



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

### Fish and Wildlife Service

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#### THREE AUSTRALIAN KANGAROO SPECIES REMOVED FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has removed three species of large kangaroos from the list of endangered and threatened species. The red kangaroo, the western gray kangaroo, and the eastern gray kangaroo in mainland Australia were listed by the Service as threatened in 1974.

The delisting action, published in the March 9, 1995, Federal Register, was based on the demonstrated effectiveness of the management activities of the Commonwealth of Australia and its various state governments, which should ensure the continued well-being of these species. This action exemplifies how the U.S. Endangered Species Act encourages the implementation of conservation and wildlife management programs in other countries.

At the time kangaroos were listed, the Service stated that population monitoring actions and management plans were inadequate and there was no national coordination of kangaroo management activities. In addition, law enforcement measures were considered unsatisfactory. An accompanying special rule banned the importation of kangaroos and their products to the U.S. until effective management plans were developed.

The Service lifted the importation ban in 1981 because effective management plans were implemented. However, kangaroos still retained threatened status under the Endangered Species Act.

In 1983, the Service proposed delisting the species but possible impacts of a severe drought led to withdrawal of the proposal. The agency said delisting could be reconsidered after more information was gathered on how kangaroo populations react to droughts.

Responding to a 1989 petition to reinstate the importation ban, the Service sent three specialists to Australia to investigate the status of kangaroos, survey methods, and the implementation of management programs. The agency issued a report of their findings entitled, "Review of Kangaroo Management in Australia, March 1990." The report generally documented excellent management plans and legislation, healthy populations, and adequate law enforcement. It also described an extensive system of protected national parks and reserves (about 5 percent of the country's total land area) containing important kangaroo habitat.

In November 1990, the Service received a petition seeking removal of the three species from the endangered species list. The Service's 1990 report was cited as justification for the request.

In response, the Service has found that the commonwealth and the states have developed effective kangaroo conservation programs to ensure not only the protection of these species but also that viable populations are maintained and that the species are managed as a natural resource.

While recognizing that urbanization, agriculture, and over-grazing by domestic livestock have caused extensive destruction to kangaroo habitat, the Service determined that modifications by the pastoral industry have actually benefitted kangaroos. These changes include an increased water supply, the production of shrublands, and the control of predators such as wild dogs. It is believed the kangaroo population of today may well exceed that present before Australia was settled by Europeans.

The three kangaroo species are commercially harvested for meat and hides. Kangaroo management establishes harvest quotas based on large-scale population surveys as well as current and projected range conditions. Harvest quotas are established annually for New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia. Quotas decrease where and when kangaroo populations are low and increase where and when they are high.

Kangaroo populations are estimated annually in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, and every 3 years in Western Australia. The 1993 kangaroo population estimates within the kangaroo harvest areas are 6.45 million kangaroos in New South Wales, 11.32 million in Queensland, 1.86 million in South Australia, and 1.80 million in Western Australia. Current kangaroo management activities are adapted to changing environmental conditions and naturally fluctuating kangaroo populations.

For the next 5 years, the Service will continue to monitor the well-being of the three kangaroo species, which could be relisted should the need arise. Still listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act are a subspecies of the eastern gray kangaroo called the Tasmanian forester, found on the island of Tasmania, as well as six species of wallabies currently or formerly found on mainland Australia and certain coastal islands.