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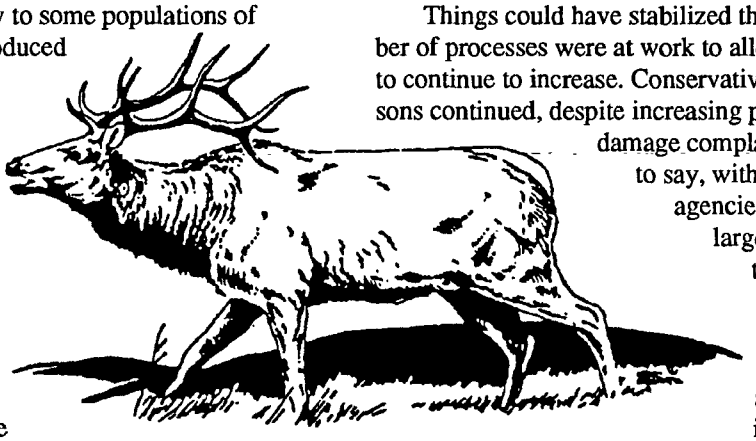
The Probe NADCA
ISSUE 189
JUNE 1998

When Deer Are Too Dear and Elk Are Too Elegant

Gary W. Witmer, NADCA Regional Director, Southern Rockies Region, Region 2

Wild ungulates—deer and elk in particular—are charismatic animals and valued natural resources. I've had the opportunity to work with these animals across much of North America in various capacities: defining their relations with forestry practices, assessing the possible impacts of energy development, defining criteria to improve transplant success, following radio-collared individuals over hill and dale, and even participating in a few hunts. But mostly, I've dealt with problem aspects stemming from overabundant populations of deer and elk. I'd like to reflect on what I have learned from these situations. My comments are largely my own and should not be interpreted as representative of any particular state or federal agency or other organization. While I am focusing on deer and elk, many of these comments apply to some populations of other wild, feral, or introduced ungulates.



Deer and elk were initially very widespread across the continent, but occurred at relatively low densities. It has been estimated that, historically, there were about 10 deer per square mile over much of North America. Those densities were probably the result of harvest by Native Americans, predation by a diverse and relatively abundant predator fauna, and importantly, heavy forest canopy cover that precluded lush understory development (hence, limiting food for ungulates).

With increasing settlement of North America, all that changed. Unregulated market hunting and increasing subsistence needs greatly reduced herds, both in density and range. Deer and elk were actually extirpated in many states.

This trend was soon to be reversed as a result of a combination of factors. Forest cover was being removed to provide for crops and livestock grazing. At the same time, large carnivore populations were being greatly reduced for human safety and livestock protection.

Meanwhile, persons in the various states were realizing what a valuable resource they had lost and protective measures were enacted. Deer and elk hunting seasons were closed. Deer and elk were trapped from areas of relative abundance (such as Yellowstone) and transplanted widely across the U.S. When the seasons were finally opened again, bulls-only and bucks-only harvest strategies were commonly used to protect the reproductive potential of the growing populations. Thus, the populations were protected, or conservatively harvested, at the same time that habitat conditions (forage production, in particular) were rapidly improving and predation rates had fallen to very low levels. Needless to say, ungulate populations responded by reclaiming most of their former range and achieving moderate densities (as high as, or somewhat higher than, historic levels).

Things could have stabilized there, but a number of processes were at work to allow populations to continue to increase. Conservative harvest seasons continued, despite increasing populations and damage complaints. Needless to say, with state wildlife agencies obtaining a large portion of their revenues from hunting license sales, there was (and still is!) a large incentive to keep population densities high. Supplemental winter feeding became common in many areas both by state agencies, but also by a growing number of private sector parties. This was usually done because winter range was considered limiting to the ungulate population, or as a response to—or in anticipation of—a series of harsh winters. Predator control continued, and was justified in an increasing number of areas, expressedly to protect "important" game populations.

At the same time, deer and elk had become "featured species" for many public land management agencies, meaning that land management decisions had to result in equal or improved conditions for those species. The private sector contributed to this concept in its own way: more and more areas of good ungulate habitat (a mix of

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agricultural and forest lands) were put off limits to hunting by choice of the landowner. Additionally, extensive urban/suburban sprawl precluded large areas from hunting entirely, or resulted in reduced harvests because of reduced season lengths and/or weapon restrictions. This situation has been exacerbated in recent years by the declining number of hunters and growing anti-hunting sentiment.

As might have been anticipated, ungulates—being creatures of habit and habitat, being reasonably long-lived, and having moderately high reproductive potential—certainly took advantage of this situation. Densities of deer are averaging 20 per square mile (twice the historic densities) and have been documented at much higher densities in many areas—over 200 per square mile in some places! Elk numbers nationwide are probably at an all-time high with densities of 15 per square mile reported for many areas. I note, however, that elk are not only difficult to census, but tend to congregate in preferred areas, and hence are usually not as evenly dispersed as deer. Much evidence suggests that deer and elk populations are doing very well in many parts of the country: high and sustained harvest rates, high numbers of damage complaints, high numbers of animal-vehicle collisions, increasing demand for damage relief (repellents, barriers), and increasing disease concerns. There may be other ancillary evidence that is not so well documented: greater use of forested areas by elk than historically occurred and more year-round use of areas by deer and elk that, historically, were only used seasonally by migratory animals. This situation applies to other species of wild, feral, or introduced ungulates in some cases, but over much more restricted geographic areas. Of course, the situation that I have described does not apply to all deer, elk, or other ungulate populations. There are some endangered subspecies of white-tailed deer; woodland caribou are endangered; and some populations of mule deer have undergone long-term declines.

The problems from overabundant ungulate populations persist and may be increasing. We, as resource managers and wildlife damage management professionals, are entrusted to deal with, or resolve, these conflicts. There are many types of problems that occur: crop damage (alfalfa, corn, soybeans), tree damage (orchards, Christmas trees, reforestation), rangeland damage (forage competition, fence damage, riparian habitat degradation, haystack raiding), disease transfer (to livestock, other wildlife, and occasionally humans), vehicle strikes (resulting in damage, injuries, deaths, and increased insurance costs), and urban/suburban damage (gardens, ornamentals).

There is another type of damage, however, that has received less attention: impacts to biodiversity. It is becoming increasingly clear that overabundant ungulate populations can and do affect ecosystem composition and function. Biodi-

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Your contributions of articles to *The Probe* are welcome and encouraged. The deadline for submitting materials is the 15th of the month prior to publication. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of NADCA.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

June 16-18, 1998: 8th Annual Meeting, Bird Strike Committee USA, Holiday Inn Lakeside / Burke Lakefront Airport, Cleveland, Ohio. Of particular interest to military and civilian personnel responsible for airfield operations, land-use planners, researchers, FAA inspectors, engineers, pilots, and aviation industry representatives. The meeting will emphasize hands-on demonstrations and activities, and will include papers and posters on topics such as wildlife control techniques, new technologies, land-use issues, engineering standards, and habitat management. Registration, $75. For hotel reservations at room rate of $89, call (216) 241-5100 and mention BSC-USA. For conference registration, contact Betsy Marshall, USDA-APHIS-WS, Sandusky, OH at (419) 625-0242, fax (419) 625-8465, or email: <nwrcsandusky@lrbcg.com> For further information, see the BSC-USA home page at <www.lrbcg.com/nwrcsandusky/bscusa.html>

September 22-26, 1998: 5th Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society, Buffalo, New York. Theme: "Global Perspectives in Wildlife Conservation and Management." Will include a workshop "The Status and Future of Wildlife Fertility Control," and symposia entitled "Managing Abundant White-tailed Deer Populations in the Eastern U.S." and "Public Health and Safety and Wildlife in Conflict." Registration information will be available in June. For information, see the Society's web page at <http://www.wildlife.org>, or phone (301) 897-9770.

Oct. 5-9, 1998: International Conference on Rodent Biology and Management, Bejing, China. Organized by Instit. of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Science, and CSIRO Div'n. of Wildlife and Ecology, Australia. For additional information and mailings, contact: Zhibin Zhang, Secretary General, Int'l. Conference, 19 Zhongguancun Road, Haidian District, Beijing 100080, P.R. China, or e-mail: <zhangzb@panda.ioz.ac.cn.>

Understanding Home Range

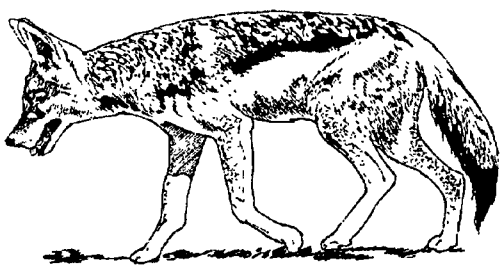
Jeff Jackson, Extension Wildlife Specialist, School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia

Ever wonder about how animals organize their use of space? They don't wander around at random. They use a home range. Home range is a basic concept in wildlife management. It is defined as the area included in the daily, seasonal, and annual travels of an individual animal. This is where they roam to find good, cover, water, a mate, and the other essentials to survival. Life is easier for an animal that knows where to find its basic needs.

Home range size varies according to species. It might be an acre or so for a cottontail rabbit, a few hundred acres for a whitetail deer, or a few thousand for a wild turkey. Home range size and location can also vary with the seasons, according to the availability of resources.

Some animals, such as whitetail deer or cottontail rabbits, tolerate other members of their own species relatively easily, so they share home ranges. It's not uncommon, for example, to see groups or even herds of deer. The populations of such animals tend to be directly limited by resources or predators. Animals that exclude others of their species from their home range, for example cougars or mockingbirds, tend to regulate their own populations by their behavior.

Defended parts of home ranges are called territories. A territory needs to be exclusive, while home ranges of animals may overlap or be shared. For example, a number of eastern chipmunks may share a common feeding area under mast trees, but each will violently defend the territory near their own burrow system.



Generally speaking, as habitat quality deteriorates, home ranges may expand, since the animals must travel further to find lunch or other resources. So home range size and territory size tend to be inversely related to habitat quality.

Having a home range also makes it easier for an animal to identify new dangers. It's as if you entered your house and found a table or chair out of place. The new arrangement would get your attention. You would wonder who had been in your house. But the same item out of place in someone else's house wouldn't seem so odd because you wouldn't know its usual location. For a wary animal in its home range, a new trap set can be like furniture out of place. The set, or trap, may be viewed with suspicion.

If an animal is expelled by the territory owners and becomes homeless, it will disperse. Adult animals often expel their young from their territory. A dispersing animal without a known home range is relatively vulnerable. A disperser must move until it finds a suitable home range or territory of its own, or its life will be short.

The research of Stefan Holzenbein (1990) shows the vulnerability of dispersing whitetail deer as compared to residents in their home range. Holzenbein studied dispersal of young whitetail bucks in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, about 100 miles west of Washington D.C. Holzenbein divided his study animals into two groups. He orphaned a treatment group of 15 male fawns by removing their mothers after weaning. The remaining 19 male fawns were left with their mothers, as controls for comparison.

Over the next year or so, the majority of the young bucks in the control group were driven from their home ranges by their mothers. Nearly all the orphaned bucks whose mothers were removed remained in the home range where they were raised. These resident bucks had a survival rate three times higher than that of the dispersing bucks. They had a much easier time avoiding danger because they remained in the home ranges that they knew.

Students of deer behavior take note: it's not the dominant bucks that drive the young bucks out of the home range. It's their mothers! If you're a landowner and you can legally control your own deer hunting territory, remove the doe and leave the buck fawn, if you want to increase the odds of having him on the land as an antlered trophy next season.

The study of coyotes also shows a similar trend regarding the vulnerability of animals outside their territory. John Houben made an interesting remark following his coyote control demonstration at a sheep farm in the mountains near Roanoke, Virginia. His was one of the presentations at the Eighth Eastern Wildlife Damage Management Conference in October 1997. Houben gestured to a gap between two hills and commented that on infrequent occasions he saw tracks in the snow, within the gap, made by a coyote entering the farm. He could catch that animal at that location, he said, even if he waited two months before the coyote passed that way again. Further, he could take him with a single trap. I am often impressed by the knowledge that a skilled trapper has of his quarry, his gear, and his territory. Why is it that in such a low-density population a trapper can take an animal that only visits rarely?

I asked John about his observations, and he said that the key is to know the travelways of new animals. "You pick the right location, make a set, and wait," he said. "It may be a week, or 30 - 40 days, before the next visit, but the new animal is likely to use the same path when exploring new land." And as a newcomer, the new animal will be vulnerable to a trap.

Mark Collinge's article "Applying Research Findings to Coyote Depredation Control Efforts" (**The PROBE**, October 1997, issue #181) summarizes such observations. Collinge

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Notes from Nigeria: Wildlife Crop Interactions in Threatened Sahelian Wetland

Augustine U. Ezealor, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria
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Supported by a grant from the African Dissertations internship Award Program of the Rockefeller Foundation, we studied a vast Sahelian wetland in northern Nigeria. This is a threatened wetland, inhabited by a diversity of small- and medium-sized African mammals, and water-birds, in addition to serving as wintering area for many European migrant birds. It is also an important food producing area with over 1,000,000 people supported by farming, fishing, and pastoral activities. The wetland is drying under the influence of 22 dams in its catchment, desertification (from several causes including drought), overgrazing, and groundwater depletion due mainly to reduced rate of recharge and numerous wells from which water is abstracted for irrigation and domestic uses. Farmers in the wetland grow many crops including several kinds of rice, and are under constant attack from pests. They are mainly subsistence farmers, living at the margin, so any loss to pests is damage.[1] Examining the complex interrelationships between the aforementioned ecological changes and vertebrate pest problems in the wetland was part of a wide ranging Ph.D. dissertation of the senior author.[2] Below are a few general observations on the wildlife-crop interface of the wetland:

- Granivorous passerines (especially *Quelea quelea*) and some migrant waterfowl were the most prominent crop depredators in the wetland.
- Although ruffs, *Philomachus pugnax*, were partial to rice fields, they fed mainly on fallen grain and invertebrates, not harvestable rice, so they were not pests.
- Estimates of bird abundance appeared to increase as wetland areas were lost. Counterintuitive, the apparent increase was due to increased birds per unit area in the residual wetland, a sampling/density phenomenon.
- Rodents caused losses in both unharvested and harvested rice. It may be possible to greatly reduce losses by using improved drying and threshing techniques which are already available.
- Rodent problems with rice and other grain cereals probably compares with those of birds, and were acute at the edges of fields. The drier a field, the better the conditions for rodents and concurrently the worse the growing conditions for rice, thus compounding the problem.
- A local rice variety whose seeds are awned and have bristles (locally called "yar kaushe", meaning "the hairy one") seemed more bird-resistant than other commonly grown cultivars.
- Control of the red-billed quelea, *Quelea quelea*, and other vertebrate pests remains a challenge. Though well intended, the toxic chemical (Queletox®) used in pest bird control is poorly applied and therefore endangering humans, livestock, and wildlife.
- Plastic owl models placed on posts reduced bird deprecatory activities nearby but were ineffective over a crop field.

All of the above, while important at one scale, are almost insignificant in the context of the advancing Sahara desert and the hastening of its destructive effects by ill-advised, disjunct, and poorly managed dams, in the catchment of the sensitive vast wetland upon which many European and African birds depend. Toward restoring the ecological integrity of the wetland and enhancing its agricultural productivity, we offer the following recommendations:

- Engaging in habitat management activities such as creating refuges, and simulating the natural flooding regime of the wetland by increasing the amount and improving the timing of water release from dams. Increased flooding could induce animals into dispersing and re-invading their historical ranges within the wetland. Dispersing the pest populations will have the effect of diluting the impact of the pests by spreading their activities over a wider area.
- Improving husbandry practices by avoiding activities (e.g., pre-harvest swathing of crops) that enhance pest damage, and embracing those (e.g., timely harvesting) that lead to yield increase.
- Using audile and visual scaring devices to reduce loss to birds.
- Using limited amounts of rodenticides to control rodents.

We believe that by emphasizing damage management rather than direct population control of the pest species, improved agricultural production could be achieved in the wetland without compromising its biodiversity and other values.

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[1]Damage is the physical harm plus the monetary loss (or other significant loss in value) that occurs as a result of an injury to a resource.

[2]Ezealor, A. U. 1995. Ecological profile of a Nigerian Sahelian wetland: toward integrated vertebrate pest damage management. Ph.D. Dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA. 24060.

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versity and ecosystem health have become preeminent concerns for resource managers in recent years.

Concerns with wild ungulate effects on ecosystems were perhaps first raised in the eastern and north central U.S., where certain common tree species (oaks, eastern hemlock) were not regenerating, presumably because of white-tailed deer browsing. Also, it appeared that some understory, herbaceous species (lilies, orchids) were disappearing from large areas because of their high palatability to ungulates. Impacts on bird populations, probably because of the loss of the shrub layer, were also documented. The impacts on small mammals were less noticeable, perhaps because the decline in some species was counterbalanced by increases in other species. It has become clear that white-tailed deer function as a "keystone" species in these ecosystems.

In the western U.S., there has been less documentation of wild ungulate impacts on ecosystems. The emphasis in this region has been on domestic livestock impacts, which have been shown on vegetation, bird populations, and soil properties. When you look at long-term ungulate exclosures (unfortunately, there are few of these that are of any size or that have been maintained for many decades), one can surmise that what we consider to be "normal, natural vegetation" may be an artifact of long-term grazing by high densities of ungulates.

This can be seen in the Olympic Peninsula of Washington and perhaps in a few other areas. We looked at exclosures in northeastern Oregon that had not been in place very long (5-15 years), but were of reasonable size (50-100 acres). The area was grazed by cattle and supported a wintering herd of over 1,500 elk. We found reduced shrub cover, shrub species richness, and shrub diversity as well as reduced organic litter on grazed areas. This is consistent with published results from other studies. Bird use of the exclosures was not different than use of the grazed areas, but birds are fairly mobile and the exclosures may not have been large enough or in place long enough to show a response. There were substantially reduced small mammal numbers on the grazed areas and we did not capture shrews on those areas. Shrews are primarily insectivorous and represent secondary consumers in the ecosystem. It is possible that the reduction in small mammals (potential prey for shrews) and perhaps in insects (not monitored in this study) resulted in the loss of a trophic-level in the ecosystem. Our results may have been more dramatic, except that this is a dry area and has had a long history of overgrazing by livestock; consequently, the area (including the exclosures) had probably not recovered from past land use practices.

Where does all this leave us? It appears certain that overabundant ungulate populations can have substantial impacts on ecosystems. One must consider, however, that wild ungulates are a valued resource across most of North America. A balance must be struck between ungulate population densities and the resultant conflicts with human interests and other resources. As the human population increases and expands into uninhabited lands, these conflicts can be expected to become more common and intense. These conflicts will remain controversial and difficult to resolve. Consider the attitude of many hunters and non-hunters alike: the more deer (or elk) that you see, the better the experience!

There are a number of obstacles that hinder our attempts to resolve these conflicts. There are fewer hunters, yet hunters (and agencies?) want to see higher harvest success rates and rates that are maintained at high levels over time. There are many fewer acres open to public hunting and anti-hunting sentiment seems to be growing each year. Areas closed to hunting serve as refugia and make it difficult to achieve adequate harvests and population regulation on surrounding lands. Furthermore, the casual observer is not very sensitive to the impacts of overabundant ungulate populations on the flora because, in most cases, the area remains "green and vegetated" as a result of increases in abundance of unpalatable or invasive plant species. Most of the methods that we have available to reduce the impacts of ungulate grazing are small-scale approaches (tree guards, repellents, use of less palatable plant species, fencing) that do not help with a landscape- or ecosystem-level problem. New methods are needed that can be applied over large areas analogous to the aerial delivery of oral baits to vaccinate free-ranging carnivores for rabies control. Research is under way to develop contraceptive technology that could be used in a similar way. Indicator species—in particular, herbaceous species and secondarily, invertebrate or vertebrate species—that could be used to monitor overgrazing impacts have not been identified for most regions. And yet we need to know if ecosystem-level impacts have occurred or are occurring. Finally, the funds available to state wildlife agencies to monitor ecosystem-level impacts—and non-game elements of ecosystems in general—have been inadequate to address this problem. A large and reliable source of funding for the "Teaming With Wildlife" initiative could help remedy this funding problem.

Wild ungulates are, and will continue to be, an important natural resource in the U.S. At the same time, their management is, and will continue to be, controversial and difficult. If we want to protect all resources and reduce conflicts, we may need to maintain wild ungulate densities at much lower levels than those to which we have become accustomed. The future management of these valued resources depends on the development of new approaches and methods and the combined efforts of all of us!

The Editor thanks the following contributors to this issue: Gary W. Witmer, Augustine U. Ezealor, Jeff Jackson and, Bob Giles, Jr. Send your contributions to **The PROBE**, *4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

ADC in the News

Two Women Animal Rights Activists Protest Prairie Dog Control

Two Colorado women, Nicole Rosmarino of Nederland, and Jessica Sandler, Boulder, were recently issued a summons in a confrontation that took place at a 34-acre construction site in Lafayette, Colorado. Situated next to the Lafayette City Hall, the area is also home to a colony of prairie dogs estimated at 2,000 population.

Employees of Western Environment and Ecology Inc. followed the approved plan to poison the prairie dog burrows. Rosmarino and Sandler went to the site to stop the process. With shovel in hand, Rosmarino tried to dig extra airways for the animals, while Sandler stood by taping the activities on a video camera.

Authorities arrested the two, and issued a summons for trespassing and for disobeying a police order. According to the Lafayette Police Chief, Leo Carrillo, if the two tresspass again, they will be arrested and taken to jail.

Conditional approval for the land development was granted approximately a year ago. Since then, animal rights activists have attempted to remove some of the prairie dogs, but with little success. After 49 were placed at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, officials there closed the area to further prairie dog relocations. The controversy heated up in March when final approval for the construction of a 208-apartment complex was granted.

According to the developers, Dunn Property Corp., removal had been the first option, but proved to be impossible when a relocation site was not found. Poisoning was chosen as the most humane alternate method of removing the colony.

*—excerpted from article in the **Denver Post**.*

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Understanding Home Range

wrote that when a coyote's capture location was marked on a map of its home range, it was obvious that very few coyotes were trapped in the center of their home range. They were almost always caught on the edge of or outside it.

Within its home range, a coyote or other animal has a sometimes astounding capacity to identify a new and potentially hazardous situation. "Neophobia" is what an animal behaviorist calls this fear of the new. Once outside of the home range, however, a new thing doesn't stand out. In fact, it is often an object of curiosity and is investigated. This is why dispersing animals are usually easier to capture.

One strategy for the wildlife damage practitioner is to completely remove destructive animals from the area to be protected, and then persistently trap the newcomers. It is often easier to capture these new animals than to take residents.

Rats on the Rise-Urban Wildlife Control Proves to Be Bonanza for Florida Man

In Dennis Bevlin's line of work, he uses whatever comes to hand. Bevlin, a wildlife trapper in Florida, has been known to smack an unwanted rat with a toilet bowl brush scrubber—if it works, why not? The burly trapper waited for the rat to appear in a bathroom drawer—and nailed him. According to Bevlin, he always get his rat.

Bevlin's assignments aren't limited to rats. In Central Florida, residential and commercial development is on the rise. As a result, various forms of wildlife are often found where they're not wanted. As an example, Bevlin is often called out to trap armadillos. The armadillos are hard on flowers beds and vegetable gardens, and homeowners want them removed.

Nuisance animal calls are dramatically increasing at the Flordia Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. According to Robert Butler, director for the Commission's central region, nuisance animal calls are overwhelming his staff.

Trappers and private wildlife control companies are cashing in on the phenomena. As in most parts of the country, common wildlife problems involve rats, raccoons, and feral cats.

With rapid population growth, wildlife habitats are on the decline. Forced to seek food and shelter out of their natural environment, wild creatures have begun appearing with increasing frequency on the streets of towns and cities, as well as making their presence known in residences and even businesses. Day care center personnel in downtown Orlando have seen raccoons out seeking food even in daylight hours.

Wild animals, both native and feral, can bring health problems as well. Feral cats are one of the number one carriers of diseases such as rabies. Even on college campuses, large feral cat populations thrive and can easily reach populations of 100 and more.

Homeowners also complain of damage from smaller creatures. Nesting birds choose the inside of walls, bats manage to squeeze through the smallest roof openings, and squirrels play havoc with house wiring. Then there are the other, more unusual problems—escaped exotic pets. Trapper Bevlin actually pulled a 5-1/2 foot python from under the hood of a truck, and trappers have spent days trying to retrieve an escaped monkey.

Private wildlife control companies are flourishing. With increased demands for their services, State agencies are too busy with the larger problems posed by endangered species such as alligators and black bears to respond to complaints regarding non-endangered animals such as armadillos, snakes, rats, raccoons, bats, or birds. In Central Florida alone, at least 21 companies are now offering nuisance wildlife control services. For local wildlife management companies and trappers like Bevlin, rats on the rise is good news!

*—excerpted from the **Orlando Business Journal***

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ADC in the News

Wildlife Up Close and Personal for Suburbanites

Increasingly, state wildlife and local government officials are receiving complaints about wildlife in and near suburban housing. For example, in the past 5 years, the number of bear complaints received by New Jersey's Fish, Game & Wildlife Division has tripled. In western New Jersey, where the bear population is thought to number about 500, bears and humans increasingly meet in suburban back yards.

Similar stories come from all over the country. Sightings of mountain lions in two Minneapolis suburbs were recently doubted by wildlife authorities, until a security guard saw one of the lions wandering through a parking lot and caught it on a surveillance camera. Routine complaints about coyotes, bears, and lions are now almost routine in some of the most urbanized areas of the U.S.

(Continued in next column)

Increased contact between people and wildlife is not always caused by suburban advances into remote areas. Sometimes, as in the case of New Jersey's bears, it happens because states have set aside abandoned agricultural lands as wildlife areas. These protected tracts, when cleared of crops and allowed to grow into woodlands, support increasing populations of wildlife, including large predators. And as the woodlands expand, they move closer to civilized territory, until the animals suddenly turn up without warning in someone's back yard.

A variety of regulations and educational efforts are the result of newly-reported conflicts. New York and Pennsylvania continue to allow sport hunters, wherever feasible, to take bear so as to keep their populations in check. In addition, New York now forbids residents to feed bears near paved roads and houses. In Cape Elizabeth, Maine, a series of town meetings were convened to educate residents about the coyote problem. People were complaining about the canids staring at them, howling at the moon, fighting with their dogs, and eating their cats. Officials advised them to keep pets and food indoors, and not to stare back.

*— excerpted from **Governing Magazine** and **The Detroit News***

An ADC Story from the Internet

In rural Carbon County, PA, a group of men were drinking beer and discharging firearms from the rear deck of a home owned by Irving Michaels, age 27. The men were firing at a raccoon that was wandering by, but the beer apparently impaired their aim and, despite the estimated 35 shots the group fired, the animal escaped into a 3-foot diameter drainage pipe some 100 feet away from Mr. Michaels's deck.

Determined to terminate the animal, Mr. Michaels retrieved a can of gasoline and poured some down the pipe, intending to smoke the animal out. After several unsuccessful attempts to ignite the fuel, Michaels emptied the entire 5-gallon fuel can down the pipe and tried to ignite it again, to no avail. Not one to admit defeat by wildlife, the determined Mr. Michaels proceeded to slide feet-first approximately 15 feet down the sloping pipe to toss the match. The subsequent rapidly expanding fireball propelled Mr. Michaels back the way he had come, though at a much higher rate of speed. He exited the angled pipe "like a Polaris missile leaves a submarine," according to witness Joseph McFadden, 31. Mr. Michaels was launched directly over his own home, right over the heads of his astonished friends, onto his front lawn. In all, he traveled over 200 feet through the air.

"There was a Doppler Effect to his scream as he flew over us," McFadden reported, "Followed by a loud thud." Amazingly, he suffered only minor injuries. "It was actually pretty cool," Michaels said, "Like when they shoot someone out of a cannon at the circus. I'd do it again if I was sure I wouldn't get hurt."

—a story circulating on the Internet

Stray Cats Pose Expensive Problem

After 170 years of roaming free on Macquarie Island, the feral cat population there is finally almost under control. At one time, the cats numbered in the thousands, but over the past 20 years, some 2,200 cats have been culled. Despite this drastic reduction in numbers, if left alone, the population would quickly return to its former numbers. The feral cat eradication program is funded by the $900,000 Natural Heritage Trust Grant.

Located just south of Tasmania, the island is considered a "sub-Antarctic pardise". Because of the voracious appetites of the wild felines, however, it hasn't been a paradise for sea birds native to the area. It's estimated that each cat devours at least 300 birds each year.

Six hunters will spend freezing days and nights searching for the elusive animals. The bad news is that the remaining 100 cats are the toughest, the most wary, and the most skilled at evading Tasmanian National Parks Service rangers. All the older, sick, or very young cats have already been taken. The remaining cat population has even learned to hide their eyes when spotlights are employed.

The hunters' problems are complicated by island weather—lots of fog, clouds, and heavy winds—and by the fact that there are only eight hours of daylight during long periods of the year.

*—excerpted from the **Sydney Morning Herald**, Sydney, Australia*

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