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October 1995

## The Probe, Issue 159 – October 1995

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# Care and Feeding of the Press and the Public

*Robin Porter, USDA-APHIS-LPA*

Never let facts get in the way of a good news story. Although this statement is a popular joke in newsrooms across the country, being ambushed by the press is no laughing matter.

Mark Twain said, "By failing to prepare, we prepare to fail."

The following communication guidelines for wildlife professionals will help you avoid failure and assist you in preparing for unexpected attention from the media, special interest groups, and the general public.

### KNOW WHO YOU ARE TALKING WITH.

Before you begin any conversation, it is critical that you determine the identity of the interviewer or caller. After you exchange general background information, write down the person's questions and indicate that you are in the middle of a meeting or a project (your work comes first). Offer to get back to the person within a set amount of time. This technique will give you extra time to formulate intelligent answers to tough questions. Remember, "haste makes waste" and also mistakes.

**BE COURTEOUS AND POLITE.** No matter how rude or aggressive the interviewer or caller, remain level-headed, calm, and unemotional. Anticipate hostile questions and always keep a list of possible answers within reach. For example:

*Question:* Do you enjoy killing animals?

*Response:* Of course not. I believe in maintaining healthy and stable wildlife populations.

### STAY WITHIN YOUR FIELD OF WORK.

You are qualified to speak about your job and what you do. If you are asked about subjects outside your area of responsibility, simply tell the requester that it is not appropriate for you to provide information on the subject. At the same time, be responsive and refer the caller to the appropriate source for an answer.

**DO NOT SPECULATE.** If asked to comment on rumors, "what if" situations, policy, or charges against another party, ask for the facts and offer to report back after you have had a chance to obtain information related to the questions. Keep in mind, you do not need to have an answer for every question and that every question is not necessarily appropriate or requires an answer. If you do not know the answer, say so in a diplomatic manner. Sincerity, truthfulness, credibility, and accuracy are your best friends when dealing with the public and the media.

**DO NOT JUSTIFY YOUR WORK.** Most wildlife programs and private businesses exist as a result of public demand and legislative action. Concentrate on providing information about what you do and how you do it. Questions related to how your program benefits an industry, business, agency, or individual should be referred to those parties for an answer.

**OFFER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO CLARIFY A STORY.** Too often, specific questions are answered as briefly as possible without offering background facts to complete the story. This can result in inaccuracies. On the other hand, don't offer unnecessary information or volunteer something that will raise more questions than it answers. Stay focused on the subject at hand.

**AVOID FOOT-IN-MOUTH DISEASE.** Do not say "morbid," say "sick", do not say "cervidae," say "deer", do not say "EA," say "environmental assessment." Also, avoid red-flag words that result in an emotional reaction; there is usually a more neutral word that can be substituted such as predator vs. coyote, euthanasia or cull vs. kill or depopulate.

**BE AWARE OF DEADLINES.** All reporters have deadlines. Ask what the deadline is so you can supply the needed information in time. However, your answers must be accurate, so if you cannot verify your information before a deadline, do not speculate or guess.

**USE PUBLIC AFFAIRS PRODUCTS.** Develop talking points, statements, press releases, brochures, fact sheets, video, and other information pieces to explain your work. These should be referred to when responding to requests for information. Additionally, use informal contacts (neighbors, family, friends) to explain wildlife damage management.

**BE AN EXPERT SPOKESPERSON AND EDUCATOR.** The most effective way to reduce the power of the press and special interest groups is to go directly to the public with your message. Volunteer to talk to schools, youth groups, scouts, hunter and trapper education classes, service groups, and other non-traditional groups about wildlife management. Also, offer your expertise as a professional wildlife damage biologist to local media sources.

*Continued on page 2, Col. 2*

# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**October 8-11, 1995: Annual Conference of The Society for Vector Control.** Holiday Inn University Park, Fort Collins, Colorado. Contact: Justine Keller, P.O. Box 87, Santa Ana, CA 92702, Telephone (714) 971-2421, FAX (714) 971-3940.

**October 18, 1995: Deer Damage Management in New Jersey: Alternatives for Landscape Professionals.** Haggerty Education Center, Morristown, New Jersey. Sponsored by Amer. Society of Landscape Architects, NJ Chapter. Contact: Helen Heinrich, ASLA, phone (201) 379-1100, FAX (201) 379-6507.

**November 5-8, 1995: Seventh Eastern Wildlife Damage Management Conference.** Holiday Inn North, Jackson, Mississippi. Contact: Phil Mastrangelo, USDA/APHIS/ADC, P.O. Drawer FW, Room 200, Forest Resources Bldg., Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS 39762. *NADCA Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with this Conference.*

**December 13-14, 1995: Coyotes in Texas: A Compendium of Our Knowledge.** San Angelo, Texas. More than 30 speakers will discuss the state of the science relative to coyote biology, ecology, and management. Contact: Dale Rollins, TAMU, 7887 N. Highway 87, San Angelo, TX 76901, phone (915) 653-4576, FAX (915) 658-4364.

**February 18-21, 1996: Second Eastern Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators Shortcourse.** Holiday Inn North, Lexington, Kentucky. Includes such topics as: Relationships of NWCs to State Wildlife Agencies; TWS Position Statement on Wildlife Translocation; Does USDA-APHIS-ADC Compete with Private Enterprise?; Establishing Industry Standards and Certification; Selling Exclusion—What Works; Marketing—The Key to Success; Capturing Trap-Shy Squirrels and Raccoons; and Developing Lures that Work. Includes a full-day session devoted to “Euthanasia of Native Wildlife,” sponsored by the Humane Society of the U.S., including hands-on training. Contact: Tom Barnes, Dept. of Forestry, Univ. of Kentucky, phone (606) 257-8633; FAX (606) 323-1031; internet tbarnes@ca.uky.edu.

**March 4-7, 1996: 17th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Sonoma County Red Lion Hotel, Rohnert Park, California.** Optional field trip on March 4; Plenary Session and Technical Sessions presenting research and management information on rodents, birds, predators, and other wildlife on March 5, 6 & 7. Contact: North Region-DANR, UC Davis, (916) 754-8491.



*Continued from page 1*

## Care and Feeding...

**OFFER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.** If you see, hear or read something negative in the media about wildlife management, call or write the managing editor/station manager to present your opinion on the subject. However, always take the high road and present the facts without attacking opposing viewpoints.

**REACH AND TOUCH THE PUBLIC.** You can't afford to ignore what the public thinks, says and does about your work. Get to know your community and do not assume that you know their values and concerns. If feasible, invite them to be part of the solution.

**DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT.** Keep a detailed record of your conversation and store it in a public/media contact file. Once you have provided assistance to media or the public, inform cooperators immediately. This can help if they are contacted by the same person.

Finally, learn to follow the “golden rules” for dealing with the media and the public: do your homework, never lie, and prepare in advance.

*Editor's Note:* Robin Porter is a public affairs specialist with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. She is a former Gannett News Service reporter. She also handled district communications for a congressional office in Michigan.

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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. Articles and notes can also be sent by e-mail to rmtimm@ucdavis.edu. 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.

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

## Zoonotic Disease Featured in Four Articles

Four newly-published articles in the *Journal of Mammalogy* feature descriptive information on several important zoonotic disease agents, which should be of interest to anyone who works closely with wild mammals.

Published in the August 1995 issue of the *Journal of Mammalogy* (volume 76, No. 3), the titles of the four articles, their authors, and a brief summary of the subject covered are as follows:

**Rodent-borne hemorrhagic fever viruses: a special risk for mammalogists?** James E. Childs, James N. Mills, and Gregory E. Glass.

Human diseases caused by two unrelated viral groups, hantaviruses and arenaviruses, are described and reviewed. Diseases caused by these agents are among the most severe and most frequently fatal of all zoonotic diseases. An outbreak of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome in 1993 in the Four Corners area of the southwestern U.S. was the first recorded incidence of a severe human disease associated with a hantavirus in the Western Hemisphere. The causative agent is strongly associated with deer mice, *Peromyscus maniculatus*. The human mortality associated with this disease is greater than 50%, the highest reported for any hantavirus disease worldwide. Of 16 known arenaviruses, 15 are associated with rodent hosts. These include lymphocytic choriomeningitis and Lassa virus, bold Old World diseases, as well as several New World viruses known primarily from Latin America. Lymphocytic choriomeningitis causes a meningitis or influenzal syndrome, which is rarely serious, and it occurs nearly worldwide in association with its primary host, the house mouse, *Mus musculus*.

**Rabies—epidemiology, prevention, and future research.** John W. Krebs, Mark L. Wilson, and James E. Childs.

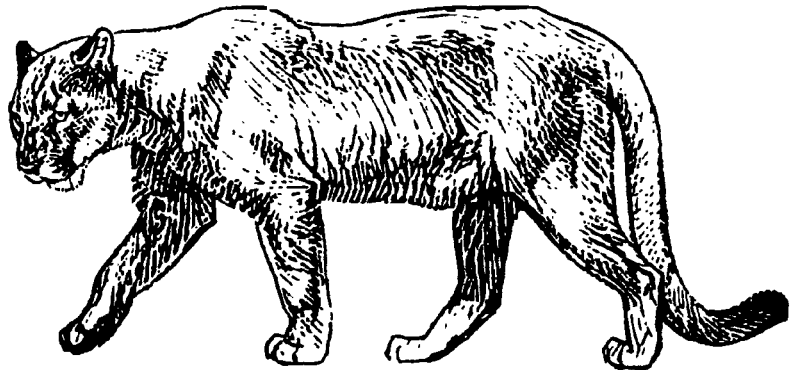
In North America, raccoons, skunks (primarily striped skunks), foxes (primarily red fox), and bats (several species) are the major reservoirs of rabies. Globally, the risk of contracting rabies is greatest in developing countries where dog rabies is enzootic. The incubation period in humans is variable, with first symptoms appearing as soon as less than ten days, or as long as 6 years, following exposure. In most cases, symptoms occur with 30-90 days. Once symptoms in humans occur, no treatment is effective, and the disease is almost universally fatal. Intentional translocation of carnivores such as raccoons and coyotes by sportsmen or others is thought to be responsible for the spread of certain strains of the disease into parts of the U.S. where they were formerly absent. A detailed set of recommendations for rabies-preexposure-prophylaxis is included.

**Nonviral vector-borne zoonoses associated with mammals in the United States.** Kenneth L. Gage, Richard S. Ostfeld, and James G. Olson.

Diseases reviewed include plague, tularemia, Lyme disease, tick-borne relapsing fevers, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, rickettsialpox, louse-borne typhus, flea-borne typhus, Q fever, and human ehrlichiosis. Many of these are associated with mammals and their ectoparasites, which can transmit them to humans.

**Guidelines for working with rodents potentially infected with hantavirus.** James N. Mills et al.

Specific guidelines are provided for personal safety while trapping, handling and releasing, transporting, sampling, and performing necropsy on potentially infected rodents, or teaching field classes in areas occupied by reservoir species. Recommendations are given on protective equipment, disinfectants, decontamination of traps and instruments, disposal of infectious wastes, and handling of samples intended for hantavirus testing.



## Lion Bill Goes to California Assembly

In June, the California Senate passed and sent to the Assembly S. 28, Sen. Tim Leslie's bill which would reverse the mandates of 1990's Proposition 117. Proposition 117 outlawed mountain lion hunting and provided for a state-funded \$30 million annual stipend to maintain lion habitat. The bill now awaits hearing in the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife. If passed by the full Assembly, the bill's language will appear as a voter referendum on the March 1996 state ballot.



The editors of **The PROBE** thank contributors to this issue: Robin Porter, Rich Chipman, Stephen Vantassel, James E. Forbes, and Wes Jones. Send your contributions to **The PROBE**, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.

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# Video Review

Stephen Vantassel, NWCO Correspondent

*"Eating Crow: Duck Hunting Method of Calling and Hunting Crows." By Jerry Tomlin. A Crow Roost Production. 1991.*

The video opens up with various typewritten screens explaining the philosophy behind this video. The author, Jerry Tomlin, essentially argues that the number one characteristic of crows is eating, not fighting. Thus the best way to hunt crows would be to rely on a method that exploits the crow's desire to eat. Mr. Tomlin also contends that an experienced crow caller can attract crows more proficiently than an electronic calling system. This video is pictorial demonstration of his views.

Mr. Tomlin begins by quickly demonstrating the old method of hunting crows, namely; stand by a tree, blow the fight call., shoot a couple crows, and then walk until you meet another group. Obviously it is not a very efficient method of controlling crows.

Tomlin's duck hunting method, by contrast, uses calls, crow decoys, and blinds in an attempt to bring the crows to your position. In fact, about half the video (approximately 36 minutes) is little more than watching three men call and shoot crows. If you don't like watching animals die, then this video is not for you. The film portrays real hunting with live footage of the great instant kills as well as the distress of the wounded. While too much tape was spent filming crows getting shot, I was quite impressed with the numbers. The educational content of the video could have been greatly improved if the author spoke about crow hunting strategies and problem-solving while the video displayed the shooting sequences.

The real educational aspect of the film begins about 25 minutes into the tape. It is here that Tomlin provides solid information about crow hunting. He tells you about calls, shotgun loads, and choke size. In my opinion, the information, albeit brief, on use of mouth calls to make different crow signals is worth the price of the tape.

The next portion of the tape rolls into preparing the birds for eating. Tomlin considers the crow breast to be the best part of the crow. Other parts like the legs and wings, he says, are too tough. He demonstrates a technique to obtain the breast meat that is so simple and fast that you may need to rewind the tape to see it again. As one who doesn't have a great deal of hand dexterity, I believe that I could follow his instructions and achieve good results. Not to leave us hanging, Mr. Tomlin provides two recipes for preparing crow meat. What does crow taste like? Well, Mr. Tomlin says crow tastes a lot like Mallard duck.

The video concludes with a second crow hunt at a farm where the hunters use hay rolls as their blind. Of particular importance in this section is the listing of supply sources for obtaining the needed products for crow hunting. As one who has

never hunted crows, I appreciated learning what products were recommended by an experienced crow hunter.

Although the video was produced for sport hunters, not ADC specialists, I would still like to give it a solid "B" grade. I sincerely believe that a novice could go out and hunt crows using the Duck Hunting Method and achieve reasonable first time success. The video has clear photography and audio so you don't have to strain your eyes or ears. I also think it deserves this grade because, if it is the first crow hunting instructional video as Mr. Tomlin claims, then I think Mr. Tomlin has done a fine job. For we all know that creating the first of anything is always the hardest.

Reasons for not giving it a higher grade were as follows: First, I thought that more time should have been spent in helping people identify good areas to hunt crows. Perhaps I am being too harsh, because if a crow damage complaint comes in, you already know where the crows are hanging around. Second, I would like to have seen more information on problem-solving. One question I would have liked to have seen answered was, how long should I stay in one spot without seeing a crow, before moving on? Finally, a primer on crow biology and habits would have really filled out the tape.

Despite these criticisms, I think the tape is worth money. With the amount of damage to bird eggs and food crops caused by crows, I think more ADC professionals will be need to learn how to control crows. If shooting is an option in your situation, then this video should help you reduce the size of crow flocks in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

To order your post-paid copy, send a check for \$43.95 to: The Crow Roost, P.O. Box 1612, Dept. NAD, Milledgeville, GA 31061. For more information on this tape and their other products, you may call them at 1-912-968-5885.

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## Publications and Videos Needed for Review

Suggestions for books, videos, and other recent publications to be reviewed in future issues of **The PROBE** are needed. If you have or know of a publication that should be shared with our membership, contact **The PROBE**'s NWCO correspondent, Stephen Vantassel, at 332 A Cooley St., Box 102, Springfield, MA 01128, or e-mail Stephen at ADCTRAPPER@aol.com.

## Hunting and Fishing Bill Approved by U.S. House Resources Committee

The U.S. House Resources Committee has overwhelmingly approved H.R. 1675, the bill that would make hunting and fishing a purpose of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act is now expected to go to the House floor in early fall. The legislation was crafted with input from the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America and other national conservation organizations. National and International Affairs Director William P. Horn continues to work with the bill's chief patron, Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, on gaining additional sponsors and votes. The bill already has the bipartisan support of the House Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus leadership.

## Wildlife Conservation Fund Benefits Through Combined Federal Campaign

Federal employees are encouraged to support the education, research and legal defense programs of the Wildlife Conservation Fund of America (WCFA) through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) payroll deduction program. The WCFA is the companion organization of the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America (WLFA). According to WLFA Senior Vice President Jim Goodrich: "The CFC represents a significant source of funding for certain animal rights groups. Sportsmen, likewise, should be able to support the pro-sportsman conservation efforts of an organization such as WCFA through the federal campaign."

Employees may enroll in the program from Sept. 1 - Nov. 15. Automatic monthly payroll deductions begin in January. The Combined Federal Campaign is the only authorized workplace fund-raising effort for federal employees to donate to select, nonprofit charities.

## Trapping Weasels

**T**hose of us working in this field frequently come across "points to ponder." Take Canada geese for example.

Federal, State, and private ADC people have been "controlling" urban Canada geese in Westchester and Rockland Counties, New York since 1958. The idea is to reduce the numbers of urban resident geese in order to reduce the feather, droppings and other problems associated with the birds from an original 1958 population of about 1,000. After 38 years of this "control," the two county populations now stands at over 20,000!

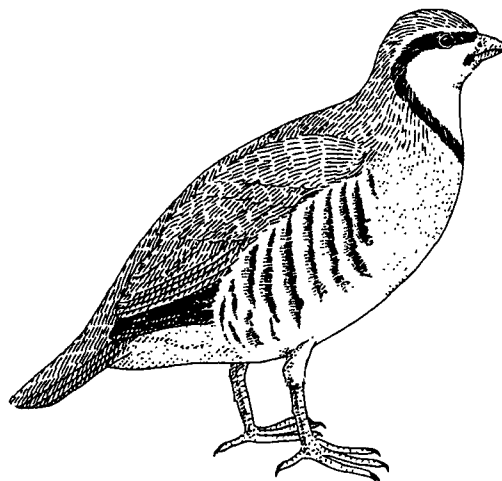
Since about 1918, Federal and State wildlife management people have been "managing" wild migratory Canada geese. The idea is to provide large numbers of geese for hunters to hunt each fall. This fall, after 77 years of "management," the Atlantic Flyway migratory goose population has declined to the point where the goose season is now closed.

Maybe what we all need to do is to start "managing" urban resident Canada geese while we start "controlling" wild migratory Canada geese. Now, that is a "point to ponder."

The NADCA Employment Committee is coming right along. We now have a file of about 5 wildlife biologists, 6 wildlife technicians and 10 trappers' résumés, which we provide to employers who request them. We just sent a set of wildlife technicians résumés to Nebraska where a job recently opened. The only category for which we currently have no résumés is "Volunteer." If you would like to participate in this NADCA service to members, contact either me or your NADCA Regional Director.

By the time you get this, the annual election will be almost upon us. We still need you, our members, to do two things: (1) Nominate people to run for office and, (2) Be sure to vote. Remember, if you don't do it—who will?

*James E. Forbes*  
NADCA President



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**Membership Application**

**NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION**

Mail to: Wes Jones, Treasurer, Route 1 Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871, Phone: (715) 468-2038

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Home

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Office

Additional Address Info: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Dues: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Class: Student \$10.00 Active \$20.00 Sponsor \$40.00 Patron \$100 (Circle one)

*Check or Money Order payable to NADCA*

Select one type of occupation or principal interest:

- |                                                             |                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Pest Control Operator  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USDA - APHIS - ADC or SAT          | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USDA - Extension Service           | <input type="checkbox"/> ADC Equipment/Supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal - not APHIS or Extension   | <input type="checkbox"/> State Agency           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Trapper                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator | <input type="checkbox"/> University             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____             |                                                 |

*The Probe*