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3-1-1994

## The Probe, Issue # 141 -- March 1994

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# Can We Landscape to Accommodate the White-tailed Deer?

*Helen Hendrickson Heinrich, Certified Landscape Architect, Madison, NJ*

Landscape design has become a major pre-occupation and occupation in much of the United States. Used in diverse ways, ranging from the ecological restoration of disturbed sites and wetlands to garden design and "landscaping" of corporate, industrial or residential projects, landscape planting design represents the highest hopes of those involved for improvement of their property's aesthetics and value. Landscape design is often a major financial investment.

Gardening is a regular recreational pastime for close to 80% of American households. Nursery production makes up 11% of the agricultural crop of the U.S. today and, by the year 2000, it is expected to grow to 20%. In the eastern U.S., much of this horticultural activity takes place in areas where the population of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) exceeds both biological and cultural carrying capacities. With the strong potential for even greater conflicts between plant growers and deer populations in the future, it is appropriate to ask whether landscapes can be designed to accommodate deer. Our research and design experience shows the answer to be yes, so long as:

- *deer populations do not continue to grow exponentially, unchecked by predation or human-caused mortality;*
- *the total food resources available to a deer population are not drastically reduced by most of the landowners fencing, using repellents, planting deer-resistant plants, or refusing to replant palatable materials after heavy depredation; and*
- *the landowner accepts a restricted palette of plants and an ongoing monitoring, testing, and replanting regime.*

## **The Tracy Estate Deer Impact Research Garden Experience**

A nine-acre former estate owned by New Jersey's Morris County Park Commission, the Tracy property contains landscape spaces designed by landscape architect Frederic Leubuscher in the late 1920s. The plants used to create these gardens, lawns, approach drives, and other spaces have been heavily browsed by deer with no interference since 1983, when the property came to the Park Commission. We were asked to replant the landscape design using the original plan, but were challenged to replace destroyed plants with those more resistant to deer browsing.

The first objective of the Tracy Estate Research Garden was to identify possible deer-resistant plants. A number of lists and local nursery owners were consulted, but the recommendations were contradictory. Some lists identified certain plants as deer-resistant, while others named them as deer favorites. Many of the plants listed as deer-resistant were destroyed or severely browsed by deer in the Tracy gardens. Only a few deer-resistant plants were common to all sources. These included Colorado spruce, dwarf Alberta spruce, boxwood, and Japanese andromeda.

Since the preferences of the local deer herd seemed to determine what would be browsed, the first task was to identify their feeding patterns and food plant preferences. Plants selected for potential resistance to deer browsing were tested in six test plots over two growing seasons in the research garden. We documented that deer will at least taste every plant, sometimes destroying the all-important single leader that determines the ultimate shape of the plant in the process. Damage occurred to

*Continued on page 4*

# Call for Nominations for Berryman Institute Awards

The Jack Berryman Institute for Wildlife Damage Management requests nominations for its new awards program. The awards will recognize superior work directed toward the Institute's goals of enhancing human-wildlife relationships by resolving conflicts between humans and wildlife. The Institute will grant three annual awards: 1) research, 2) communication, and 3) program

achievement. The research award is designed to recognize superior achievement in the creation of new knowledge. This could be based on a journal publication, book, or other scholarly accomplishment.

The communication award will recognize superior achievement in fostering communication. It can be based on a publication, video, symposium, editorship, book, or another accomplishment that enhances communication.

The program achievement award is designed to reward a superior "hands-on" effort or program that deals with or helps resolve a wildlife damage management problem or a human-wildlife conflict.

To nominate someone, send a letter stating why your nominee is worthy of the award and a copy or description of the nominee's accomplishment. Individuals, organizations or groups can be nominated for these awards. Send nominations to: Dr. Michael Conover, Berryman Institute, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-5210.

## In Memoriam

Dennis Linzy of Rigby, Idaho, was killed in a two-vehicle accident on Dec. 30, 1993 while working for the USDA Animal Damage Control program. Dennis was 43 years old and had worked as an ADC Specialist since 1979. He was a "top hand" and was well known throughout the state and region.

During his 14 years with ADC, Dennis experienced many memorable events including catching two coyotes in one trap, foot-snaring several grizzly bears, and calling in a cougar while calling coyotes. He often called in 2 to 4 coyotes at one stand and shot all of them, using both a shotgun and rifle. He was also a skilled big game hunter and taxidermist.

Dennis was a good husband and father to his wife, son, and two daughters. He had many friends and he was known for his unique sense of humor. He will be missed and have a lasting influence on all those who knew and worked with him.

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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Research & Extension Center, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting material is the 15th of each month. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of NADCA.



## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 12-15, 1994: 12th Eastern Black Bear Workshop, River Terrace Resort & Convention Center, Gatlinburg, Tennessee.** The theme is *Human-Bear Interactions*. For more information, contact Michael R. Pelton, Department of Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37901, (615) 974-7126; FAX (615) 974-4714.

**May 1, 1994: Gull Damage Management Techniques Short Course, Burlington, Vermont.** Sponsored by the Northeast Association of Wildlife Damage Biologists. Contact James E. Forbes, USDA/APHIS/ADC, P.O. Box 97, Albany, NY 12201.

**May 1-4, 1994: Northeast Association of Wildlife Damage Biologists Annual Meeting, Sheraton-Burlington Hotel and Conference Center, Burlington, Vermont.** Contact: Rich Chipman, P.O. Box 1436, Montpelier, VT 05601.

**September 11-17, 1994: The Professional Trappers College Short Course, LaGrange, Indiana.** For more information contact: Charles Park, 410 S. Poplar, LaGrange, IN 46761.

**September 21-25, 1994: First Annual Conference, The Wildlife Society, Albuquerque, New Mexico.** Theme: "Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship through Science and Education." Contact: (301) 897-9770:

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# **ADC News, Tips, Ideas, Publications...**

## **Popularity of Guarding Burros on the Rise**

Guarding burros have increased in popularity with North Dakota livestock owners for protecting sheep and goats. In an attempt to obtain information on the usefulness of guarding burros, each USDA/APHIS/ADC North Dakota Animal Damage Control Specialist was contacted concerning the use and effectiveness of burros.

Tabulation of the responses produced the following information: North Dakota has 133 burros guarding 131 sheep or goat flocks. Of the 131 flocks with guarding burros, 112 (85.5 percent) continue to require additional wildlife damage control work to stop predation by coyotes and red foxes. Some incidents that were reported in the questionnaire included the following: burros killing lambs, coyotes killing burro foals being raised for sale as guarding animals; sheep and calves being killed by coyotes with burros standing in the middle of the flock or herd; and 34 goats killed in a 40-acre pasture with two burros.

## **Guard Dogs No Match for Coyotes Forming Packs**

Coyotes, which normally hunt alone or in pairs, have been reported to be forming hunting packs in the West. According to Tom McDarnell of the American Sheep Industry Association, ranchers in northwestern Colorado and southwestern Wyoming reported that their guard dogs have been attacked and outwitted by coyote packs.

McDarnell said the coyotes have developed new hunting strategies—they attack guard dogs directly, distract the dogs while other coyotes split up the flock and attack, or run the guard dogs to exhaustion and then attack the sheep. “In the last year, we’ve seen growing numbers of coyote packs attacking guard dogs and, in one case, even killing the dog,” McDarnell said.

Guy Connolly, a biologist in predator damage control at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Denver Wildlife Research Center, said because of a moratorium on predator control, there are more coyotes and they are hungrier than usual. “We’ve heard for 10 years about coyote packs attacking guard dogs and even killing some, which isn’t a surprise because coyotes are very adaptable, and naturally they’d figure out some way to get around guard dogs,” Connolly said.

## **Grizzly Rescue Ends Badly**

Authorities suspect that a Montana grizzly transplanted from Montana to a Grants Pass, Oregon, wildlife rescue program, has fallen victim to poachers. According to the August 22 issue of the Roseburg, Oregon, *News-Review*, the grizzly has disappeared since her escape from the 24-acre Wildlife Images compound. Wildlife Images, founded by Dave Siddon, has a reputation for rehabilitating “outlaw” bears and returning them to the wild. The grizzly was trapped and removed from Montana when she became a nuisance at a dude ranch.

Hunters had contacted Siddon and informed him that they had good information that their neighbor shot the bear. Grizzlies are protected by the Endangered Species Act. Shooting a grizzly without a permit is punishable by up to a year in prison and a \$50,000 fine.

With the grizzly’s strong homing instinct, stated Anne Vandehey of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Bear Recovery Program in Missoula, Montana, there is a slight possibility that the bear is trying to find her way home. “It wouldn’t be a miracle of miracles,” Vandahey said, “but it would be nice if she turned up.”

## **Animal Rights Activists Go Underground**

Animal rights activists may be intensifying their efforts by working “undercover.” From the Animal Industry Foundation, a group that tracks animal rights groups and their activities, comes word that a recent fund-raising letter from People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), stated the magazine’s mission is to inspire action for animals any way it can.

One tactic the letter suggested was “to establish a secret cover, so that we can report on the antics of extremists who fight the animal rights movement every step of the way.”

Hugh Johnson, poultry specialist for the American Farm Bureau, says “It is important for animal agriculture groups to be aware they are being targeted as ‘extremists’ by someone who really is one.”

*The editors of The PROBE thank contributors to this issue: Sherm Blom, Gary Simmons, Mike Fall, James E. Forbes, and Wes Jones. We also wish to thank those who sent material that we were unable to use because of space limitations. Send your contributions to The PROBE, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

## Landscaping for White-tailed Deer

most of the test plants, decreasing their landscape value. This was accomplished by browsing, tasting, trampling, and by working branches down to the ground over time for ease in feeding. All of these activities reduced the landscape value of the plant and its usefulness in filling its role in shaping landscape spaces.

Species tested systematically for the first time included gray and scented foliage perennials including familiar herbs and the new, trendy ornamental grasses that, when green, thrust sharp-edged leaves at the hungry deer. There was some evidence that thick barriers of thorny or unpalatable plants discouraged browsing of more palatable species.

The most important result of the research garden was confirmation that the feeding patterns of deer are unique to each group of deer. Factors affecting how much attention a deer may pay to a particular garden included:

- *location of the plot;*
- *food preferences of the individual herd;*
- *food availability on surrounding properties due to climatic conditions;*
- *variety of vegetation present on surrounding properties;*
- *accessibility (or lack of access) to surrounding properties; and*
- *local hunting pressure.*

### Design Methods to Accommodate Deer Populations

Prepared lists of deer-resistant plants were valuable only as a rough guide when attempting to deer-proof a garden. Our experience shows that to reduce deer damage to landscape plantings, landscape professionals and landowners must consider the following issues:

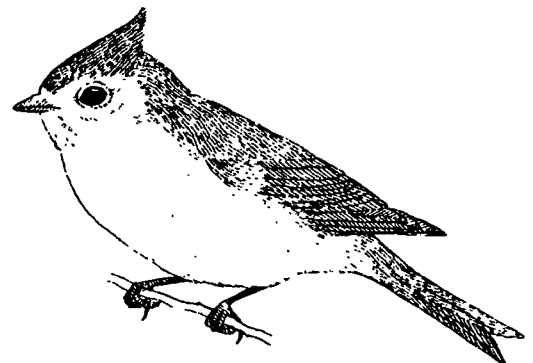
1. Analyze the feeding patterns of the local deer population thoroughly to identify those plants most likely to be left alone (undamaged). Experience with properties in areas with high deer populations shows that care in choosing the right plants in the beginning makes changes and additions to the plan less necessary as the planting matures.
2. Install small-scale trials of other potentially resis-

tant plants before investing in large numbers of plants that could be destroyed in a few days.

3. Select plants to maintain the form and shape of a garden by careful matching of deer browsing resistance, plant habits, and growth patterns.
4. Choose deer-resistant plants that are part of a community with the same survival requirements, so that maintenance and the need for artificial subsidies of nutrients and water do not become impractical. It is all too easy to create a deer-resistant planting made up of plants with very different cultural requirements, especially as further testing leads to introduction of more and more exotic species.
5. Investigate additional protection methods, combining fencing, repellents, population control through hunting, or other alternatives.
6. Educate landowners about unfamiliar, more resistant plant species, and train their eye to tolerate some amount of deer damage.

Landscape architects and wildlife biologists must work together to help the public reshape its landscape visions to a more balanced, if less idealistic, goal. We must make clear the effects on vegetation of decisions about deer population control, choice of native versus exotic plant species, and use of a plant community or individualistic planting design approach. Through design and research, we can accommodate deer in our landscapes through a multi-disciplinary, site-specific team approach. Each profession has much to offer that will prove valuable as the human-wildlife interface continues to create conflict.

*Helen Hendrickson Heinrich can be contacted at 71 Green Village Road, Madison, NJ 07940.*



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# New Book on Human vs. Animal Rights

*Walter (Howdy) Howard, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, University of California, Davis, CA 95616.*

**Book Review: Animal Scam: The Beastly Abuse of Human Rights.** By Kathleen Marquardt with Herbert M. Levine and March LaRochelle (all of Putting People First). Regnery Gateway, Inc., Washington, D.C. 1993 vii + 221pp., 5 tables, bibliography, index appendices. \$24.00 (cloth).

**T**his book will delight the hearts of all **PROBE** readers, for it spells out factually all the suspicions you have had about the animal rights movement. It is a very bold, highly readable, well-documented book that will make you an instant authority concerning animal rightists and their terrorist activism. You will be in a much better position to defend the ethical and moral right to use animals responsibly.

If you love animals and want to see them treated as humanely as possible, **Animal Scam** is a must to read. The book is crammed with a wealth of hard-to-find material. Part 1 explains the animal rights scam, who they are, with a few choice examples of activism by PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals).

Part 2 is titled "People and Animals: Animal Rights Lies About Animal Welfare and Conservation." It contains chapters on Animals in Science, Animal

Agriculture, Pets, Fur, Entertainment and Recreation, and Hunting. They are all well done and full of useful gems.

Part 3: "Danger and Opportunity: The Threat to Human Rights and How to Fight Back" has a chapter on the Danger of Animal Rights. The 11-page Epilogue on Fighting Back is very informative. I think more animal rightists need to be taken to court. There are five parts to a valuable Appendix that contain hard-to-find names and addresses: Animal Welfare Organizations [the good guys] that are Fighting Animal Extremism; U.S. Animal Rights Groups; A Decade of Animal Extremism, 1984-1993; using Animals in Biomedical Research; and In Their Own Words, Quotations for Animal Rights Leaders.

I hope contributors to animal rights organizations will read this book. They will realize that the animal rights movement does absolutely nothing to improve the welfare of animals or for conservation. It will come as a shock when they learn that practically all of their contributions go toward raising more money with the balance being used in salaries. Well meaning contributors to the animal rights movement need to turn to honest animal welfare and conservation organizations. Buy a copy of this book now and share it with friends.

## Cynthia Smith Appointed Assistant Deputy Administrator of ADC

**C**ynthia Smith has been appointed to the position of Assistant Deputy Administrator for the USDA/APHIS Animal Damage Control program.

Smith began her career with the APHIS in 1979 as a Clerk-Typist. In 1983, she completed a B.S. degree in microbiology with minors in psychology and biology from the University of Maryland. In addition, she has completed graduate course work in information science, law, and microbial ecology.

Smith moved to APHIS' Biotechnology, Biologics and Environmental Protection (BBEP) unit when it was formed in 1987. She held several staff and management positions in BBEP from 1987-1993.

As a founding member of the Capitol Area Biotechnology Information network, Smith acted as steering committee chairperson of the United Nations initiative, the Information Resource on the Release of Organisms (IRRO) from 1991-1993. In 1993, she completed the APHIS Leadership Education and Development Program. She has received Certificates of Merit for Outstanding Performance in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992 and has numerous other awards, including several for her activities in BBEP's EEO program.

Smith has been described by her supervisors and peers as hardworking, professional, reliable, a self-starter, a strategic thinker and planner, and a good writer with analytical skills.

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## **Position Available**

**VERTEBRATE PEST ECOLOGY, COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SPECIALIST**  
The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, University of California at Davis, seeks an assistant/associate cooperative extension specialist to conduct a research and outreach program in ecological approaches for managing vertebrate pests. Ph.D. in a relevant field of biological sciences, expertise in vertebrate ecology, and the ability to do research of peer-review quality, to communicate effectively, and to deal with various viewpoints, are required; background in animal damage control is desired. Send a statement of qualifications, a curriculum vitae, transcripts (if within five years of graduation), and the names and addresses of three references to: Dr. Dirk Van Vuren, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, University of California, Davis, CA 95616. Applications will be accepted through 29 April 1994. The University of California is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.