlife inspector in Memphis, Tennessee inspecting packages from Mexico and Italy during Operation Daybreak. The operation was a joint Service, CBP, and USDA operation.

Photo: USFWS

In Detroit, Michigan, a wildlife inspector participated in the annual CBP Detroit Field Office Trade Day, which allowed government agencies to present material and answer questions from the trade community. Over 300 attendees comprised the diverse group of U.S. and Canadian customhouse brokers, carriers, importers, and other trade groups who networked with commodity teams, specialists from the Centers for Excellence and Expertise, and frontline officers from CBP, and other partner agencies. In addition to the Service, other participating government agencies included Homeland Security Investigations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; USDA; U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Canadian Border Services Agency; and the Canadian Food Inspection Service.

In Atlanta, Georgia, wildlife inspectors participated in a joint training and presented the "ABCs of Customs" along with the USDA, CBP, and the FDA to 20 customs brokers where they explained the different types of illegally imported wildlife and the proper import procedures for entry into the U.S.

In Tampa, Florida, a wildlife inspector represented the Service at the North Florida Situation Manual Table Top Exercise, related to Avian Influenza. The goal of the discussions was to demonstrate the effectiveness of

the operational plans, policies, and procedures currently in place to target, recognize, safely interdict, and safeguard birds in the passenger environment at the port of entry; and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved.

The work of the wildlife inspectors in the Northeast Region resulted in a U.S. company and its freight forwarder paying almost a \$23,000 in combined collateral forfeiture for their roles in knowingly failing to declare the export of more than 27 shipments of sea urchins that were illegally exported over a one-year period. In a separate case, a subject who imported violin bows that contained ESA and CITES species, such as ivory and tortoise shell, paid a \$25,000 civil penalty for the unlawful importation. Both of these cases were the result of wildlife inspectors being vigilant and highlight the breadth of knowledge these professionals possess.

A wildlife inspector in North Dakota presented to more than 150 elementary school students during the Rolette County North Dakota Soil Conservation Service Conservation camp and to over 300 7th grade students and faculty from six schools in the Rolette County area. The wildlife inspector highlighted the ESA, worldwide wildlife trafficking, species identification, and wildlife smuggling interception techniques. Other trainings included: one to U.S. military customs inspectors on regulations that interplay with international trafficking of wildlife species, and another to natural resource law enforcement college students about possible career opportunities with the Service and OLE.

At the Port of Sweetgrass, Montana, a wildlife inspector worked with Canadian officials as part of an international rescue effort to clear 25 species of live CITES Appendix II (and some ESA threatened) common caimans. Initially, the caimans were seized by Canadian authorities, who placed them with a Canadian non-governmental organization (NGO). The Canadian NGO partnered with an NGO in the U.S. who imported the caimans. After the caimans were legally and safely in the U.S., they were placed at wildlife facilities throughout the U.S. OLE officers in Alaska provided training on federal wildlife laws to 25 military conservation officers who work on Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska. They also

staffed a booth at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, Women in Law Enforcement Fair.

Wildlife inspectors in California participated in an import/export forum to educate National Association of Music Merchants members who are affected by recent changes in import/export regulations. The presentation focused on wood import/export regulations, electronic documentation requirements, the Lacey Act and ivory and CITES regulations. Following the forum, the wildlife inspectors scheduled one-on-one meetings with distributors and suppliers to discuss Service regulations. They also presented on Service law enforcement careers and the international wildlife trade at Wildlife Ecology Course at California Polytechnic State University.



A two-week-old, live Amazon parrot was seized by a wildlife inspector in Laredo, Texas from a vehicle travelling from Mexico to Alabama. The undeclared bird was hidden under the passenger seat because the driver was afraid that it would be confiscated and he would be fined. Photo: USFWS



Pangolin meat was discovered and seized by CBP and Service wildlife inspectors. Global law enforcement is working together to save this species. Photo: USFWS



Wildlife inspectors from the Port of Los Angeles participated at the World Elephant Day at the Los Angeles Zoo. Photo: USFWS



A Service wildlife inspector from Calais, Maine participated in a black bear border operation with Environment and Climate Change Canada. The operation took place at the border port of Vanceboro, Maine where over 150 vehicles were inspected and several seizures for unlawful export of bear parts were made by both the Canadians and the Service. The wildlife inspector is shown using x-ray technology to examine frozen wildlife products. Photo: USFWS

Service wildlife inspectors also work closely with zoos and aquariums across the country. Wildlife inspectors find the appropriate zoo or aquarium to care for the seized live animals and also assist with a variety of public outreach events. A few examples of this outreach were wildlife inspectors from Baltimore, Maryland who participated at the Smithsonian National Zoo's "Stamping out Extinction" event and Chicago wildlife inspectors who participated in the Chicago Zoological

Society's Conservation Expo held at the Brookfield Zoo.

At the National Zoo in Washington D.C., wildlife inspectors hosted a display table of confiscated wildlife and explained to visitors the Service's role in fighting wildlife trafficking. The focus of the event was to educate zoo visitors about how a sales percentage of the "Save Vanishing Species" postal stamp funds conservation efforts of endangered animals. In both events,

wildlife inspectors greeted hundreds of zoo visitors and explained the important role they play in global wildlife conservation.



Red-eared slider turtles were seized by wildlife inspectors to keep salmonella from spreading. Photo: USFWS

Wood turtles were seized by wildlife inspectors in San Francisco before being smuggled to Hong Kong. Photo: USFWS



1.12 tons of illegal shark fins were seized by Service wildlife inspectors before being smuggled to Hong Kong. Photos: USFWS



A wildlife inspector and a wildlife inspector assistant from Baltimore, Maryland participated in the "Stamping Out Extinction" event at the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Photo: USFWS



Support for Officers in the Field

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) supports the work of its special agents and wildlife inspectors in the field by providing national policy guidance, professional training, and administrative and technical support. The program's state-of-the-art infrastructure also includes three special units that provide forensic analyses, high-tech investigative assistance, and intelligence gathering and analysis in support of Service wildlife crime investigations and wildlife inspection and smuggling interdiction operations.

Forensics Laboratory

The National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (Lab), located in Ashland, Oregon, is the world's only full-service crime laboratory devoted exclusively to supporting wildlife law enforcement. Scientists at the Lab identify the species of wildlife parts and products seized as evidence. They link suspect, "victim," and crime scene through the examination and comparison of physical evidence, determine the cause of death of wildlife crime victims, and help analyze crime scenes.

In 2016, Lab scientists supported 732 wildlife crime investigation requests. In support of these requests, forensic experts examined 2,605 individual items of evidence; conducted over 1,525 photo identifications for probable cause seizures or for facilitating commerce; and conducted on-site examination and analysis of evidence in OLE cases. Lab personnel conducted 20 scientific presentations or trainings centered on the improved methods to analyze wildlife forensic evidence. These presentations were delivered to not only U.S. law enforcement, but also internationally to audiences in Austria,



A forensic scientist prepares CITES protected wood samples for anatomical analysis.
Photo: USFWS

Chile, France, Indonesia, Nepal, and Tanzania. Additionally, Lab personnel testified at six trials including two in Canada; provided expert guidance while serving on wildlife crime committees; and published five peer reviewed articles in scientific journals.

The Genetics Unit processed 131 case assignments analyzing over 600 individual items. The Freezer Reference Materials Collection added 726 new samples for 206 species including nine new species. The collection now contains 57,109 individual samples of 24,866 total individual species. The Critical Reagent and the Primer Databases are now fully digitized for traceability and the Primer Database is also being integrated with the Reference Collection Database for traceability. Also in 2016, the Genetics Unit executed multiple photo ID requests of possible totoaba swim bladders and continues to work with potential manufacturers of biosynthetic rhinoceros horn to obtain product samples for validation testing.

In addition to their regular duties, staff of the Morphology Unit also served as scientific committee members, leaders on scientific panels, and as expert forensic instructors to international conservation law enforcement officers. One specialist served as a committee member for the Wildlife Forensics Subcommittee of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science (OSAC) and also as a team leader for the development of both the report writing and the morphology standards documents for the Wildlife Forensics Subcommittee. After two years of work, these documents have been approved by the full Biology Scientific Area Committee and will be forwarded for full OSAC approval. In addition, this same forensic expert traveled to the Philippines as a member of an international team whose mission was to enhance wildlife law enforcement capacity in the Philippines. Another morphology staff member also served on a committee for a student's Master's thesis at the University of California, Los Angeles.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

A Senior special agent performs maintenance on the DERTSU video server. Photo: USFWS



A Senior special agent preps a mobile phone forensics-training-platform to be shipped for an international training exercise. Photo: USFWS

The Lab's Web site continues to be a popular and effective outreach tool. In 2016, the site had 97,788 page views and the Lab's Feather Atlas site had 1,443,812 page views. The average views per day were an impressive 4,223.

Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit

In the current fight against global wildlife trafficking, organized crime syndicates regularly use digital technology to carry out their criminal enterprise. For a law enforcement agency to be successful, a high level of proficiency in the field of digital technology is required. In 2009, OLE initiated the Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit (DERTSU) to specialize in this complex field and to give special agents support in such increasingly critical areas as retrieval and analysis of computer-based records and utilization of advanced surveillance techniques. In fact, most every large-scale wildlife trafficking case investigated by the OLE has at least one or more different types of digital evidence involved in the case (smart phone, computer, GPS, etc.), which requires special techniques provided by DERTSU for proper handling and examination.

Based in Jacksonville, Florida, DERTSU consists of two programs, a digital forensic laboratory and a covert electronic surveillance equipment unit.

It is a worldwide leader in providing highly technical digital forensic and covert electronic surveillance equipment program support solely for the purpose of combating wildlife crime both domestically and internationally. DERTSU is staffed by Service special agents and technical experts with skills in digital forensics and technology-based surveillance techniques who provide expertise to assist field special agents with complex investigations.

Intelligence Unit

OLE's Intelligence Unit is responsible for the collection and analysis of information on all aspects of wildlife trafficking to support Service investigations, inspections, and smuggling interdiction efforts. Through this unit, Service investigators have access to a multitude of law enforcement tools and resources, which assist them to identify and disrupt wildlife trafficking networks. The unit also coordinates information sharing with other law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and other countries. In addition, it has established and maintains a broad network of domestic and international contacts with conservation groups, trade associations, and other entities involved in, or concerned with, wildlife trade.

The Intelligence Unit will expand in 2017 in order to meet the needs of the Service's domestic and international law enforcement activities.



A forensic scientist is preparing libraries for NextGen sequencing. Photo: USFWS



A geneticist is accessioning new primers into the primer database. Photo: USFWS

Appendix: Laws Enforced

The Office of Law Enforcement upholds the Nation's wildlife and plant protection laws. Brief summaries of these statutes appear below.

Lacey Act (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378). This Act prohibits the importation, exportation, transportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken or possessed in violation of federal, state, tribal, and foreign laws. It also authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to designate injurious wildlife and ensure the humane treatment of wildlife shipped to the United States. Originally enacted in 1900, the Lacey Act is the Nation's oldest federal wildlife protection law.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712). Except as allowed by implementing regulations, this Act makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, including feathers or other parts, nests, eggs, or migratory bird products.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668C). This Act makes it illegal to import, export, or take bald or golden eagles, or to sell, purchase, or barter their parts or products made from them, including nests or eggs.

Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543). This Act prohibits the importation, exportation, taking, and commercialization in interstate or foreign commerce of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species. The Act also implements the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (16 U.S.C. 718). Commonly referred to as the "Duck Stamp Act," this law requires waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older to purchase and possess a valid federal waterfowl hunting stamp before they take migratory waterfowl.

Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407). This Act establishes a moratorium on the take and importation



Service wildlife inspectors inspected a juvenile Harris hawk that was being exported for the falconry trade. Harris hawks are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Photo: USFWS

of marine mammals, including parts and products, and defines federal responsibilities for the conservation of marine mammals. It assigns management authority for the sea otter, walrus, polar bear, dugong, and manatee to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Airborne Hunting Act (16 U.S.C. 742j-1). Section 13 of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 is commonly referred to as the Airborne Hunting Act. It prohibits taking or harassing wildlife from aircraft, except when protecting wildlife, livestock, and human health or safety as authorized by a federal or state license or permit.

National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). This 1966 Act constitutes an "Organic Act" for the National Wildlife Refuge System. It provides guidelines for administration and management of all areas in the system including "wildlife refuges, areas for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife that are threatened with extinction, wildlife ranges, game ranges, wildlife management areas, or waterfowl production areas."

African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4201-4245). This Act provides additional protection for the African elephant. It establishes an assistance program for elephant-producing countries



This cabinet with inlaid tortoiseshell was discovered by K-9 Dutton at the Seaport of Houston. Most sea turtles are protected by the Endangered Species Act; however, all are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Photo: USFWS

of Africa and provides for the creation of an African Elephant Conservation Fund. In addition, the Act places a moratorium on the importation of raw or worked ivory from African elephant-producing countries that do not meet certain criteria.

Wild Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4901). This 1992 Act promotes the conservation of exotic birds by encouraging wild bird conservation and management programs in countries of origin; by ensuring that all U.S. trade in such species is biologically sustainable and of benefit to the species; and by limiting or prohibiting imports of exotic birds when necessary.

Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306). The 1998 reauthorization of this Act prohibits the import, export, or sale of any product,

item, or substance containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, any substance derived from tiger or rhinoceros.

Antarctic Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 2401). This Act provides for the conservation and protection of the fauna and flora of Antarctica. The Act makes it unlawful for any U.S. citizen to take any native bird or mammal in Antarctica or to collect any native plant from any specially protected area on that continent. In addition, the Act makes it unlawful for anyone in the United States to possess, sell, offer for sale, deliver, receive, carry, transport, import, export, or attempt to import or export from the United States any native mammal or bird taken in Antarctica or any plant collected in any specially protected area.

Archeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470aa). This Act protects archeological resources and sites on public and Indian lands and fosters increased cooperation among governmental authorities, the professional archeological community, and individuals who own collections of archeological resources obtained before October 31, 1979. The Act makes it illegal for any person to excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any archeological resource located on public or Indian lands without a permit. In addition, the Act makes it illegal for any person to sell, purchase, exchange, transport, receive, or offer to sell, purchase, or exchange any archeological resource taken from public or Indian lands in violation of federal, state, or local law.

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