

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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## ENDANGERED STATUS PROPOSED FOR TWO FOREIGN CROCODILE SPECIES

Endangered status has been proposed for two foreign crocodile species whose numbers have declined dramatically in recent years because of loss of suitable habitat and hunting for their hides, which are extremely valuable for fashioning into luxury leather items.

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the American crocodile (Crocodylus acutus) and the estuarine or saltwater crocodile (Crocodylus porosus) in the July 24, 1979, Federal Register. Public comment is invited through October 26, 1979. The proposal stemmed from petitions submitted by Professor Federico Medem of the National University of Colombia and Dr. F. Wayne King of the New York Zoological Society and is also based in part on information received in response to a February 5, 1979, "Notice of Status Review."

The American crocodile is found primarily in coastal waters in Florida, Mexico, throughout the Caribbean, and along the Pacific Coast of Central and South America. The Florida crocodile population was listed as endangered in 1975.

The saltwater crocodile is one of the largest reptiles, growing as long as 20 feet. It occurs in Australia, India, and throughout Southeast Asia and many Pacific islands. The proposed listing excludes the Papua New Guinea crocodile population, which is being considered for listing as "threatened (similarity of appearance)" because of the controls and protection afforded it by that country. This classification means that the species is not endangered biologically but that some controls must be imposed because of its close resemblance to an endangered species.

"Endangered" means that a species is threatened with extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Listing of the two crocodile species would make it illegal for anyone under the jurisdiction of the United States to take, import, or export the reptiles or sell or offer them for sale in interstate or foreign commerce.

Both the American and saltwater crocodiles are included under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, a multi-nation treaty that regulates international commerce in the wildlife and plants listed as in need of protection.

Comments, suggestions, or data on any aspect of the proposal should be submitted to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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