



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission is, working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.” We are the only agency of the U.S. Government with that primary mission.

The Service helps protect a healthy environment for people, fish and wildlife, and helps Americans conserve and enjoy the outdoors and our living treasures. The Service's major responsibilities are for migratory birds, endangered species, certain marine mammals, and freshwater and anadromous fish.

Over 125 Years of Service

The Service's origins date back to 1871, when Congress established the U.S. Fish Commission to study the decrease of the nation's food fishes and recommend ways to reverse the decline.

Meanwhile, in 1885, Congress created an Office of Economic Ornithology in the Department of Agriculture. The office studied the food habits and migratory patterns of birds, especially those that had an effect on agriculture. This office gradually grew in responsibilities and went through several name changes until finally renamed the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1905.

In addition to studying birds and mammals, the Survey's responsibilities included managing the nation's first wildlife refuges, controlling predators, enforcing wildlife laws, and conserving dwindling populations of migratory birds. The Bureaus of Fisheries and Biological Survey were transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1939. In 1940, they were combined and named the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Further reorganization came in 1956 when the Fish and Wildlife Act created the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and established two bureaus, Sport Fish and Wildlife and Commercial Fisheries. In 1970, the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries was transferred to the Department of Commerce and renamed the National Marine Fisheries Service.

For many years the Service was the principal federal wildlife and fisheries research agency. In the 1940's, Service research biologists conducted some of the first investigations into the effects of the pesticide DDT in wildlife. Service researchers also revealed the life cycle of the parasite that causes whirling disease in trout. In addition, Service biologists developed many of the captive breeding techniques that have benefitted such rare species as whooping cranes, California condors and black-footed ferrets. The Service's research function briefly became an independent agency and was eventually reorganized as part of the U.S. Geological Survey in 1996.

Notable former employees include Jay N. "Ding" Darling, designer of the first Federal Duck Stamp, and Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*. Today, the Service employs approximately 7,500 people at facilities across the country including a headquarters office in Washington, D.C., seven regional offices, and nearly 700 field units. Among these are national wildlife refuges, national fish hatcheries and management assistance offices, law enforcement and ecological services field stations.