

Commercially Importing and Exporting Jewelry Made with Wildlife

What jewelry does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulate upon import or export?

We regulate most jewelry products made from wildlife. Examples of regulated products include:

- Mother of Pearl
- Puka shells
- Conch pearls
- Black coral
- Red coral
- Feathers of some birds
- Sea Turtle
- Walrus Ivory
- Elephant Ivory
- Wildlife teeth or claws (i.e. shark, big cat, bear)
- Reptilian leathers

When is jewelry considered wildlife?

Jewelry is considered wildlife if it consists of, or is made from any wild animal or its parts or eggs. Wildlife not only includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish, but also invertebrates such as mollusks.

What about jewelry from animals that are captive-born or bred, ranch-raised, or hatched in captivity?

Such items are also wildlife.

What type of requirements govern the import or export of wildlife jewelry?

That depends on the species. You

may legally import or export many wildlife items, such as mother of pearl and water buffalo horn provided you obey applicable State and foreign laws and comply with the basic Service import/export regulations explained in this fact sheet.

Some wildlife jewelry imports and exports require permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Examples include black coral, some species of red coral, queen conch, alligator skin watchstraps.

Does the U.S. prohibit trade in any wildlife jewelry?

Yes. You cannot import or export jewelry made from animals protected under the Endangered Species Act. Examples include sea turtle and elephant ivory.

The U.S. also bans commercial trade of migratory birds, including wild ducks, geese, and other species, and marine mammals. Walrus ivory and whale items, for example, cannot be imported into the U.S.

How do I import or export wildlife jewelry?

Generally, you must import or

export your shipment through one of our designated ports, declare your shipment to us, and receive clearance from us for your shipment.

You must be licensed with us and pay user fees for each shipment if you commercially import or export.

How do you define import?

Any wildlife introduced or brought into, or landed on, any place under U.S. jurisdiction is an import.

How do you define export?

Any wildlife that departs, is sent, or shipped from, is carried out of, or is consigned to a carrier from a place under U.S. jurisdiction with a destination outside of the United States is an export.

Do U.S. customs officials use the same definitions?

No. Our rules apply to some shipments not considered imports or exports for customs purposes.

Is a shipment an import or export if it is placed in a customs bonded warehouse or free trade zone?

Yes. Such shipments would be imports or exports under Service regulations. You and your shipment must meet wildlife requirements.

Is any wildlife jewelry exempt from Service import/export requirements?

Pearls are exempt unless they are

made from animals protected under the CITES treaty or from an endangered species.

Check with us if you think your wildlife jewelry may be exempt.

Where may I import or export my shipment?

We have designated certain ports for importing and exporting wildlife to consolidate shipments at specific locations and provide more efficient service.

You may import or export your wildlife jewelry shipment through any of the following designated ports: Anchorage, Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Honolulu, Houston (TX), Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami, New Orleans, New York/Newark, Portland (OR), San Francisco, and Seattle.

May I use a different port?

We allow shipments of certain species going from or to specific places to use certain other ports (check our website for information on border ports and special ports).

Also, under limited circumstances, you may be authorized under permit to use a port that does not normally handle wildlife trade. When you apply for this permit, you must show that using one of our authorized ports would cause an undue economic hardship.

How do I declare a shipment?

You may declare your shipment electronically using our “eDecs” system (<https://edecs.fws.gov/>) or you may file a paper Form 3-177 at the port.

When do I declare my shipment for import?

You must declare your shipment to us at an authorized port of entry and receive clearance from us before U.S. Customs releases your shipment.

When do I declare my shipment for export?

You must declare your shipment to us at an authorized port and receive clearance from us before your shipment is containerized or physically loaded on a vehicle, aircraft, or vessel, unless authorized otherwise by us.

Do I need a license to import or export wildlife jewelry?

Yes. Anyone engaging in business as an importer or exporter of wildlife must obtain a license from us.

Do I have to pay fees?

Yes. You must pay base inspection fees for each shipment you import or export once you are licensed by us. These fees differ based on the type of port you use. In addition, premium inspection fees will be added for shipments that contain species requiring a permit under 50 CFR 15, 17, 18, 21, 22 or 23. Check with one of our inspection offices to see what fees apply to your shipment.

What wildlife laws do I need to know about?

U.S. wildlife laws that contain import/export restrictions related to wildlife jewelry include the Lacey Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act. You must also ensure that

your wildlife shipment complies with State and foreign wildlife laws.

Are there any other agencies I need to contact?

Yes. Other Federal agencies involved with the import and export of wildlife or jewelry may have additional requirements.

These agencies include the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Agriculture and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

You should also contact your State fish and wildlife agency about any State requirements.

For more information, contact:

Office of Law Enforcement
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