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The Probe NADCA
ISSUE 164
APRIL 1996

Opportunities and Challenges Within Wildlife Damage Management

Robert H. Schmidt, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Utah State University, Logan Utah 84322-5210

Dr. Scott Craven, Extension Wildlife Specialist and Professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, recently presented the keynote address at the 17th Vertebrate Pest Conference, the largest national conference dedicated to wildlife damage management, held March 4-7 in Rohnert Park, California.

In his remarks, Craven discussed some of the factors that will affect the direction of wildlife damage management, especially the opportunities and challenges associated with this profession.

According to Craven, wildlife damage management is a growth industry. There is a continual and increasing need for the management of wildlife around homes and gardens, agricultural operations, and as part of traditional natural resource management. Although he prefers the term "wildlife damage management" over the terms "vertebrate pest control" and "animal damage control," he believes all describe the same business — managing wildlife damage to meet human needs.

Craven noted many positive characteristics of the wildlife damage profession that demonstrate its health and vitality.

The National Animal Damage Control Association (NADCA) continues to grow as a coordinating group for the wildlife damage industry.

The National Animal Damage Control Association (NADCA) continues to grow as a coordinating group for the wildlife damage industry. Recently merging with the National Urban Wildlife Management Association, NADCA has experienced increased membership and a revitalized presence in the profession. In addition, the Wildlife Damage Management Working Group of The Wildlife Society has evolved to allow wildlife biologists and managers to focus their input into wildlife damage management. The TWS Working Group has also seen an increase in membership, development of an Internet discussion group (WDAMAGE) and has now sponsored three symposium sessions at the annual meeting of The Wildlife Society. "We've come a long way from the black hat, gopher-choker image of a few decades ago," noted Craven.

Other significant milestones include:

- Utah State University's Berryman Institute in increasing the stature of the field through its teaching, research, national awards program, and staff, as well as additional wildlife damage-related courses being taught throughout the US.

- The explosive growth of Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators (NWCOs), which are businesses that specialize in urban wildlife damage. The success of Critter Control, Inc., as well as the attendance of NWCOs at recent regional workshops specializing in wildlife damage, "...suggest strong demand for more opportunities."

- There are three major conferences that focus on wildlife damage management: the Vertebrate Pest Conference (formed in 1962), the Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop (formed in 1973), and the Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference (formed in 1983). Their *Proceedings* are an important literature base for wildlife damage researchers and managers.

- The active role of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Animal Damage Control program in developing a high profile in regional and national conferences, maintaining and enhancing the Denver Wildlife Research Center (now

Continued on page 5, Col. 1

IVFDM Not IVPDM

Robert H. Giles, Jr., Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0321

I have advocated a systems approach to animal damage control for years, taught a course in IPM which, when it is practiced well, is just such an approach. Later I realized it was not pests that I wanted to manage, but their damage. Even later, I realized that a rational landowner computes losses and gains and that decisions are made based on the total production system (**The PROBE**, No. 131, April 1993), not merely reduced financial losses. It seems so simple once put briefly.

Recently, after too many years, I realized, with the help of Dr. Augustine Ezealor, that "integrated vertebrate pest damage management" (IVPDM) was weak. It should have *fauna* substituted for *pest*. One aspect of integrated management is analysis of the problem and ascertaining whether perceived loss is real, then its causes and roots. It is as often that market conditions result in perceived damage as much as the presence of tooth marks. By concentrating on the animal (limiting it to vertebrates for various reasons), on *fauna*, then on damage, we reduce the redundancy (pests, by definition, produce "damage") and allow analyses associated with vertebrates that cause significant reduction in expected, estimated net present-discounted financed, esthetic, or cultural benefits to people. (The latter seems to be a definition of damage.)

I think IVFDM should be our not-very catchy phrase, but one that is more precise as we move along a rough road to a concept of a total production system.

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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.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

July 14-16, 1996: 6th Annual Bird Strike Committee-USA (BAC-USA) Meeting, Phoenix, Arizona: Held in conjunction with the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) at the Wigwam Hotel, Phoenix, AZ. Contact: Ms. Holly Ackerman, phone (703) 824-0504.

October 1-6, 1996: 3rd Annual Conference, The Wildlife Society, Cincinnati, Ohio. Conference will include a Symposium, "Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits of Wildlife Damage Management," to be coordinated by Dr. Kathleen Fagerstone (contact at 303-236-2098). For general information on the Conference, contact TWS at (301) 530-2471.

Letter to Editor

RE: Pet Sterilization and Animal Rights

Dear Editor:

The recent Vertebrate Pest Conference held in Rohnert Park, California March 4-7, featured an evening debate on the subject "Animal Rights and the Need to Understand Nature." Dr. Walter E. Howard, University of California, Davis (retired), represented the animal use/management perspective, and Dr. Steven Sapontzis, California State University, Hayward bravely championed the animal rights viewpoint.

During the debate, a repeated theme of Dr. Sapontzis was that animals should not be treated different than humans — that is, a practice should not be imposed upon animals if it is not also done on humans. Therefore, animals should not be hunted, trapped, or slaughtered for meat because humans are not subjected to these practices. Dr. Sapontzis also noted his keeping of pets obtained from the local animal shelter, which he mentioned was necessary because of the "irresponsibility" of some pet owners not having their pets neutered or spayed.

Unfortunately, the incongruity of these positions did not occur to me until the trip home. Dr. Sapontzis and most of the animal rights community advocate the sterilization of pets for populaton control. From the animals' perspective, this is an involuntary, painful procedure. Fortunately, this is not common practice with human populations. Dr. Sapontzis must either advocate involuntary human sterilization, or make an exception to his premise for this practice on animals.

From my perspective, sterilization is just another form of population management similar to hunting or trapping.

J. Grant Huggins
NADCA Region 4 Director

ADC News, Tips, Ideas , Publications . . .

Correspondence Course Announcement

Utah State University has developed a 2-credit correspondence course that should be useful to wildlife damage management practitioners interested in obtaining college credit or additional training in wildlife damage management. The course, Fisheries and Wildlife 481, is called "Directed Reading in Wildlife Damage Management."

This course concentrates on wildlife damage management. It is particularly suited for people interested in expanding their awareness of the political, social, economic, technical, and biological issues involved in wildlife damage management, especially as it reflects on both positive and negative human-wildlife interactions. This is a reading course, and students work with the instructor to develop an appropriate and rigorous reading program. The intent of this course is to give a the student a better appreciation for the art and science within this discipline. This will be done by selecting a minimum of 10 articles in the text and summarizing and critiquing them. The objectives for this course are:

1) *To introduce and explain new aspects of wildlife damage management to the student, and*
2) *To provide the student with a better understanding of the current research and debate surrounding issues in wildlife damage management.*

The current textbook is the *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Vertebrate Pest Conference*, published by the California Vertebrate Pest Council, 1994.

People interested in obtaining information about this course should contact the Independent Study Division, UMC 5000, Utah State University, Logan UT 84322-5000, or call 1-800-233-2137. Ask for registration material for FW 481, "Directed Reading in Wildlife Damage Management." The registration fee for this course is $90 (textbook not included).

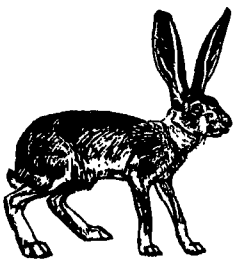
Call for Nominations for Berryman Institute Awards

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.



Virus "Cure" for Rabbit Problem Eludes Human Controls

The introduction of European wild rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) to Australia and New Zealand has caused overwhelming ecological problems. As a result of the introduction of these rabbits, Australian and New Zealand landowners have suffered annual financial losses estimated at $90 to $600 million. In an effort to combat these high losses, Australian and New Zealand government agencies have been exploring a variety of biological controls. One of these methods would be the introduction of Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD) to reduce widespread populations.

In March 1995, researchers began a field trial of the RCD virus. The trail came after RCD was laboratory tested for its infectious qualities to other species. In a fenced "quarantine" area on Wadang Island, an island located approximately 2.5 miles from the mainland of southern Australia, researchers released some of the RCD virus. By October the virus had somehow spread from the island. On October 17, at least two infected rabbits were discovered on the mainland at Point Pearce. Initially the outbreak seemed to be confined to an isolated area near Yorke Peninsula.

Later, it was discovered that this was not the case. Ten days later dead rabbits were found in the Yunta district, 260 kilometers northeast of Adelaide. At this point officials announced that "the outbreak of the disease in this district cannot be contained and [we] have ended all efforts to control the disease. Instead, plans are now being brought forward to exploit rabbit calcivirus for controlling Australia's wild rabbit problem."

The editors of **The PROBE** *thank contributors to this issue: Robert H. Schmidt, J. Grant Huggins, Stephen Vantassel, Robert H. Giles, Jr, and Jack Ammerman. Send your contributions to* **The PROBE**, *4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

Video Review

Stephen Vantassel, Special Coorrespondent, The PROBE

Review of "Professional Coyote Trapping" Produced by Fur-Fish-Game, 2878, E. Main St., Columbus, OH 43209. 80 minutes.

This 1987 video is just another of the educational videos sold by *Fur-Fish and Game Magazine*. The instructors, Tom Miranda, Bob Gilsvik, Jerry Herbst, Jeff Smith, and Dave Hieb are each very qualified and experienced. The video, shot in the rolling hills of central South Dakota, consists of three basic parts.

The first portion addresses equipment choices and how to get it ready for the coyote trap line. Each instructor explains a different portion of the equipment needed for the trapline. Tom Miranda begins this segment by laying out the fundamental equipment required for foothold trapping. The viewer will appreciate the down-to-earth manner of these instructions as well as the little tips that will save not only time, but money as well. The advantage of having four different instructors lies in being able to see the different ways they carry and use their equipment. This diversity allows the viewer to determine what is best for him. Snaring equipment is also discussed. To their credit, the video doesn't showcase specific brands or manufacturers.

After listing the equipment, the video shows how to prepare your traps and snares for the trapping season. Instructors were careful to point out the various hazards inherent in these preparation steps. They were quite correct to do so, because not a few fires have resulted from trappers overheating the wax. The instructors also warned the viewer that storage of the traps is also important. Foreign odors are a nemesis to coyote trapping, because a coyote can smell 50 times better than a human.

The second segment of the video centered on making sets. They emphasized the importance and technique of determining trap location. Using maps and even viewing your trap line from the air, were suggested as key helps in deciding where to set your coyote traps. The viewer is then shown how each of the four instructors make their coyote sets. Each of the foot hold instructors hammered home the necessity of properly bedded traps. Both flat and dirt hole sets were demonstrated. One aspect of this instruction I would have liked to have seen was the making of the set from start to finish. For in each case, the viewer is shown the trap bedding area already dug out. More explicit demonstration of staking would also have been appreciated. The snaring demonstration was clear and to the point. I just wish they allowed snares in Massachusetts.

The trapping segment continues by showing the viewer day two of the trapping experience. Tom Miranda demonstrates how to remake a set after it has caught a coyote. Handling a non-target catch is also demonstrated by Bob Gilsvik releasing a raccoon, ostensibly because it was caught a week before the season opened. I believe that adding a little verbal instruction on how to properly release a non-target would have greatly improved this piece. The potential for getting injured while releasing an animal is quite high, especially when the raccoon is shown pawing Mr. Gilsvik's hand. So more instruction, especially on safety, should have been provided. The viewer is also told to quickly and cleanly dispatch the catch. Unfortunately the viewer is neither told nor shown how to properly accomplish this. Albeit video taping a coyote being shot or bludgeoned may offend some viewers, I still think that the procedure could have been explained by a diagram at the very least.

The final portion of the video consists of proper pelt handling. The viewer is shown how to skin a coyote by expert fur handler Dave Hieb. This segment moved rather quickly because Mr. Hieb used a skinning machine to assist him. Although the viewer will have grasped some of the fundamentals to at least do a fair job on this first catch, Mr. Hieb should have skinned a coyote by hand using a skinning gambrel. On a side note, I would have liked to have seen some details on how to build or purchase the skinning machine which was used in the video.

The quality of the tape's production is excellent. The producers did a fine job working to make the tape's sights and sounds clear and understandable. The video's cover claims that the tape has been made to satisfy the requirements of television viewers. I would have to say that I agree with their claim.

Overall, I thought the video did a fine job explaining the basics of coyote trapping. I give the video an animal damage control grade of A minus. I truly believe the novice trapper could go out, after seeing this video, and catch some coyotes. I give the video a minus grade because it didn't discuss the use of padded jaw traps and neglected to detail proper staking procedure.

Despite its weaknesses, I am confident that the coyote trapping novice will appreciate the content of this video.

You can obtain a copy of "Professional Coyote Trapping" by sending $29.95 plus $5.00 shipping and handling to Fur-Fish-Game Video Library, 2878 E. Main Street, Columbus, Ohio 43209.

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Opportunities and Challenges ...

the National Wildlife Research Center), and providing technical and operational assistance in many states.

- Increasing credible sources of technical information, including the recently-revised *Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage* handbook.

- The continuing development of new products and techniques, including methyl anthranilate, invisible fencing, and wildlife contraception.

In addition, he explained that there are opportunities to assure a broader role of wildlife damage management in wildlife conservation as a form of "ecological damage control." Wildlife damage managers have the skills, abilities, and knowledge to assist in the conservation of all wildlife species. Cowbirds, white-tailed deer, and other species can have a negative impact on preferred ecosystem structure and function, Craven noted. Wildlife damage management should evolve with conservation biology to form a firm partnership in conserving our wildlife heritage.

There are also numerous challenges facing wildlife damage managers, Craven explained. There are increasing demands to regulate this industry, and minimum standards and training for practitioners is even now being debated. The attitudes of the general public will continue to affect how wildlife is managed. Wildlife professionals tend to focus on the health of wildlife populations, while the homeowner is more concerned about the fate of individual animals. "This will require the judicious use of translocation as a damage management tool," Craven said.

The key is public recognition of the need for professional wildlife damage management. If managers can convey to the public a need for wildlife damage management, then the public will ask for the profession's assistance, explained Craven. We need to favor non-lethal strategies over lethal ones, and emphasize problem solving, not animal killing. In addition, "We need to police our own ranks, and make sure abuses are controlled." If managers are going to protect the tools that they have, then they must know their tools inside and out to prevent misuse.

Virtually all wildlife management programs and land use decisions have wildlife damage implications. Craven argued that we need to be involved in decisions at the outset. By being proactive, hopefully we can prevent damage before it occurs.

"The future of wildlife damage management looks very, very good," concluded Craven. "The challenges will provide some vitality in our field."

Wildlife Control Seminar Makes Points With Michigan Man

Editorial Note: The following letter was posted to the electronic bulletin board WDAMAGE on February 13, 1996.

I have just returned from the Second Annual Wildlife Control Instructional Seminar sponsored by W.C.T. Magazine and NADCA. The information exchanged at this conference was a tremendous help to me. I was astounded after listening to speaker after speaker extol helpful hints, techniques, and information.

I was told that I'd learn as much in the hallways during the breaks as I would in the conference room. That statement proved to be true! As a matter of fact, one NWCO that I had lunch with explained a way for my business to immediately save over $500 annually. I verified the information as soon as I arrived home. Sure enough, I was able to decrease this year's office expenditures greatly!

I was impressed with the content of the seminar including topics such as squirrel techniques, moles, updated bat control, Canada Geese, and raccoons in attics and chimneys. The speakers were well prepared and between the seminar and the hallway chats, I managed to put in two 16-hour days and left Sunday after the last dog was hung. Tired? You bet! Exhausted. Still, I'm already anticipating the third annual seminar next year!

This is a slow period for my ADC business but I'm looking ahead toward putting all the new ideas into practice. I commend Wildlife Control Magazine and the National Animal Damage Control Association for a very well planned and executed weekend!

Take care and good luck...

Jack Ammerman, Advanced Wildlife Removal
Flint, Michigan

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