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Managing Nature in Today's World

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Proceedings of 4th Bird Strike Committee-USA/Canada Meeting, Sacramento, CA
21-24 Oct 2002 (www.birdstrike.org)

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ABSTRACTS

Managing Nature in Today's World

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The objective of my talk is to help airport authorities better understand the turmoil they encounter when managing birds and other wildlife populations. Many are reluctant to manage birds and mammals because they know that it will inevitably stir up controversy. Especially this is true when the program includes lethal means. Many people think all problems can be resolved by using non-lethal frightening devices or by live-trapping offending animals and relocating them away from airports. There are some sound arguments as to why it is biologically, ecologically and ethically proper to even use lethal means to resolve some airport wildlife problems. The public needs to recognize that we are dealing with people-modified environments rather than natural scenes, and that the solution to airport bird strikes, for example, cannot be left to the whims of nature. People need to understand that all animals die. Nature requires that most die before they become sexually mature and such deaths usually leaves space for another of that species. Further, when animals are killed by a wildlife manager, they nearly always die far more humanely than when they die naturally. People are the most humane of all predators. Nature, though beautiful, is a tough fang and claw arena where the survival of the fittest regime is composed of a cruel and brutal death ethic. Living in the wild is not free of suffering. The main functions of organisms are to survive, reproduce and serve as food to others. Everything in nature is linked together by eating and being eaten. The balance of nature would collapse without meat eaters and predators. Our ethic about animals is against inflicting unnecessary pain and distress to animals, but not against killing when science-based wildlife management requires it.