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February 1982

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Walter E. Howard
Professor and Vertebrate Ecologist, Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, University of California, Davis

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TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF VERTEBRATE PEST CONFERENCES IN CALIFORNIA

WALTER E. HOWARD, Professor and Vertebrate Ecologist, Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, University of California, Davis 95616

It is difficult for some of us to realize that the Vertebrate Pest Conferences in California were started 20 years ago. We have come a long way since the first one in Sacramento in 1962 to the very successful 3-day Tenth Vertebrate Pest Conference (VPC) opened by Chairperson Rex E. Marsh on 23 February 1982, in Monterey, California. When closing the Tenth Conference, incoming Chairperson for the 1984 VPC, Dell 0. Clark, pointed out that there were easily 550 people in attendance from 31 states, District of Columbia, and 15 foreign countries.

How did the Vertebrate Pest Conference get started? According to my file, interest first started rolling on 12 January 1960, when, with strong support from Maynard W. Cummings of the University, I wrote Eldridge (Red) G. Hunt of the California Department of Fish and Game, James W. Koehler of California Department of Agriculture (now Department of Food and Agriculture), and John A. Ludeman, Branch of Predator and Rodent Control (BPRC), Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, requesting a meeting to discuss the laws and policies of bird control. This meeting was held on 10 February 1960 in Red Hunt's office. Malcolm N. Allison participated in John Ludeman's place, as John was in Oregon working on starling control. William LaMarr of Fish and Game also joined us.

Considerable efforts were involved in establishing better communications concerning vertebrate pest control in 1960, and progress was made toward establishing a cooperative vertebrate pest control research program at Davis between the University, the Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) and the Bureau of Vector Control of the California Department of Public Health. The DWRC Field Station now located between Davis and Dixon was at that time actually on the Davis Campus with Adolph Zajanc and James 0. Keith being housed along with me in Field Station Administration, under Director J. Lowell Myler.

During 1960 it became apparent that the current information pertaining to vertebrate pest control was mostly couched in in-house reports of the DWRC and other organizations, hence not available for general use or for citing. To make this information more available, it was obvious that new cooperative efforts were essential, and one method I proposed was to hold conferences. But to do this we had to organize so we could sponsor such conferences. All the involved individuals were affiliated with some state or federal organization, hence it was going to be difficult and time-consuming to attempt to obtain "official" sponsorship of such conferences. After considerable discussion, it was decided the way around this was to establish an unofficial working committee which would organize and direct the conferences. This group became the Vertebrate Pest Control Technical Committee. The first meeting was on 17 January 1961 at the California Department of Agriculture. Richard H. Dana became our secretary. Koehler, Dana and others strongly backed the idea of holding vertebrate pest conferences. Walter Ball, Chief, Bureau of Weed and Rodent Control and Seed Inspection, California Department of Agriculture, also supported the efforts.

At the second meeting of the Vertebrate Pest Control Technical Committee on 3 April 1961, we laid specific plans for the first Vertebrate Pest Control Conference, of which I served as General Chairman. (Starting with the third conference the word "control" was deleted from the conference title.) In attendance at this meeting were Ball, Dana, Koehler and Rollo E. Talbert of the Department of Agriculture, Keith F. Murray and Joe E. Brooks of the Department of Public Health, Zajanc and Ludeman of the Branch of Predator and Rodent Control, USF&WS, and Cummings, Elbert M. Brock, and Howard of the University. Once plans for the first conference were under way, we received strong encouragement from Dr. Philip J. Spear of the National Pest Control Association, and the NPCA generously offered to publish the proceedings of the first conference for us. Since then the Committee has had all the conference proceedings printed at the University of California at Davis. The proceedings have always been published within about 4 months after each conference, except for the first one. Authors who are slow in submitting their manuscripts are cited by title only.

Prior to the first conference some general policies were established. It was agreed that all meetings would be in California and that the chairmanship for the conferences would alternate between the California Department of Agriculture and the University of California. Since game animals as pests were not included in the papers presented at the first conference, and the California Department of Fish and Game was no longer directly involved in predator control in California, that organization wanted to maintain contact but not become active as members of the Technical Committee. In order to insure that the conference would always present the most needed information about vertebrate pest control, it was decided that all speakers would be by invitation only. The entire committee decides what subject areas need to be included; then a search for the best speaker to provide this information is commenced. This prioritizing has paid off as will be clearly apparent in the cross-subject index of the 10 conferences (about 375 articles) which is due to be published in 1982. Starting with the Fourth VPC, the Committee decided that the chairperson of each conference would automatically become the editor of the proceedings of that conference. Names of many of the other people who have worked so hard to make these conferences a success appear in the credits located in the front of each conference proceedings.

In 1965 and 1966, the Committee developed a commendable list of Purposes and Objectives of the Vertebrate Pest Conference Committee. Then, after heroic hard work by Charles C. Siebe of the

Department of Agriculture and other members, with newly prepared bylaws, the Vertebrate Pest Conference became incorporated in the State of California on 18 August 1975 pursuant to the General Nonprofit Corporation Law.

At the Tenth VPC, three workshops were added to the regular program to make the conference more valuable to structural pest control operators (PCOs), agricultural pest control advisors (PCAs), staff of county agricultural commissioners, and many others wanting a more practical exposure to the latest in vertebrate pest control. Agricultural pest control advisors receive continuing education credits if they attend the conferences, hence the workshops enhance this function. Since we still have an enthusiastic Vertebrate Pest Conference Committee, I can assure you that the Eleventh Vertebrate Pest Conference, to be held in Sacramento in 1984, is sure to be another good one.