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WMI Outdoor News Bulletin

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North American Bird Species Shown to be Susceptible to Avian Influenza:

Research at the University of Georgia, published in the November 2006 issue of *Emerging Infectious Diseases* (Vol. 12, No. 11), has identified two North American wild bird species that are susceptible to infection from two highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus strains, reports the Wildlife Management Institute.

Laughing gulls and five duck species were inoculated with two different strains of HPAI H5N1 virus. The species were selected to represent a diversity of habitats and behaviors of “critical” North American waterfowl, including traditional avian influenza virus (AIV) reservoir species, such as the mallard. Only laughing gulls and wood ducks contracted the highly pathogenic strains. After inoculation, both exhibited illness before death.

Following the outbreaks and subsequent spread of HPAI H5N1 in wild avian birds in Europe and Africa in 2005, however, migratory birds have been under scrutiny as possible vectors for distribution of HPAI viruses. (Natural occurrences of low pathogenic avian influenza [LPAI] are common in native waterfowl populations and often have little to no noticeable effect on infected individuals.) Prior to the University of Georgia study, the susceptibility of North American waterfowl to HPAI viruses was unknown.

Although the most recent AIV sampling protocols in the United States were established in March 2006, with finalization of a National Strategic Plan for detection, the current surveillance system is rigorous enough to detect HPAI viruses potentially present in wild bird communities as well as those that may arrive in the future, according to Dr. Thomas DeLiberto, National Wildlife Disease Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “The Georgia study,” commented Dr. DeLiberto, “provided very valuable information and really reinforces that the surveillance methods we have in place are robust and effective in detecting avian influenza viruses.”

Since this past March, avian influenza surveillance has expanded to encompass all four of the major flyways in the United States. The primary goal of the plan, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Interior, is to collect 75,000-100,000 wild bird samples and 50,000 environmental samples nationwide this year. Samples are taken from birds found dead, captured live birds and wild bird habitat.

To learn more about avian influenza news and research, visit <http://www.usda.gov/birdflu> or <http://www.doi.gov/issues/avianflu.html>. To examine the research report in *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol12no11/06-0652.htm>. (mcd)

Longleaf pine restoration gets huge boost from Conservation Reserve Program:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced in October a major new practice to restore longleaf pine forests across nine southeastern states. Up to 250,000 acres are authorized for the new Longleaf Pine Initiative, known as CP36, in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). This acreage will be in addition to the more than 200,000 total acres of longleaf pine forest already planted the last few years through general CRP signups under the national Longleaf Pine Conservation Priority Area. The Continuous CRP CP36 practice accelerates implementation of one of

the highest ecosystem conservation priorities in the southeastern United States, reports the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI).

Longleaf pine forests once covered some 90 million acres of the coastal plain, from eastern Texas to southeastern Virginia. However, they were reduced by human land uses to only 3 to 4 million acres. Widely spaced trees that allow abundant sunlight to the ground, frequent fires and a lush, diverse herbaceous understory characterize the climax-stage longleaf pine ecosystem. The widespread conversion of this ecosystem for agriculture and loblolly pine plantation culture, as well as degradation due to elimination of frequent fire from the southern landscape, has led to corresponding, *serious* declines of numerous wildlife species. Extensive restoration of this ecosystem is a high management priority to enable recovery of populations of red-cockaded woodpeckers, Bachman's sparrows, brown-headed nuthatches, northern bobwhites, gopher tortoises, pine snakes, gopher frogs and indigo snakes.

An impressive, diverse coalition of more than 40 federal and state wildlife and forestry agencies, conservation organizations and environmental groups united to conceive and support the practice. The Longleaf Alliance (www.longleafalliance.org) launched the collective effort to create the practice, which resulted in a formal proposal to FSA in April 2005. The breadth and depth of support among conservationists for restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem, and the substantial value to both forest and wildlife resources are illustrated by the fact that this may be the first time that the Southern Group of State Foresters and the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies have endorsed the same proposal. Likewise, the proposal has been emphatically supported by both bobwhite and songbird conservationists as a major step forward for a landscape-scale opportunity to restore a critical suite of wildlife resources in the Southeast.

Under the CCRP, signup occurs continually throughout the year and eligible landowners are automatically accepted for the practice without having to compete during periodic national signups. The CP36 can be enrolled as either 10- or 15-year contracts and will be eligible for a one-time \$100-per-acre signing incentive payment (SIP). A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) will be made equal to 40 percent of the establishment costs, in addition to the standard 50 percent cost-share payments. The CP36 is available for lands with a cropping history within the pre-existing national Longleaf Pine Conservation priority Area.

For more information, contact Don McKenzie, WMI, at 501-941-7994. (dfm)

Controversy still stalking elk feedgrounds in Wyoming:

Claiming elk feed grounds in Wyoming are creating a serious disease risk to elk and other wildlife, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance and the Wyoming Outdoor Council have recently requested a federal district court to shut them down, reports the Wildlife Management Institute.

The plaintiffs are arguing that 12 of the feedgrounds are on lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management, so those agencies should be required to undertake an environmental review of their respective feedground operations. Also argued is that several of the feedgrounds have outdated federal permits, which need to be evaluated before being reauthorized.

In response, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) lawyers are arguing that the feedgrounds have a long history and, because the State of Wyoming has the authority to manage game species within its boundaries, the operation of the feedgrounds does not qualify as a major federal action requiring environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act. They further argue that the permits, although old, are valid nonetheless. Finally, the DOJ attorneys assert that the complaining groups have waited too long to challenge the long-established operations.

The feedgrounds were established in the 1930s and 1940s to compensate for reduced elk habitats and to help keep the animals from competing with livestock for hay fed on private lands.

The State of Wyoming filed as an intervenor in the case. It, too, affirmed that it has authority to manage its wildlife and that to ask the Forest Service to manage such wildlife was unacceptable.

Brucellosis, a disease that causes premature abortions in elk and livestock, has long been a problem on the feedgrounds. To combat the disease, Wyoming, in early 2006 started a controversial five-year “test and slaughter” program on the Muddy Creek feedground. The program was designed to reduce the incidence of the disease. It was precipitated in 2003 by an outbreak of brucellosis in cattle that was linked to infected feedground elk. That outbreak caused the state to lose its “brucellosis-free” status, a costly outcome to the livestock industry. In September of 2006, partially as a result of disease control work, Wyoming regained its “brucellosis-free” status.

The plaintiffs contend that the notion that elk must be killed to control brucellosis is the wrong approach. They say that a key reason for the presence of the disease is the continued existence of the feedgrounds, which results in unnatural crowding of elk. A further contention is that the feedgrounds themselves should be abandoned. And they also point out that Chronic Wasting Disease, a new and fatal disease to elk, is inching closer to the feedgrounds. The groups maintain that, if the disease reaches the feedgrounds, the impact on the elk herd would be disastrous.

The State of Wyoming has allowed that the feedgrounds may create a favorable situation for disease transmission, but it has countered that, in the absence of the feedgrounds, the number of elk in the Yellowstone ecosystem would be significantly reduced and conflicts with livestock on private feedgrounds would be significantly increased—the same two factors that led to creation of the feedgrounds nearly 70 years ago.

Long-term critics of the feedgrounds have argued that what is needed is a fresh and thorough look at the feeding program based on an evaluation of each feedground with the intent of phasing each one out over time by implementing such things as extensive habitat improvement, potential buy-out of public land grazing leases, and use of late season depredation hunts to keep elk off of private livestock feedgrounds. They have suggested that funding for these initiatives could come from a mix of private and public funds and perhaps be guided by an organization like the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. (lhc)

Predator/prey workshop to be held at North American Conference:

A full-day workshop on integrating predator/prey management to achieve conservation objectives will be held at the 72nd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. The Conference will be held in March, at the Hilton Portland and Executive Tower in Portland, Oregon.

Jointly sponsored by the Safari Club International Foundation and the Wildlife Management Institute, the workshop, which will take place on Tuesday, March 20, will examine societal, biological and policy issues surrounding predator/prey relationships and management. The event's objective is to improve integration of predator/prey management plans.

The workshop will feature a mix of invited speakers and submitted papers, plus a poster session. Three of four sessions will address (1) integrating mountain lion and ungulate management; (2) integrating wolf and big game management; and (3) predator management implications for waterfowl and upland birds.

Conference preregistration is required. Persons wishing to attend the Conference only for the workshop must pay the one-day registration fee. *All persons who wish to attend the workshop must RSVP to Bob Byrne, at bbyrne@sci-dc.org.* A complimentary lunch and refreshment breaks will be provided workshop attendees.

New book gets rave notice:

“Have we ever needed this!” exclaimed one reviewer.

Although not quite so vehement, praise from other reviewers for *Thinking Like A Manager: Reflections on Wildlife Management* continues to reflect strong endorsement from a broad spectrum of the professional conservation community.

Released in June, *Thinking Like A Manager* has stimulated thought and enthusiasm. Crafted over the course of four years by wildlifers John Organ, Dan Decker, Len Carpenter, Bill Siemer and Shawn Riley, the novella delves into current wildlife management

issues and the evolving processes of dealing with them. It offers insight, perspective and opportunity regarding the complex circumstances of managing wildlife populations in our evolving social, cultural, political and ecological landscapes.

“A great read! Very insightful and a fun way to learn about human dimensions,” wrote another reviewer. “Powerful message,” said another. “Simple, clear and entrained,” yet another commented.

As might be expected, the most of the feedback has come from wildlife management professionals. But not entirely. “What a wonderful book.... Although I am more involved with fisheries management issues more so than wildlife matters these days, all the issues described and approaches suggested apply equally. ‘Old salts’ like me will find pearls of new wisdom and insight, plus just feel good after reading the book, knowing that others out there struggle with all the same issues. Students and young professionals will benefit by finding the context of what they’ve heard crystallized in this one small book.”

Besides the book fitting into the curricula of a growing number of university departments and programs, a number of federal resource management agencies have secured copies for their staffs. “I purchased *Thinking Like A Manager* for my Division leadership team and have had very positive responses,” advised one administrator. Wrote another: “I think all of our people will get a lot of useful information out of it, but especially our field staff and mid-level managers.”

The cost of *Thinking Like A Manager* is \$10.00, plus \$2.00 shipping. Copies may be ordered from the Wildlife Management Institute, 1146 19th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036, or by phoning 202-371-1808.

With dove vote, Michiganders shoot science-based wildlife management in the foot:

A referendum to authorize the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) authority to establish a hunting season for mourning doves in the state failed by a substantial margin during this month’s election, reports the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI).

Despite the fact that hunting mourning doves is a legal, popular and biologically sustainable recreation in 40 other states, despite the fact that the Michigan DNR determined that hunting was not detrimental to the state’s autumn dove population and a consequent, potential economic windfall, despite the fact that harvests and populations levels of the migratory dove are monitored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as MDNR, Michigan citizens voted otherwise. Given the amounts of antihunting money and rhetoric used to campaign against the hunt—much of both from out-of-state sources—the outcome is not entirely surprising. What is surprising is that the vote was a complete contradiction of an earlier and forceful mandate from Michigan citizens to the MDNR to use sound science to manage wildlife.

As pointed out in the September issue of this news bulletin, Michigan voters overwhelmingly passed a ballot initiative a decade ago, which required that wildlife in the state be managed on the basis of sound science.

“It clearly is the right of citizens to make decisions, good or bad. It appears that folks in Michigan have managed to do both on the same issue,” observed WMI Midwest field representative Pat Ruble. “The antihunting contingent can crow—or coo, in this case—over its recent voting booth accomplishment, but as science has shown, Michigan’s dove population won’t be better for it. The so-called victory actually is tainted by the loss of a legitimate recreation and associated revenues, but more so by the compromise of wildlife management by science. The vote may not bode well for other wildlife species—game and nongame alike—in Michigan, if their management can be trumped by emotionalism, misinformation and anthropomorphic rhetoric.”

Geothermal energy issue still boiling at the Valles Caldera National Preserve:

In October, a continuing disagreement over the value of mineral rights under the Valles Caldera National Preserve in northern New Mexico forced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to file a federal condemnation lawsuit to obtain the remaining mineral rights from the former owners of the Baca Ranch, which became the Preserve, reports the Wildlife Management Institute.

The Baca Ranch owners had leased their mineral rights to an energy company that had planned to build a geothermal energy plant on the property. However, plans for the energy plant were seriously hindered when, with congressional authorization, 95,000 acres were acquired for \$101 million in 2000 and was designated a National Preserve. The issue originally materialized when the energy company applied for a permit to use about 30 previously drilled geothermal wells to access its share of the mineral rights below the Preserve.

In late 2004, New Mexico’s two senators, Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman, introduced legislative resolution to the dispute in Congress. It called for the USDA Secretary to negotiate a price with the holders of the mineral rights—the energy company. The legislation was approved by the Senate but never went to a vote in the House.

The condemnation lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court in New Mexico last month will force the owners of 12.5 percent of the Preserve’s mineral rights to face a judge who will set the price and terms of sale to the USDA. In 2000, the U.S. Forest Service—the agency responsible for the Preserve—set the value of the mineral rights at \$1.87 million. The owners claim that the value is as high as \$14 million. In documents accompanying the lawsuit, the Forest Service revalued the rights at \$700,000. Because of the large discrepancy of value assessments, the former property owners support the condemnation suit as a method to settle the long-term disagreement.

USDA maintains that it must own the mineral rights to protect the multiple values of the Preserve. The Preserve is a “quasi” Forest Service property (Santa Fe National Forest). By special arrangement, the property is managed as a working ranch and natural preserve rather than being administered under standard rules of the Forest Service. Limited public access is provided on the property for recreational opportunities, such as world-class elk hunting and wildlife viewing.

For more information on the Valles Caldera National Preserve, including information on recreational opportunities on the property, see <http://www.vallescaldera.gov/>. (lhc)

72nd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference registration:

The advance program for the upcoming North American Conference, in March, in Portland, Oregon, will be printed and distributed early next month. It will contain both hotel and Conference registration information (including online registration, which will open December 1), a tentative meeting and program agenda, and a wealth of other information, so that prospective attendees can make their plans.

The advance program’s information also will be available electronically at www.wildlifemanagementinstitute.org sometime before Christmas.

Northeast states get positively proactive on State Wildlife Action Plans:

As the number of approved State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) grows, the states and their conservation partners are increasingly turning towards strategies to implement priority actions identified in the Plans. The Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) has taken SWAP implementation to a new level by focusing agency resources on landscape-level, regional conservation needs, reports the Wildlife Management Institute.

NEAFWA directors and technical staff understand that some SWAP priorities transcend state boundaries. Examples include barriers to diadromous fish, quantity and quality of migratory bird habitat, mitigation of transportation system impacts, and watershed impacts from water removal or degradation. More practically, the utility of new tools to guide SWAP implementation also is not defined by state boundaries. Development of better monitoring methods, consistency in classification of conservation “hot spots,” and techniques to minimize impacts of sprawl are a few other examples whereby states potentially benefit from tools developed at a regional scale.

NEAFWA has pledged to assign a percentage of their states’ annual federal State Wildlife Grant appropriation to a Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) account. The RCN process will work similarly to the National Conservation Needs grant program coordi-

nated by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). NEAFWA-designated technical staff will develop a set of prioritized RCN topics. A request for proposals (RFP) will be generated to solicit contractor proposals for projects that are intended to meet the needs described by the RCN. NEAFWA then will select the best proposals for funding.

Lee Perry, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and President of NEAFWA, explained how this is not a new concept to the states: "Because fish and wildlife are not confined by state and regional boundaries, natural resource management administrators pooled available resources long ago to address regional, national and international issues that affected the welfare of fish and wildlife within their individual states. Through this new NEAFWA action, we are applying a proven, collaborative approach to address emerging issues that affect fish and wildlife and their management."

As with previous multi-state projects, personnel from the Service's Region 5 Federal Aid office have been closely involved with the states in setting up the RCN program. "This multi-state collaboration is an important step in the evolution and implementation of SWAPs, and will ensure that they are dynamic documents and that benefits from State Wildlife Grant dollars will be maximized," stated John Organ, Federal Aid Division Chief for Region 5.

NEAFWA expects to issue its first RFP in mid January. Six priority RCNs for 2007 have been selected and will include (1) creation of regional habitat cover maps, (2) impact of invasive species on Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Northeast, (3) development of in-stream flow standards, guidelines and policies, (4) technical assistance to private landowners, (5) identification of regional focal areas and corridors for the conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Northeast, and development of habitat conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, and (6) development of regional indicators and measures.

For more information, contact Steve Weber, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, at 603-271-2462. (sjw)

Nominations sought for 2007 northern bobwhite quail awards:

In cooperation with the Southeast Quail Study Group (SEQSG), Quail Unlimited (QU) is seeking nominations for the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) Group Achievement and Individual Awards for 2007. These awards recognize outstanding action and involvement by an agency, organization or group and a federal agency employee in helping implement and promote NBCI.

In 2006, the West Central Missouri Chapter of Quail Unlimited was recognized as the second winner of the NBCI Group Achievement Award. Also in 2006, NBCI Individual

Awards honored Natural Resources Conservation Service State Biologist Pat Graham and Webster County (KY) District Conservationist Mike Andrews.

A committee of SEQSG and QU representatives will make the final selection, and awarding announced and awards presented at the 72nd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Portland, Oregon, on Thursday, March 22, 2007.

Nominations must include contact information for the agency, organization, group nominee or federal employee; background history (education, special training, etc.); a concise summary of NBCI-related activities that justify the nomination, and nominator contact information. Nominations should not exceed five pages and must be submitted by *January 15, 2007*, in Word format to bobwhite@psci.net or faxed to 812-536-3159.

Additional information on NBCI can be located at www.bobwhiteconservation.org. The NBCI Plan, released in March 2002, can be viewed at www.qu.org/seqsg/nbc/nbc.cfm.

Worth reading:

Recently off the University of Delaware Press is *A Writer's Voice: Collected Work of Twentieth Century Biologist and Conservationist, Joseph P. Linduska*, compiled and neatly edited by Louise E. Dove. The book is a wonderful and engrossing anthology of the wit and wisdom of an extraordinarily gifted biologist, conservationist and outdoor writer. Joe Linduska, who died in 1993, was a gentle man, maybe even a gentleman, but he certainly was genuine and, with a permanent starburst twinkle in his eye, a certifiable character. I'm pretty sure that he was the world's only Czech-American leprechaun.

You don't have to have known Joe Linduska to enjoy this book thoroughly, but those of us who gained his friendship, and treasure it still, may want to bronze this little (270-page) opus. It will give all readers a glimpse into his considerable intellect, his foresight as a scientist and conservationist, the breadth and subtlety of his humor, and his consummate skill as an outdoor writer. The latter is the "most wonderfulest" thing about the book.

What readers may not discover, or perhaps not even suspect, is that Joe was a highly skilled technical writer. But that's another story. Better yet, it could be part of another book—a biography of Joe—which could include a virtual encyclopedia of hilarious anecdotes about the subject. But Joe is not the gist of *A Writer's Voice*.

In this work, most of the writings are from 1986 to 1993, when Joe wrote a weekly column ("colyum" he called it) for the *Kent County News*, in Chestertown, Maryland, where he and his sainted bride Lillian resided. But it includes a smattering of magazine and newspaper articles as far back as the late 1950s, about the time he really hit his stride as a conservation writer. In nearly all of his published pieces, besides cogency, there is a subtle, snake-charmer wryness—what Joe himself referred to as "a little gimmick" and sug-

gested was a literary device. Baloney, I say. Except when forced into pedantic technical writing, Joe wrote what and how he thought, and humor was simply, innately manifest in his insights and outlook.

But read a few examples for yourself. On the diet of a western house finch, he wrote that it is “as unselective as an opossum or a derelict coon hound,” and that bird’s digestive tract “has the thoroughness and efficiency of a septic tank.” He referred to the American woodcock as a “woodland Durante,” whose peenting vocalizations are akin to the “eructations of a flatulent frog.” He characterized the European starling as a “squeaky-voiced, nest-thieving, black-hatted wretch... [that] found its way over most of the world, often with the help of stupid people.” He advised that ichthyologists are fishermen who have gone to college.

Satire and a poorly disguised curmudgeon persona were other vehicles. For example, on a one-time proposal by “some gang of addlepatented nitwits” to have the great blue heron replace the Baltimore oriole as Maryland’s state bird, Joe threatened to move to Delaware in retaliation, and insinuated that the Baltimore Orioles ball club and Cal Ripken might follow suit.

Joe’s writing featured a variety of colorful expressions and statements. “Land O’Goshen, sakes alive and grease my collards!” for example. For another, he defined destiny as “Sooner or later you’re gonna get it.”

Joe was a master of self-deprecating humor. He was not loath to mention, in one manner or another, his appreciation for the elixir merit of martinis (in fact, for travel and cheap-skate purposes, he actually invented clear Pepsi in liter bottles long before the bottling company did). And there was the well-documented rift between Joe and his “Chesterpeake” Bay retriever, Fitzhugh’s Standing Ovation (aka Duke, aka Damnuduke), whom Joe enlisted initially as columnist alter-ego. After wresting the column regularly away from Joe, by popular demand, Duke added insult to injury by taking some ineffectually subliminal shots at his indignant master/fellow journalist by referring in print to Joe variously as the “Ole Man,” “Old Guy,” “Old Busybody,” “Ole Pop,” “Old Geezer,” “Old Skinflint,” “Old Pinch Penny,” “Old Crosspatch,” “Old Crab,” “Old So-Called-Colyumist,” “Old Goat,” “Old Big Shot,” “Ole Big Mouth,” “Ole flint-hearted Joe the Shmo,” “Old Bellyacher,” and “Ole Grouch.”

Don’t think for a minute that I have substantially high-graded from the book’s contents. The entire volume is awash in writing that is highly informative and entertaining—a cross between the literary styles of George Ade and Dan Jenkins. But see for yourself.

One last thing—the Foreword is very nicely penned by one Lonnie Williamson, of the Creek Confederacy Williamsons, Alphonse for decades to Joe’s Gaston (or vice versa), and quite a fine colyumist himself.

A Writer’s Voice can be ordered on-line at <http://www2.lib.udel.edu/udpress>. Its retail price is \$42.50.

Thanks, Joe. Thanks, Louise.

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