

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NEWS BRIEFS FROM THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Manatee protection areas established in Florida's Kings Bay. Endangered manatees have been assured sanctuary from human disturbance in the headwaters of Florida's Crystal River with the designation of three Manatee Protection Areas by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The areas, which comprise some 10 acres of the 500-acre Kings Bay area, include or are adjacent to warmwater springs where the unique marine mammals congregate during the winter.

The designation, published in the November 12, 1980, Federal Register, restricts waterborne activities in the areas from November 15 through March 31 each year. Conflicts with boaters, swimmers, and divers fascinated by the animals' seasonal presence necessitated establishment of certain areas within their aquatic habitat where the manatees could safely retreat.

As many as 80 to 100 manatees--nearly one-tenth of the total estimated coastal Florida population--are thought to winter in the Kings Bay area. Two of the sanctuaries are in the southeast part of the bay, south of Banana Island. A warmwater spring which is a popular diving instruction site was not included in a nearby sanctuary's boundaries. The third sanctuary includes a section of canal adjacent to the bay in the Springs O'Paradise subdivision. All three areas will be posted with signs indicating boundaries.

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Alligator trade. Manufacturers who fashion products from tanned American alligator leather no longer need Federal permits under a final rule to be published in the November 25, 1980, Federal Register. This change allows the Fish and Wildlife Service to concentrate its law enforcement efforts at the earlier point in trade where hides are tanned by the limited number of processors of crocodilian hides.

The final rule also allows the nationwide sale of alligator meat and parts, except hides, from lawfully harvested alligators, if that sale meets other Federal and State laws. At present, this sale has been restricted to the State in which an alligator was harvested.

Once endangered throughout its range in the southeastern United States, the alligator has rebounded in recent years under strict protective laws. Alligators in 12 Louisiana parishes have been reclassified to a special category under the Endangered Species Act that allows closely regulated commercial trade. The final rule also applies to nuisance alligators taken in Florida by State officials.

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Parrot proposal would regulate, not ban, international trade. A proposal by the Fish and Wildlife Service to include parrots, cockatoos, and other psittacine birds in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) would not prohibit trade in these popular birds, as some exporters have feared. If approved by other treaty countries next February, the proposal would merely require importers to obtain export documents from the country of origin.

The proposal involves only CITES, an international treaty, not the U.S. Endangered Species Act. CITES allows commercial trade in species listed in Appendix II but requires export permits or re-export certificates as a means of regulating trade in wildlife or plants that are currently or potentially threatened with extinction. Other species can be added as "look-alikes" when they are difficult to distinguish from those in need of protection, as is the case with parrots, cockatoos, and other similar birds. Service officials pointed out that appropriate documentation would expedite clearance of imported birds at U.S. ports of entry, which is sometimes slowed when inspectors cannot readily identify the species. About 70 percent of all parrot imports already meet the proposed requirements.

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Annual report on fishery resource activities available. How successful are efforts to control sea lampreys in the Great Lakes? What's being learned about the nutritional needs of fish? The answer to these questions are among the information included in the Fish and Wildlife Service's annual report on its fishery resources program for fiscal year 1979.

The report summarizes the Interior agency's fishery activities to maintain, improve, and restore U.S. recreational and commercial fisheries through the production of fish at hatcheries, fishery training and research, assistance to other agencies, grants-in-aid, law enforcement, and construction of facilities.

Single copies of the report are available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Publications Unit), Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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