

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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ORNITHOLOGICAL DETENTE--
U.S. AND U.S.S.R. SIGN MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY

A United States-Soviet Union treaty on the conservation of migratory birds and their environment, signed last month in Moscow, is the newest in a series of international agreements designed to protect wildlife, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

"This probably is one of the most significant steps we have yet taken toward the conservation of both migratory birds and their habitats," Greenwalt said. "This treaty, as well as earlier ones between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, and Japan, provides the basis for Federal conservation efforts toward birds which are an international resource."

The treaty, signed in Moscow by E. U. Curtis Bohlen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and Russell E. Train, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, on November 19, 1976, extends the protection provided many species of birds and provides a means for U.S. and Soviet scientists and wildlife managers to cooperate in the conservation of these birds and the habitats upon which they depend.

The treaty applies to all areas under the jurisdiction of both countries and covers more than 200 species representing 36 families of birds of mutual interest to the United States and the Soviet Union.

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The new treaty:

--provides that both nations will protect and enhance the habitat of these birds;

--recognizes that special concern must be paid to species of birds that are threatened with extinction and provides for cooperation in protecting them;

--provides authority for the U.S. Government to conserve some species of migratory birds not covered by existing authorities;

--recognizes that indigenous inhabitants of Alaska and parts of the U.S.S.R., such as Eskimos, may take certain birds for their own nutritional and other essential needs under regulated circumstances;

--provides for each nation to notify the other in the event of calamities which may pose a threat to significant numbers of migratory birds or their environment, and provides for cooperation in eliminating such hazards;

--provides authority to control the introduction of wild exotic plants or animals which may be harmful to migratory birds or their environment;

--provides for the identification of areas of particular importance to migratory birds and requires that they be given special protection;

--calls for cooperative research into methods of conserving migratory birds and their environment; and

--encourages both nations to establish refuges and other protected areas for the conservation of migratory birds and their environment and to manage such areas so as to preserve and restore the natural ecosystems.

Although the new treaty is between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., both nations recognize that the birds in question visit or are of interest to many other countries and have agreed to explore the possibility of expanding the treaty to allow other nations to sign.

The treaty will enter into effect after ratification by the Senate and signature of the President and will remain in effect for 15 years. After that time it will be renewed automatically unless one of the nations wishes it terminated.

"We have found the Soviets to be very knowledgeable concerning migratory birds and quite concerned over their conservation," Bohlen said. "They have been most cooperative and have pushed hard for a strong, workable agreement. The treaty, which has been under negotiation for 2 years, is one of the tangible results of the spirit of cooperation developed between conservation officials in the United States and the Soviet Union under the 1972 U.S./U.S.S.R. Agreement on Cooperation in the Protection of the Environment." This agreement, which is administered by a committee co-chaired by Mr. Train, was renewed for an additional 5 years at the same time in Moscow.

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