

## A NOTE ON WILDLIFE PROTECTION LAWS

by John M. Grugan, Boston

Readers may have noticed the recent media coverage(1) of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife's undercover operation based in Atlanta, Georgia, which netted a number of individuals involved in the business of trading in endangered species. There was a day, not that long ago, when such crimes were rarely covered by the print media, not to mention television, the main reason being that perpetrators were being turned out of the courtrooms with only the proverbial slap on the wrist. Fortunately for mankind and wildlife alike, law enforcement officials(2) involved with the investigation and prosecution of wildlife resource violations as well as the courts are now handling such cases with seriousness.

Presently, convictions of more serious violations of the wildlife protection statutes (3) can result in prolonged incarceration. As reported in the federal publication, WILDLIFE NEWSLETTER (4), one individual, convicted of smuggling 371 parrots (5) into Texas, was sentenced to five years in jail. In another case, a 16-count indictment was sought against a Florida pet dealer for, among other things, the illegal importation, possession and trading of falcons and owls.

Possession of even a feather from an endangered bird can place the possessor in jeopardy of governmental prosecution, while the handling of migratory birds without the proper permit is also grounds for prosecution. (Over-zealous birders beware!)

Prescinding from the enforcement aspect of wildlife laws, it is interesting to observe the substantial amount of cooperation which has surfaced between the United States and other nations in an effort to resolve wildlife issues. Nations from all corners of the world attended the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Covention On Trade In Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora held in New Delhi in February, 1981. The treaty itself ("CITES") was first signed in 1972. In June, 1980, the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. passed the "Law of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Wildlife Protection" which was enthusiastically received by American wildlife officials.

Finally, one can hope that zoos and similar institutions, as well as pet shop dealers, will be more perspicacious about documentation concerning endangered wildlife.

1. Newsweek, "The Snakes Can Sting", July 27, 1981, p. 64, and at least one Boston TV station reported this case.
2. The U. S. Fish & Wildlife's Division of Law Enforcement in conjunction with the Land and Natural Resource Division of the Department of Justice prosecute violations of

wildlife and smuggling laws.

3. Some of the statutes involved include the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, (16 U.S.C. 702, et. seq.), the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531, et. seq.), and the Convention On Trade In Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (16 U.S.C. 1536, et. seq.) ("CITES")
4. Published by the U. S. Department of Justice, Division of Land and Natural Resources, Volume 2, No. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1981 reports on a host of such cases.
5. Except for Cockatiels (Nymphicus hollandicus), Budgerigars (Melopsittacus undulatus) and the Rose-ringed Parakeet (Psittacula krameri), all species of psittacids are afforded protection under "CITES".

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