

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Citation: 16 U.S.C. 703-712

Summary: This law implements the treaties that the US has signed with a number of countries protecting birds that migrate across our national borders. It makes illegal the taking, possessing or selling of protected species.

Statute in Full:

§ 703 · Taking, killing, or possessing migratory birds unlawful [MBTA § 2]

Unless and except as permitted by regulations made as hereinafter provided in sections 703 to 711 of this title, it shall be unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to take, capture, or kill, possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to barter, barter, offer to purchase, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship export, import, cause to be shipped, exported, or imported, deliver for transportation, transport or cause to be transported, carry or cause to be carried, or receive for shipment, transportation, carriage, or export, any migratory bird, any part, nest, or egg of any such bird, or any product, whether or not manufactured, which consists, or is composed in whole or part, of any such bird or any part, nest, or egg thereof, included in the terms of the conventions between the United States and Great Britain for the protection of migratory birds concluded August 16, 1916 (39 Stat. 1702), the United States and the United Mexican States for the protection of migratory birds and game mammals concluded February 7, 1936, and the United States and the Government of Japan for the protection of migratory birds and birds in danger of extinction, and their environment concluded March 4, 1972[,]and the convention between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the conservation of migratory birds and their environments concluded November 19, 1976.

§ 704 · Determination as to when and how migratory birds may be taken, killed, or possessed [MBTA § 3]

Subject to the provisions and in order to carry out the purposes of the conventions, referred to in section 703 of this title, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized and directed, from time to time, having due regard to the zones of temperature and to the distribution, abundance, economic value, breeding habits, and times and lines of migratory flight of such birds, to determine when, to what extent, if at all, and by what means, it is compatible with the terms of the conventions to allow hunting, taking, capture, killing, possession, sale, purchase, shipment, transportation, carriage, or export of any such bird, or any part, nest or egg thereof, and to adopt suitable regulations permitting and governing the same, in accordance with such determinations, which regulations shall become effective when approved by the President.

§ 705 · Transportation or importation of migratory birds; when unlawful [MBTA § 4]

It shall be unlawful to ship, transport, or carry, by any means whatever, from one State, Territory, or district to or through another State, Territory, or district, or to or through a foreign country, any bird, or any part, nest, or egg thereof, captured, killed, taken, shipped, transported, or carried at any time contrary to the laws of the State, Territory, or district in which it was captured, killed, or taken, or from which it was shipped, transported, or carried. It shall be unlawful to import any bird, or any part, nest, or egg thereof, captured, killed, taken, shipped, transported, or carried contrary to the laws of any Province of the Dominion of Canada in which the same was captured, killed or taken, or from which it was shipped, transported, or carried.

§ 706 · Arrests; search warrants [MBTA § 5]

Any employee of the Department of Agriculture [Department of Interior] authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture [Secretary of the Interior] to enforce the provisions of this Act shall have power, without warrant, to arrest any person committing a violation of this Act in his presence or view and to take such person immediately for examination or trial before an officer or court of competent jurisdiction; shall have power to execute any warrant or other process issued by an officer or court of competent jurisdiction for the enforcement of the provisions of this Act; and shall have authority, with a search warrant, to search any place. The several judges of the courts established under the laws of the United States, and United States commissioners [United States magistrate judges] may, within their respective jurisdictions, upon proper oath or affirmation showing probable cause, issue warrants in all such cases. All birds, or parts, nests, or eggs thereof, captured, killed, taken, sold or offered for sale, bartered or offered for barter, purchased, shipped, transported, carried, imported, exported, or possessed contrary to the provisions of this Act or of any regulation prescribed there under shall, when found, be seized and, upon conviction of the offender or upon judgment of a court of the United States that the same were captured, killed, taken, sold or offered for sale, bartered or offered for barter, purchased, shipped, transported, carried, imported, exported, or possessed contrary to the provisions of this Act or of any regulation prescribed there under, shall be forfeited to the United States and disposed of by the Secretary of the Interior in such manner as he deems appropriate.

§ 707 · Violations and penalties; forfeitures [MBTA § 6]

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, any person, association, partnership, or corporation who shall violate any provisions of said conventions or of this subchapter, or who shall violate or fail to comply with any regulation made pursuant to this subchapter shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not more than \$15,000 or be imprisoned not more than six months, or both.

(b) Whoever, in violation of this subchapter, shall knowingly--

(1) take by any manner whatsoever any migratory bird with intent to sell, offer to sell, barter or offer to barter such bird, or

(2) sell, offer for sale, barter or offer to barter, any migratory bird shall be guilty of a felony and shall be fined not more than \$2,000 or imprisoned not more than two years, or both.

(c) Whoever violates section 704(b)(2) of this title shall be fined under Title 18, imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.

(d) All guns, traps, nets and other equipment, vessels, vehicles, and other means of transportation used by any person when engaged in pursuing, hunting, taking, trapping, ensnaring, capturing, killing, or attempting to take, capture, or kill any migratory bird in violation of this subchapter with the intent to offer for sale, or sell, or offer for barter, or barter such bird in violation of this subchapter shall be forfeited to the United States and may be seized and held pending the prosecution of any person arrested for violating this subchapter and upon conviction for such violation, such forfeiture shall be adjudicated as a penalty in addition to any other provided for violation of this subchapter. Such forfeited property shall be disposed of and accounted for by, and under the authority of, the Secretary of the Interior.

§ 708 · State or Territorial laws or regulations [MBTA § 7]

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to prevent the several States and Territories from making or enforcing laws or regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of said conventions or of this Act, or from making or enforcing laws or regulations which shall give further protection to migratory birds, their nests, and eggs, if such laws or regulations do not extend the open seasons for such birds beyond the dates approved by the President in accordance with section three of this Act [16 USCS @ 704].

§ 709a · Authorization of appropriations [MBTA § 8]

There is authorized to be appropriated, from time to time, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, such amounts as may be necessary to carry out the provisions and to accomplish the purposes of said conventions and this Act and regulations made pursuant thereto, and the Secretary of Agriculture [Secretary of the Interior] is authorized out of such moneys to employ in the city of Washington and elsewhere such persons and means as he may deem necessary for such purpose and may cooperate with local authorities in the protection of migratory birds and make the necessary investigations connected therewith.

§ 710 · Partial invalidity/Short title [MBTA § 9]

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, or part of this subchapter, which shall be known by the short title of the "Migratory Bird Treaty Act", shall, for any reason, be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered.

§ 711 · Breeding and sale for food supply [MBTA § 10]

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to prevent the breeding of migratory game birds on farms and preserves and the sale of birds so bred under proper regulations for the purpose of increasing the food supply.

§ 712 · Treaty and convention implementing regulations; seasonal taking of migratory birds for essential needs or indigenous Alaskans to preserve and maintain stocks of the birds; protection and conservation of the birds. [MBTA § 11]

(1) In accordance with the various migratory bird treaties and conventions with Canada, Japan, Mexico, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to issue such regulations as may be necessary to assure that the taking of migratory birds and the collection of their eggs, by the indigenous inhabitants of the State of Alaska, shall be permitted for their own nutritional and other essential needs, as determined by the Secretary of the Interior, during seasons established so as to provide for the preservation and maintenance of stocks of migratory birds.

(2) The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to issue such regulations as may be necessary to implement the provisions of the convention between the United States and Great Britain for the protection of migratory birds concluded August 16, 1916, the convention between the United States and the United Mexican States for the protection of migratory birds and game mammals concluded February 7, 1936, the convention between the United States and the Government of Japan for the protection of migratory birds in danger of extinction, and their environment concluded March 4, 1972; and the convention between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the conservation of migratory birds and their environment concluded November 19, 1976.