

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Wildlife Management Institute Outdoor News
Bulletin

Wildlife Damage Management, Internet Center for

May 2007

WMI Outdoor News Bulletin * May 2007, Volume 61, No. 5

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/wmioutdoornews>



Part of the [Natural Resources Management and Policy Commons](#)

"WMI Outdoor News Bulletin * May 2007, Volume 61, No. 5" (2007). *Wildlife Management Institute Outdoor News Bulletin*. 10.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/wmioutdoornews/10>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Wildlife Damage Management, Internet Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wildlife Management Institute Outdoor News Bulletin by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



WMI Outdoor News Bulletin

Richard McCabe, Editor

Issued monthly by the

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Suite 700, 1146 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036

Phone 202-371-1808 | FAX 202-408-5059

Volume 61

May 18, 2007

Number 5

Contents:

- WMI's path forward
- Special Sessions Announced for 73rd North American Conference
- Public hearings conclude on Northern Rockies gray wolf delisting proposal
- CWD Alliance announces new on-line bibliography
- Coyotes not dissuaded by Chicago politics or its perpetual road construction
- New addition to WMI family
- Worth reading: *The White Cascade*

WMI's path forward:

It has been said that "the only thing constant is change." We at the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) are experiencing that truism firsthand. As reported in last month's "Outdoor News Bulletin," WMI is entering a new era. Although it has undergone a number of name changes since its inception in 1911, its mission has remained consistent. The biggest differences between the previous WMI and its new status are the source of funding for operation and administrative affairs and the composition of the Board of Directors. In the past, major sporting firearms and ammunition manufacturers provided the primary source of funds for WMI. This fiscal year, WMI is generating its own funding through contracts, grants and donations. As we operate within this new and, for WMI, unique business model, the Institute will retain its independent, nonprofit, corporate status.

WMI officers are working to assemble a new Board of Directors, which will represent major contributors to the conservation profession. The new Board members will include representatives from state and/or federal resource agencies, academia, conservation organizations, business and industry, and private individuals, all of whom are dedicated to science-based, professional, wildlife resource management. Three members of the former Board will remain, and we welcome their continued involvement. The new and more diverse Board of Directors will provide oversight and guidance for WMI.

Due to fiscal constraints, WMI must streamline administrative staff and headquarters operations. We will continue to maintain an active presence in Washington, DC, primarily through efforts of the President and Executive Vice President, as well as WMI's regional field representatives with expertise in particular resource policy issues. WMI staff will continue to remain engaged and visible in the continent's most pressing natural resource policy issues. Due to advances in communication and computer technology, WMI staff will maintain interaction with conservation partners across the continent. Field representatives will work closely with federal and state agencies, Cooperative Research Units, conservation organizations and universities within their respective regions.

Currently, much of the officers' activities is associated with creating the administrative infrastructure of an independent, nonprofit organization. The National Shooting Sports Foundation, with which WMI has long been associated, is assisting with the transition. Once separate banking, accounting and other administrative components are established, we will return our full focus on resource policy issues, science, conservation projects and administration of the annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference.

WMI's current program portfolio includes energy development and wildlife management, climate change impacts to fish and wildlife resources, woodcock research and management, northern bobwhite quail research and management, the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow program, the Hunting Heritage Action Plan, game bird planning, reviews of the use of science in agencies, this monthly newsletter, the North American Conference, and other partnership efforts with conservation agencies and organizations. We will continue to look for opportunities to advance the profession of resource management across the North American continent.

In order to attain firm financial footing, WMI will actively pursue donations and competitive grants from foundations and agencies in order to finance the operations and administration of the organization. We truly thank those individuals and organizations who have made financial commitments to support the work and future of WMI, and we look forward to increasing our support base in the future.

To be very sure, WMI's core values remain those of the past. We value science-based wildlife management and policy decisions, conservation leadership, partnership and consensus building, North America's hunting heritage, sustainable wildlife populations and the habitats on which they depend, and restoration of balance to conservation efforts. Most of all, we value the many partners-agencies, organizations, industry, academicians, and others-who assume the responsibility for conserving the continent's fish and wildlife resources and for enabling professional management in the best interest of those resources, the landscape and society.

Although the organization's transition is complicated, time consuming and somewhat distracting from pressing resource issues, the long-term benefits of the investment will outweigh the short-term costs. WMI will continue its dedication to the restoration and enhancement of wildlife populations and their habitats and, through science, to promote

conservation and professional management of wildlife resources. In time and as resources permit, we plan to rebuild our staffing levels to work most effectively with our conservation partners to meet the challenges associated with managing wildlife in an ever-changing world. For now, we are focused on effecting WMI's transition and on new or renewed strategies to address prevailing conservation issues.

We sincerely thank everyone who has expressed support for the WMI mission, staff and organization. Finally, we look forward to productive and continuing partnerships with all members of the conservation community. (saw)

Special Sessions Announced for 73rd North American Conference:

The steering committee for the 73rd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, which will be held March 25-29, 2008, in Phoenix, Arizona, announced the three Special Sessions that will follow the event's Opening (plenary) Session. The plenary will take place from 8:00-9:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 26. The Special Sessions, which will run concurrently from 9:45 a.m. to 12:00 noon, are:

Covert Operations: Hatching the Game Bird Plans

Chair: Dan Dessecker (rgsdess@chibardun.net)

Concerted efforts have been and are being made to address the habitat limitations and needs of many of North America's popular game birds-woodcock and the various species of grouse and quail. Vegetative succession, climate change, forestry and agricultural practices, pollution, human sprawl and indifference are among the factors that challenge the well-being of these game bird populations. The problems are nothing new. The solutions and their affordability must be new, creative, dedicated and affordable. This session will review the status and implementation prospects for game bird plans underway.

Mitigation: Brokering, Bargaining and Bartering Natural Resources

Chair: Steve Thompson (steve_thompson@fws.gov)

Habitat alteration and fragmentation from human-use impacts continue to jeopardize fish, wildlife and other natural resources on an increasingly large and complex spatial scale. In recent years, the cumulative effects of innumerable housing, mining and energy developments on public and private lands have eliminated or threatened the sustainability of many fish and wildlife populations. Ultimately, the long-term success of mitigation programs or projects depends on how accurately the decision framework of managers represents the biological parameters of the targeted habitat. This Special Session will explore elements of mitigation strategy evaluation, delineation and monitoring on public and private lands. It also will address technical and regulatory challenges to mitigation programs for single- or multiple-species management at regional and landscape levels.

Access: The Foundation of a Successful Natural Resource Model

Chair: Randy Kriel (rkreil@nd.gov)

Few people understand fully the vital role that access plays in the successful management of North America's natural resources. Because it enables public contact with natural resources, access provides the driving force for many management programs. The public's ability to access and enjoy the resources in a variety of ways lends to widespread, continued interest and involvement in and support for sustaining those resources. This session will examine access needs for public and private lands, successful programs and policies that sustain and improve access, continuing challenges to access, and ways that access to fish and wildlife resources impact hunting and fishing participation and the revenue streams that make management practicable and effective.

Persons interested in being considered as presenters in a Special Session (and submitting an authored or coauthored paper for the Conference *Transactions*) are urged to contact the appropriate chair as soon as possible.

Public hearings conclude on Northern Rockies gray wolf delisting proposal:

Seven hearings on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposal to delist the Northern Rocky Mountain population (NRM) of gray wolves have concluded, reports the Wildlife Management Institute. All opportunity for public comments ended May 9.

The proposal calls for wolves to be removed from protection of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) throughout the northern Rockies except for northwestern Wyoming. Wyoming has yet to establish a suitable (to the Service) regulatory framework for wolf management. Idaho and Montana have established frameworks and will be responsible for wolf management once delisting has occurred. Until Wyoming completes this process, wolves in northwestern Wyoming will remain under federal protection.

The proposal has drawn heated debate from proponent and opponents of delisting, which is warranted, according to the Service, because the NRM has exceeded criteria established for a viable and recovered wolf population. According to the 2006 Interagency Annual Report, the northern Rockies now has at least 1,300 wolves residing in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. The population has averaged about 26 percent growth each year for the past decade.

At the end of 2006, there were an estimated 673 wolves in Idaho, 311 in Wyoming and 316 in Montana, including an estimated total of 173 packs (groups of two or more wolves) with 86 packs meeting the definition of "breeding pair" (an adult male and female raising two or more pups).

The total number of wolves and breeding pairs is important to the issue of removing the NRM from the endangered species list. Biological recovery criteria calls for at least 30 or more breeding pairs composed of at least 300 wolves well distributed across the three states. 2006 was the seventh year that these criteria were met. At the end of the year there

were no documented wolves or wolf packs in other states adjacent to Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

This wolf population has a long and checkered past. It was essentially extirpated by the 1930s and first received legal protection with the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973. Wolves began to recolonize northwestern Montana in the early 1980s and, in 1995 and 1996, 66 wolves from southwestern Canada were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho.

In 2003, wolves in northwestern Montana were reclassified from endangered to threatened. In 2005, U.S. District Courts in Oregon and Vermont concluded that the 2003 rule was "arbitrary and capricious" and violated the ESA. This court ruling invalidated the 2003 changes to the ESA listing. Since then, the NRM, outside of areas designated as nonessential experimental populations, has been classified as endangered under ESA.

Wolves are especially controversial because of their food choices. They subsist largely on elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose and bison. The interagency report indicated that livestock depredations in 2006 included 184 cattle, 247 sheep, 8 dogs, 1 horse, and 2 llamas. Reportedly 43 of the packs were involved in confirmed livestock depredations. Some hunting groups are concerned that wolves are having a detrimental effect on deer and elk populations. In response to the livestock losses, 142 wolves were lethally removed in 2006 but no packs were relocated.

Once public hearing comments on the proposal are reviewed, the Service will make its final ruling on the proposal. For more information, the annual report can be read at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualreports.htm>. (lhc)

CWD Alliance announces new on-line bibliography:

The Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Alliance and National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) Wildlife Disease Information Node have recently completed an exhaustive on-line bibliography of CWD-related research literature, citations and full-text articles, reports the Wildlife Management Institute.

Formatted into a fully searchable database, the CWD bibliography contains more than 230 documents, including full-text, peer-reviewed literature and abstracts, CWD management plans, illustrations, maps, news updates, and much more. These can be accessed using either a guided search that lists items under 56 search categories or a basic search that lists items by specific topics and key words submitted by the user. Results from both search options are listed alphabetically and can be sorted by various reference filters (e.g., Headline, Publisher, Publication Date, etc.).

The CWD bibliography was initiated in 2003 by the National Wildlife Health Center. It was undertaken in an effort to consolidate the rapidly increasing body of CWD knowledge and research into an accessible on-line database that would provide much needed resources for wildlife disease biologists, managers and the concerned public. The NBII

Wildlife Disease Information Node contributed to the bibliography's development by making it searchable by topic and category. Since then, the CWD Alliance has partnered with NBII and Dr. Kurt VerCauteren, of USDA's National Wildlife Research Center, to expand and update the bibliography with archived and current CWD articles.

"CWD continues to be the focus of many research projects and articles. Because of the extensive listing available today, this tool is invaluable for wildlife managers, students and others interested in the diverse aspects and status of chronic wasting disease," said Tia Kropf-Beringer, website content manager for the CWD Alliance. "The Alliance is committed to promoting responsible and accurate communications regarding the disease, and will continue to update the bibliography with new items that contribute to the rapidly growing body of CWD knowledge." To access the bibliography, visit <http://www.cwd-reference.org>.

For technical problems concerning the CWD bibliography, contact the NBII Wildlife Disease Information Node at wdin@usgs.gov. And to learn more about CWD, visit the CWD Alliance website at <http://www.cwd-info.org>. (mcd)

Coyotes not dissuaded by Chicago politics or its perpetual road construction:

An excellent, new publication dealing with urban coyotes is now available, reports the Wildlife Management Institute. *Urban Coyote Ecology and Management-The Cook County, Illinois, Coyote Project* documents research with radio-collared coyotes in Chicago and its suburbs by Dr. Stanley Gehrt of Ohio State University (OSU) and his graduate students.

With coyotes becoming increasingly abundant in many cities throughout the country, Gehrt and his students initiated study in 2000 to examine the movements, social behavior, diets, survival rates and other ecological factors of these new urbanites. Through February 2006, they captured 253 coyotes in Cook County and placed radio collars on 175 of them. More than 30,000 locations were documented for the instrumented animals.

The researchers found that, similar to coyotes in rural landscapes, urban coyotes maintain territories as groups, which typically involve five or six adults and their pups. Urban territories, averaging about three square miles, tend to be smaller than those of rural coyotes. The urban territories do not appear to overlap, indicating defense of territorial boundaries from other coyote groups. In addition to resident groups, urban coyote numbers also include solitary animals that have left packs and seek to join groups or create their own territories. These solitary males or females, usually six months to two years of age, have extensive home ranges, averaging 25 square miles.

The research has shown that survival for urban/suburban coyotes is slightly higher than for those in the countryside. The city dwellers were shown to have a 60-percent chance of surviving for a year. Most, however, die before they reach age two. Roadkills are by far the most common mortality cause, accounting for 50-70 percent of deaths. Other mortal-

ity factors included shooting, malnutrition and disease. Sarcoptic mange was identified as the most common disease-related mortality.

The research, supported primarily by Cook County Animal Control, with special support by the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, has been able to discredit several urban coyote myths. One, for example, is the common perception that urban coyotes frequently prey on domestic cats. Another is that these coyotes depend on human sources of food (garbage, pet food). Examining more than 1,400 coyote scats, the investigators found that small rodents were the most common food item (occurring in 42 percent of the scats), followed by fruit (23 percent), deer (22 percent) and rabbit (18 percent). Domestic cat remains were found in only 1.3 percent of the scats, and human garbage or pet food occurred in merely 1.9 percent.

Another disproved misconception is that urban coyotes are a significant source of conflict or danger for humans. During the course of the study, 5 (3 percent) of the 175 radio-collared coyotes were considered nuisance animals and, consequently, were removed from the area. Furthermore, the study related that there has never been a documented case of a coyote biting a human in Cook County. By comparison, Cook County typically records 2,000-3,000 dog bites annually, with some human fatalities.

It appears that coyotes in urban landscapes can be more of an asset than a liability. Although coyotes rarely kill adult deer or take enough Canada geese to impact those urban wildlife numbers significantly, their predation on fawns and depredation of goose nests may help slow the increases of those mainly, otherwise unchecked populations.

Urban Coyote Ecology and Management-OSU Bulletin No. 929-concludes with a number of management options and observations based on the study to date. It is an excellent reference on urban wildlife management issues. Copies can be obtained by contacting BUCKEYE PUBLICATIONS (pubs@ag.osu.edu, 614-292-1607) or a .pdf can be downloaded at: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/b929/pdf/b929.pdf>. (pmr)

New addition to WMI family:

In the wee hours of May 1, wee Owen Charles Dunfee was born to parents Kayte and Matt (WMI Conservation Project Specialist), in Annapolis, Maryland. The happy and fatigued couple is delighted with their healthy and rapidly growing son/puggle.

Worth reading:

Gumption, grit and greed accomplished Manifest Destiny and the transcontinental railroad secured it. A number of wonderful books have been written about the Golden Age of Steam and the men (robber barons and buccaneers) whose vision, brazenness, cunning and ruthlessness enabled "the true alchemy of the age, which transmuted the otherwise useless resources of a country into gold." *Hear that Lonesome Whistle Blow* (1977) by

Dee Brown is one such work. Stephen Ambrose's *Nothing Like It in the World* (2002)-with apologies to David Lavender's *The Great Pretender* (1970)-and *Empire Express* (1999) by David Bain are others well worth reading.

But the railroad's mastery of America's geography came at great expense. *The White Cascade* (2007) by Gary Krist is the story of one such cost, a horrific cost. It documents the 1910 Wellington disaster on the Great Northern Railroad (GNR) line through Stevens Pass, a treacherously pitched slot in the Cascade Mountains of central Washington, and "the weakest link in the GNR's transportation chain" connecting Minneapolis and Seattle.

The Cascades are less lofty than the Rocky Mountains, but nonetheless are more rugged, precipitous and densely timbered. The massif also is regarded as the snowiest region in the contiguous United States. Their winding canyons and steep-sided peaks of 6,000-8,000 feet posed a nearly insurmountable obstacle to rail connection of the East to Seattle. After others had failed, it took John F. Stevens (later, chief engineer of the Panama Canal) to identify a route for a rail line through the mountains, wending precariously, improbably along the course of the Wenatchie River below. The line up and over "Steven's Pass" was completed in 1893, at a cost of millions and dozens of lives. That included a 13,283-foot tunnel-"the dirtiest, blackest hole that a man ever went into"-that terminated about half a mile east of Wellington. The tunnel alone took three years to create with the labor of 2,400 men.

The entire line was the brainchild of GNR owner and president James J. Hill, "the shaggy-bearded, barb-wired, one-eyed son-of-a-bitch of western railroading." It was overseen by GNR's Cascade division superintendent James Henry O'Neill, who proved to be both hero and scapegoat of the Wellington disaster.

On average, Stevens Pass receives about 50 feet of snow per year. An exception was the winter of 1897-98, when 140 feet of snow accumulated in the pass. Bisecting the Pacific Northwest, the Cascades captures moisture from every weather system that crosses them. Typically, the snow season is subsiding by late February. But not in 1910. That month, one major snowstorm after another blanketed and reburied the mountain range. Time and again, the valiant O'Neill called on his armada of rotary-plow engines and legions of shovel-wielding transient laborers ("birds of passage") to keep the tracks clear and the trains moving.

On February 21, 1910, Everett, Washington's *Daily Herald* carried the banner headline, "Cold Wave is Hieing Hither." At Wellington, initially a construction camp and subsequently a remote station for the GNR, snow began falling heavily again on Tuesday, February 22, "like someone was plucking a chicken," and accumulating at a rate of about one foot per hour. The temperature hied hither to 10 degrees F.

As the snows fell nearly unabated over the next several days, the snow-removal crews worked frantically to keep the tracks open, but spirits, energy and coal reserves dwindled. Temperatures rose and fell, creating layer upon layer of wet snow-"Cascade cement"-on

the mountain slopes and ridge tops, increasing the danger and repeated inconvenience of snow slides and avalanches.

Into this scene, on Thursday, April 24, chugged the NPR train #25, the burgundy-colored Seattle Express, with its H-Class Pacific engine, two steam-heated sleepers, two day-coaches, and mail, baggage and observation cars. And 55 passengers.

Also making the grade but likewise unable to proceed because of the deep snow (exceeding 17 feet), breakdown of the overworked rotary plows and desertion by overworked birds of passage, was GNR's five-car Fast Mail train, #27.

The two trains were shunted to parallel spur tracks along the main line, on a manmade 50-foot ledge, with the Fast Mail train on the outside spur. That kept the main track open for the operable rotaries and because there was no place else to put them, except, perhaps, back in the Great Northern tunnel, which railroaders considered worse than folly. Also, those spur tracks were located where there had never been a snow slide.

And the storm continued.

At 1:42 a.m., Friday, April 25, 1910, as 125 people slept aboard the two stranded trains, the integrity of multiple and variably dense layers of unstable snow on the mountain 1,000 feet above Wellington gave way and loosed several acres of snow that slid downward, gaining size and momentum and terrible sound as it advanced.

The White Cascade, brilliantly, aptly titled, is a magnificent 315-page chronicle of America's deadliest avalanche. It is so well constructed, documented and detailed that it reads almost like a fiction thriller. It relates a tragedy of progress, of pitting reason, ingenuity, will and hubris against Nature. It is a reminder of what's in charge.

This book was published by Henry Holt and Company, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10010 (phone 646-307-5095; sales@henryholt.com). It retails for \$26.00.

© 2007 Wildlife Management Institute, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Permission is granted for broadcast, publication, and retransmission to e-mail lists, the World Wide Web or other copying or storage medium, online or not, if (1) the text is forwarded in its entirety, including this paragraph, and (2) no fee is charged. To offer comments, questions, criticisms or ideas for the "Outdoor News Bulletin" or for any of its articles, e-mail our ONB editor.

© 2006 Wildlife Management Institute
1146 19th Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-371-1808 . FAX: 202-408-5059