



U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
OPERATION SILENT WILDERNESS
EVIDENCE PHOTOS OF WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING
VIOLATIONS OF THE MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT,
BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT AND LACEY ACT



FWS officers serving a federal search warrant at the residence of a suspected feather trafficker.



Golden eagle feathers packaged for sale on the black market by feather traffickers were discovered during the investigation by FWS LE agents.



The Operation Silent Wilderness investigation led to discovery of crested caracara tail feathers and other feathers from species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. These feathers were packaged in preparation for sale on the black market.



Law enforcement officers found anhinga and other migratory bird feathers soaking in a bin drawer.

These feathers were being cleaned for the black market feather trade.

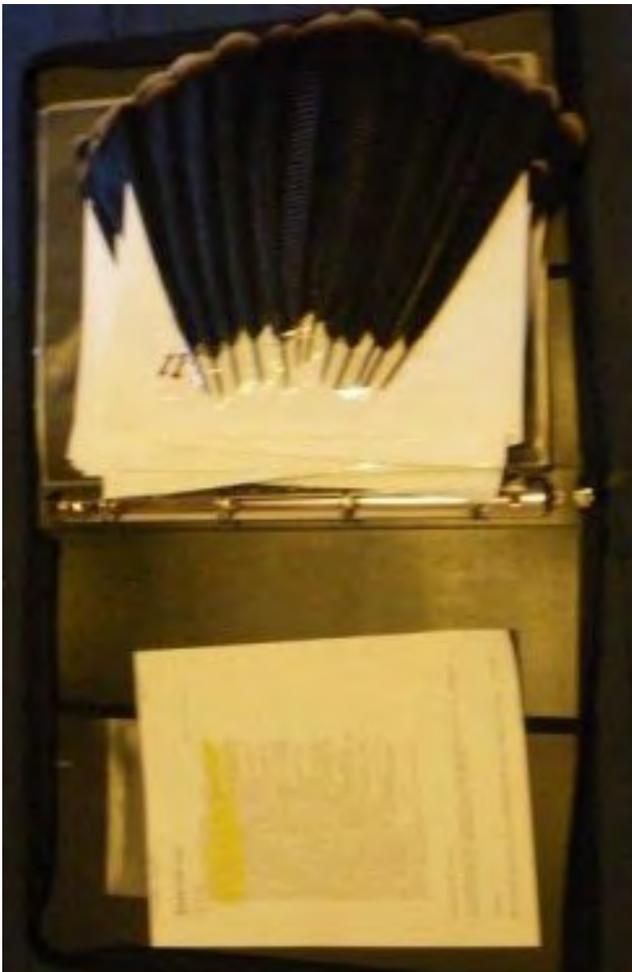
Photo top left—The length of an adult golden eagle's tail was provided to potential buyers.



Photo right—The hackles (neck feathers) and other feathers from Anhingas.



Bottom left—Anhinga tail feathers. Each anhinga tail represents one anhinga that was shot in the Everglades for its twelve tail feathers.



Bottom right—Anhinga tail feathers numbered for sale on the black market. Hawk tail feathers were found in protective sleeves in preparation for illegal trade.



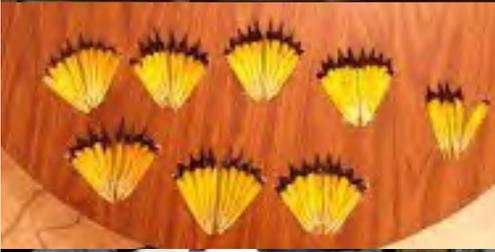
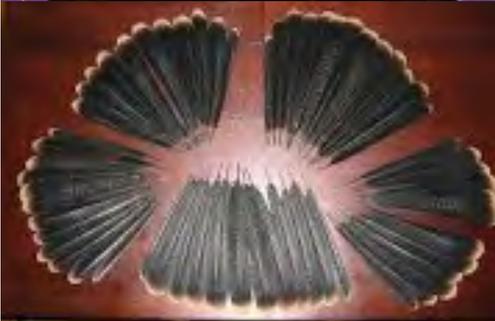
During the Operation Silent Wilderness investigation, law enforcement agents uncovered anhinga hackles from birds shot south of Lake Okeechobee and trafficked through Alabama. Protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the anhinga is known by a number of names including “devil bird,” “water turkey,” “snake bird” and “bird of dark water.” The association to the turkey is due to its broad tail and neck. Other name associations are likely linked to the species’ habit of swimming with just its head and long neck sticking out of the water and the way the anhinga hunts its prey.





Seized images of various feathers and feather fans uncovered during the Operation Silent Wilderness investigation.

Shown to the left are feathers from the following protected species: anHINGA, Northern flicker, Harris' hawk, red-tailed hawk, rough-legged hawk, and the scissor-tailed flycatcher (bottom left corner). Also shown are bald and golden eagle feathers and fans.



Images seized from feather traffickers during Operation Silent Wilderness include: scissor-tailed flycatcher (left), an-hinga, Northern flicker yellow shafted (right, center) and golden eagle feathers. These feathers from protected species were being prepared for sale on the black market.



These seized images are of golden eagle feathers that were measured and photographed by feather traffickers for sale on the black market. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act originally passed in 1940, provides for the protection of the bald eagle and the golden eagle (as amended in 1962) by prohibiting the take, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, unless allowed by permit (16 U.S.C. 668(a); 50 CFR 22).



For a list of avian species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as of 2013, visit: www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/

Shown below are seized images depicting sets of anhinga tail feathers. Typically females have brown feathers and males have dark brown to black feathers. Learn more about these feathers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's forensic laboratory: www.fws.gov/lab/featheratlas/

Protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the anhinga is known by a number of names including "devil bird," "water turkey," "snake bird" and "bird of dark water." They have long necks, strong beaks and great swimming abilities.



During Operation Silent Wilderness a number of seized images showcased anhinga tail feathers that were being prepared for sale on the black market.

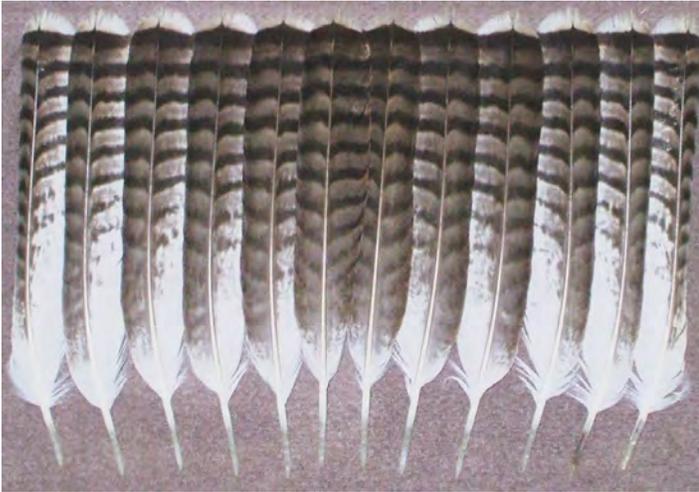


Below are seized images of Hawk and golden eagle feathers prepared for sale by feather traffickers. The Operation Silent Wilderness investigation led to the successful sentencing of several individuals for wildlife trafficking and violations of the Migratory Bird Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Lacey Act.

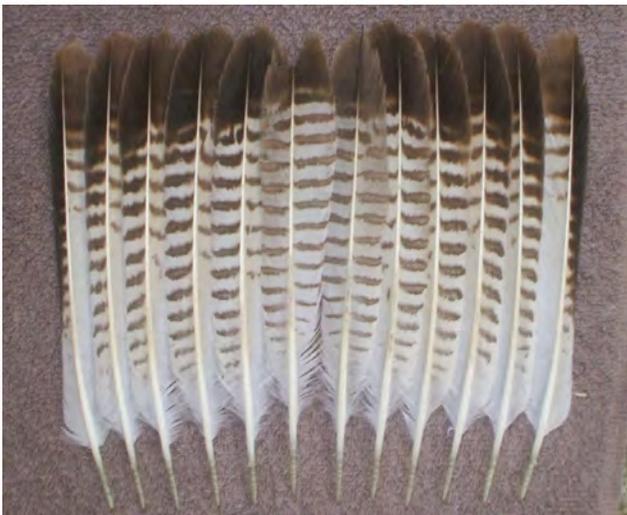


Shown below are seized images of immature red-tailed hawk tail and immature bald eagle and anhinga tail feathers (images on right side). These illegally obtained feathers were being prepared for sale by feather traffickers. The Operation Silent Wilderness investigation led to the successful sentencing of several feather traffickers for violations against the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Lacey Act.

Learn more about these feathers and more from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's forensic laboratory: www.fws.gov/lab/



Below are seized images depicting several sets of crested caracara tail feathers and a set of immature red-tailed hawk tail feathers being prepared for sale on the black market. This evidence was seized during Operation Silent Wilderness.



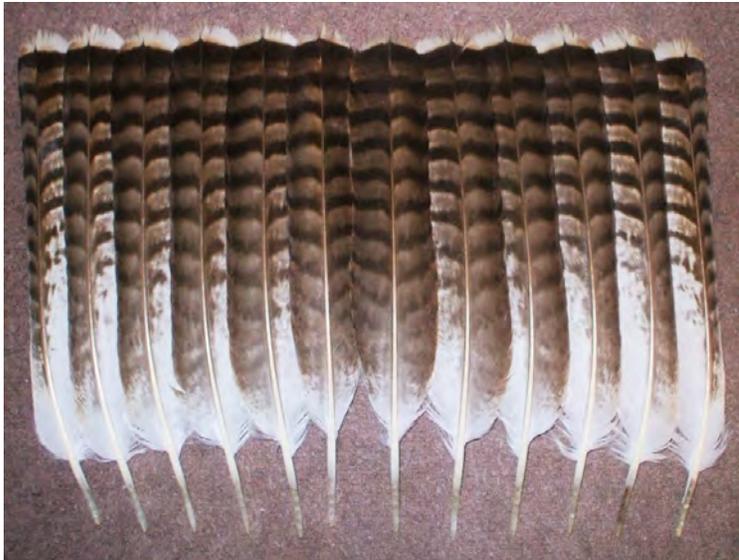
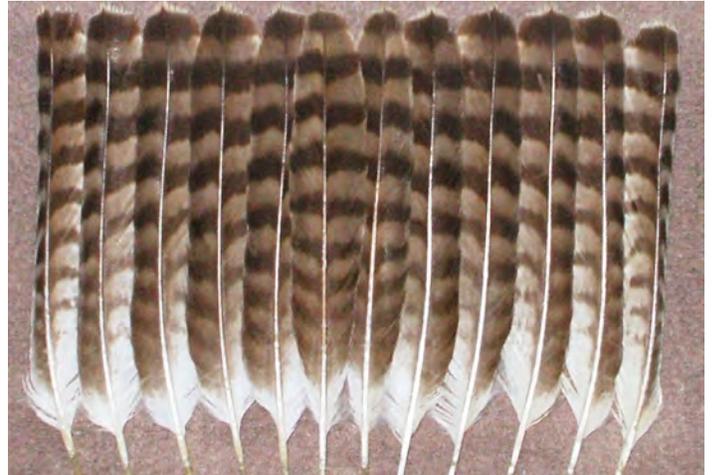
Below are images showing sets of red-shouldered hawk, immature red-tailed hawk, crested caracara, and Harris' hawk tail feathers.

The red-shouldered hawk is a crow-sized buteo (bird of prey), or soaring hawk, while the red-tailed hawk is larger and stocky. Typical light-phase birds have whitish breast and rust-colored tail. A tropical falcon version of a vulture, the crested caracara reaches the United States only in Arizona, Texas, and Florida. The Harris is a medium-sized to large hawk. It is dark overall, with a white rump and undertail. It has chestnut-red thighs and shoulders.



Below are images of crested caracara and other hawk tail feathers placed for sale on the black market by feather traffickers.

Learn more about these feathers and others from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's forensic laboratory: www.fws.gov/lab/



Below are images seized depicting sets of aninga tail feathers and a set of immature red-tailed hawk tail feathers being prepared for sale on the black market. This evidence was seized during Operation Silent Wilderness.



Below are a number of feather fans made from illegally obtained tail feathers of red-shouldered hawk, immature golden eagle, mature red-tailed hawk, immature bald eagle, and anhinga.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act makes it illegal for anyone to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird except under the terms of a valid permit issued pursuant to Federal regulations. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act originally passed in 1940, provides for the protection of the bald eagle and the golden eagle (as amended in 1962) by prohibiting the take, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, unless allowed by permit (16 U.S.C. 668 (a); 50 CFR 22).





The Operation Silent Wilderness investigation seized a number of images depicting illegally obtained hawk and aninga feathers, that were made into fans and prepared for sale on the black market.

The Operation Silent Wilderness investigation seized a number of images depicting illegally obtained hawk, eagle and aninga feathers, that were made into fans and prepared for sale on the black market.

Pictured below:

Top left—Harris' hawk feather fan. Top right—Red-tailed hawk feather fan.

Bottom left—Feather fan containing one immature bald eagle feather in the center.

Bottom right—Red-tailed hawk feather fan.





Following the Operation Silent Wilderness investigation several feather traffickers were found in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Lacey Act.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act makes it illegal for anyone to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird except under the terms of a valid permit issued pursuant to Federal regulations. The migratory bird species protected by the Act are listed in 50 CFR 10.13.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act originally passed in 1940, provides for the protection of the bald eagle and the golden eagle (as amended in 1962) by prohibiting the take, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, unless allowed by permit (16 U.S.C. 668(a); 50 CFR 22).

Under the Lacey Act, it is unlawful to import, export, sell, acquire, or purchase fish, wildlife or plants that are taken, possessed, transported, or sold: 1) in violation of U.S. or Indian law, or 2) in interstate or foreign commerce involving any fish, wildlife, or plants taken possessed or sold in violation of State or foreign law.

To the left is a anhinga fan. Two eagle fans are shown below.



Following the Operation Silent Wilderness investigation several feather traffickers were found in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Lacey Act. Below are several seized images of feather fans. Top left is a golden eagle feather fan. Top right and bottom left are anhinga feather fans. Bottom right is a hawk feather fan.



Operation Silent Wilderness uncovered several illegal wildlife trafficking activities. Feather traffickers attempted to sell these illegally obtained hawk feather fans on the black market.



Below are seized images of fans comprised of illegally obtained magpie (top images) and hawk feathers. A relative of crows and jays, the magpie is one of only four North American birds that have tails making up half of their body length, the others being the yellow-billed magpie, scissor-tailed flycatcher and fork-tailed flycatcher.

For a list of avian species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act visit: www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/regulationspolicies/mbta/MBTANDX.HTML



Below are seized images of four feather fans made of immature red-tailed hawk feathers. The red-tailed hawk is protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



