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The Probe: Newsletter of the National Animal Damage Control Association

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# The Probe, Issue 193 – October 1998

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The Probe of NADCA
ISSUE 193
OCTOBER 1998

# Recollections, 1966-1996

*James E. Forbes, Past President, NADCA*

The story of the Federal Animal Damage Control (now "Wildlife Services") program had its roots in the western United States going back to the 1800s. However, it really got going when Congress enacted the Act of March 2, 1931. This set the foundation for the whole modern-day ADC Program. This program functioned fine for 35 years until I came along in 1966. I'm not going to talk about those first 35 years, because I know nothing about it— I hope some of our older retirees in future issues will write a similar history of that period.

I'm going to confine my remarks to the 30-year period between 1966 and 1996 and limit it geographically to the 13 Northeastern states (originally there were eleven, however Virginia and West Virginia were added to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Region 5 in the early 1970s).

Things were different in those days. Most people were engaged in or dependent upon agriculture in one way or another. When predators killed livestock or rodents ate crops, it was going to cost someone money at best and maybe took food off of their table at worst. The general public's attitude was that predators and rodents should all be killed; yet most birds should be protected. These attitudes were beginning to change 180 degrees in the early 1960s and had completely changed by 1980.

The agency's name changed a lot too. Called the Branch of Predator and Rodent Control (PRC) before 1966, it was renamed Wildlife Services (WS) and in the 1970s was changed to Wildlife Assistance. When the program moved from USDI to USDA in 1986 it was renamed Animal Damage Control (ADC). Since about 1990, there have been several attempts to rename it Wildlife Services again. All these name changes make two things come to mind: "What goes around comes around"; and "A rose by any name..."

*Continued on page 3, col. 1*

# Giles Resigns as NADCA President

To NADCA Officers and Regional Directors—
Gentlemen and Ladies:

I've tried and failed and so I must resign as President of NADCA. I thought I could handle the task but it is now clear that I cannot and I must not delay leaving this post any longer. I retired June 1 and the change has been stressful but I thought this was normal and that I could get around the problems of changing office, etc. I took the nomination fully expecting to be able to spend the time and energy needed. The President's office has been supported by agencies for years (phone, mail, etc.) and I did not appreciate how much support there was (and appears to me to be necessary) to handle the affairs and to maintain the flow for the organization. There are family health problems as well also so I cannot be reliable for the organization.

I deeply regret this decision and the frustrations and costs, but I may have delayed too long already. I wish you well and I appreciate the past associations very much.

*Sincerely yours,*
*Robert H. Giles, Jr.*

# Executive Committee to Appoint President

In accordance with the NADCA By-Laws (Article IV, Section 4), when a vacancy in the office of President occurs, the Executive Committee (Officers and Board of Directors) is charged with appointing one of the current Vice Presidents to fill the remaining term as President. At this time, the Executive Committee has not resolved the issue of who will be NADCA President but is scheduled to meet by telephone conference call within the next few weeks to officially take this action.

The Executive Committee will also accept Bob Giles' resignation with regret, and thanked him for his efforts on behalf of our Association. The Executive Committee asks all NADCA members to be willing to respond positively if called on to work on behalf of NADCA— either on a committee, or to undertake a special task or project in the coming months. In this way, the important work of our Association will continue without interruption.

# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**November 17-19, 1998: Annual Meeting of Western Coordinating Committee - 95, "Vertebrate Pests of Agriculture, Forestry and Public Lands," Circus Circus Hotel, Reno, Nevada.** An informal meeting, designed those involved in research, extension, teaching, and regulatory activities related to wildlife damage management to share information in an informal setting as well as coordinate research and plan for future needs. Those planning to attend should RSVP by Nov. 6. Registration fee, approx. $30. Contact: Dr. Desley Whisson, chairperson, phone (530) 754-8644, or email <dawhisson@ucdavis.edu>.

**December 6 - 9, 1998: 60th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio.** Conference theme: "Reflections on a Century of Accomplishments." For further information, contact Dave Risley at (614) 265-6331, or see web site:
<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/odnr/wildlife/workshops/midwest>

**January 31 - February 3, 1999: Fifth Annual Wildlife Control Technology (WCT) Instructional Seminar, Imperial Palace, Las Vegas, NV.** For further information, contact Lisa at (815) 286-3039.

**March 17, 23, & 25, 1999: Vertebrate Pest Control Workshops, California** (Salinas, Ontario, and Sacramento, respectively). Co-sponsored by Vertebrate Pest Council and Pesticide Applicators Professional Assoc. (PAPA). Three one-day workshops providing basic information and pesticide applicator certification credits, covering bird, rodent, and predator damage control techniques. For further information, contact Dr. Desley Whisson at (530) 754-8644, or visit web site <http://www.davis.com/~vpc/welcome.html>.

**April 27-29, 1999: 14th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Conference and Feral Swine Symposium. Holiday Inn, Manhattan, Kansas.** Conference theme: solving conflicts between people and exotic wildlife. See "Call for Papers" in this issue of **The PROBE**. Sponsored by USGS-Kansas Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, KSU Research & Extension, APHIS-Wildlife Services, and Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks. Contact: Charles D. Lee, phone (785)532-5734, fax (785) 532-5681, email <clee@oz.oznet.ksu.edu>.

**May 9-13, 1999: Bird Strike Committee USA / Bird Strike Committee Canada, Delta Pacific Resort & Conference Center, Richmond, British Columbia.** For information on call for papers, registration, and field trips contact: Bruce MacKinnon, Transport Canada, phone (613) 990-0515, or email <mackinb@tc.gc.ca>. Exhibitors wishing to display products should contact Jeff Marley at Margo Supplies Ltd., phone (403) 652-1932. Book hotel rooms prior to Feb. 8 by calling (800) 268-1133.

**May 23-27, 1999: North American Aquatic Furbearer Symposium, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Miss.** Presentations (papers and posters) will be given on ecology, economics, human dimensions, policy issues, population estimates, or techniques related to aquatic and semi-aquatic furbearers (beaver, mink, otter, nutria, muskrat, and raccoon). A variety of field trips to view local historical, ecological, and wildlife management areas are planned. Peer-edited symposium proceedings containing full papers and poster abstracts will be published. For conference information and registration forms, visit website at: http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/naafs/naafs.htm, or contact Richard B. Minnis, MS Coop. Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, phone (601)325-3158.

**June 28-July 2, 1999: 2nd International Wildlife Management Congress, Hungary.** To include a plenary session "Issues in Wildlife-Human Conflicts." Contact: Dr. E. Lee Fitzhugh, Extension Wildlife Specialist, UC Davis, phone (530) 752-1496, email <elfitzhugh@ucdavis.edu>.

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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.

# Call for Papers:

## 14th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Conference

*Theme:* "Solving Conflicts between People and Exotic Wildlife"

*Dates:* April 27-29, 1999

*Location:* Manhattan, Kansas

Five areas of special interest have been identified for the Conference: exotic wildlife management, urban wildlife control, predator management,trapping and capture skills, and media and communication skills.

*New Format*
This and future conferences will include a special symposium on a major wildlife management issue. Additionally, the *Proceedings* will be expanded to include a number of peer-reviewed articles, and will also include general articles to be reviewed by an editorial panel. The goal is to have the published *Proceedings* available at the time of the conference. Papers may be submitted for a) oral presentation, b) poster, c) peer review, or d) review by an editorial panel.

*Symposium Overview*
Feral swine populations appear to be increasing and have expanded their range in the last decade farther north and west than previously known. Populations now exist in the central tier of states ranging from Colorado and Kansas east through Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio. Reasons for expanding populations for feral hogs are poorly understood. Natural resource management agencies and animal health officials are working to develop programs to control feral hogs and to protect livestock, wildlife, and sensitive habitats. This symposium will provide an opportunity to share current information about management, current population status, legal and animal health issues, and ecological concerns related to feral hogs.

*Deadlines*
October 1: Abstracts for preliminary evaluation; November 30: Papers for peer review; December 31: Papers for editorial panel evaluation

For further information, contact Charles D. Lee, Extension Wildlife Specialist, Kansas State University, phone (785) 532-5734, email <clee@oz.oznet.ksu.edu>.

*Continued from page 1, Col. 2*

# Recollections, 1966-1996

The men in charge in those days were outstanding. John Gottschalk was the Director of the US FWS in Washington DC. I was privileged to know both Clifford Presnall, the retiring head of PRC, and the newly appointed head of WS, Jack Berryman. Richard Griffith, who got his start in the Western ADC Program, was the Northeast Regional Director. Bill Hickling was the WS Regional Supervisor and John Peterson was a staff specialist who did all the work in the Regional Office. These fellows were all savvy, smart, honest men of integrity who really had leadership ability. They knew where they were going and how they were going to get there.

The rest of us were along for the ride. There were only eleven of us: Frank Gramlich in Maine, Rene Bollengier in Vermont and New Hampshire, Ed Ladd in Southern New England, and yours truly in New York. First Ernie Mills, then Al Godin in New Jersey, Dob Studholm had Pennsylvania, Les Terry and then Len Walker worked in West Virginia while Don Gnegy was in Virginia. Bob Gustafson was State Supervisor for awhile both in Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Godin, Gustafson, and Terry moved around several times. The rest of us stayed put in our original duty station throughout our careers. Les Terry and I got our start as trainees under Ed Ladd in Amherst.

These were really talented people: Al Godin was a tireless researcher, writer and artist. He authored and illustrated *Wild Mammals of New England* the sex and age chapter of the *Wildlife Management Techniques Manual*, and a bibliography of brant and mountain beaver. Ernie Mills was a world-renowned expert on the Norway rat and rodenticides, and he wrote numerous publications on this subject. Frank Gramlich initiated the first Eastern Coyote Control Program back in the 1970s when we were still with the FWS.

In 1966, the Leopold Committee, headed by Starker Leopold (son of Aldo = Father of Wildlife Management) released its final report. It suggested that PRC change its name to WS and take on added responsibility such as wildlife enhancement on military bases (under the Sikes Act) and pesticide monitoring. We did this and also took on added responsibilities such as reviewing the newly-created Highway Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and serving as oil spill coordinators to help the Coast Guard cope with oiled birds and mammals.

We were the ones who were first involved with Endangered Species. Ernie Mills wrote the world's first article on the subject. I wrote the second for the *New York Conservationist*, and in it set forward the revolutionary idea that Congress should appropriate some money to fund the 1969 Endangered Species Act (autographed copies are still available, by the way).

I began to notice a pattern developing. We never seemed to get any money to do the above special tasks. Yet, as soon as Congress appropriated money to cover these items— that item and responsibility (and money) was transferred to another FWS Division. Could it be that the purpose of the Leopold Report was to get us to do anything — anything *but* ADC work? NOOOO!

The program has changed a lot in 30 years— some examples:

• Migratory Birds: We were not allowed to do or even recommend control techniques for ducks, geese, or songbirds. We could work only on pigeons, starlings, and English sparrows. Migratory bird management/control was the province of the Division of Management and Enforcement (M&E). They would normally fly Canadian waterfowl surveys and band ducks (Management) and enforce the Waterfowl Hunting Regulations (Enforcement). In 1974, M&E became Law Enforcement (LE). They started enforcing the Endangered Species Law and stopped doing management. Thus, we got all the migratory bird depredation responsibility (but no money). We were even permitted to kill Canada geese at our discretion if the need should arise. When we moved to USDA in 1986, that authority was rescinded.

• Gulls: Prior to 1900, there were no gulls in the Northeast, not even in Maine. Herring gulls and black-backed gulls occurred throughout the Northeast along the coast by 1966. Ring-billed gulls did not begin nesting on Lake Champlain and the Great Lakes until the mid-1940s. In New York, gull complaints increased from 1/year in 1966 to 200+/year in 1996. Gulls today are involved in more than 50% of all jet aircraft bird strikes. They also cause problems at landfills, at rooftop nesting colonies, and to agriculture (cherry, cabbage, milo crops).

• Geese: In the mid-1960s, there were probably less than 5,000 resident Canada geese mostly located in and around New York City and Philadelphia. Today 700,000+ Canada geese inhabit almost every body of water in the 13 Northeastern states. Geese can cause "mega" bird strikes to aircraft. Geese took out two engines, at a cost of $4 million, on a French Concorde at JFK Airport recently.

• Blackbirds: Red-winged blackbirds were causing losses in sweet corn and in field corn up to 34 bu/ac at the time I started. Redwings were so numerous the cattail nesting habitat was saturated and they began nesting in upland alfalfa fields. In the beginning, most of our damage control efforts were directed toward redwings. However, between 1966 and 1986 populations of redwings declined greatly, while grackles increased. Today, starling problems greatly outnumber blackbird problems in the Northeast.

• Orchard Mice: Meadow mice and pine mice (actually voles) are collectively called orchard mice, and they can cause real damage to orchards resulting in great monetary loss. Thirty years ago, we would work closely with cooperative extension agents attending twilight meetings in orchards giving advice on new techniques, methods, and products for orchard mouse control. We spent a lot of time field testing new toxicants developed by the Denver Wildlife Research Center. There were probably 15 different toxicants and 10 different bait combinations available to the orchardist. About half our total efforts were directed toward orchard mouse control in those days.

About the only toxicant left today is zinc phosphide and you can get it in only about four bait formulations. Today, hardly anyone is doing anything in orchard mouse control— mainly because they don't know how. The expertise was lost when the old-timers retired.

Prior to 1966, PRC had a network of four bait mixing stations across the United States located in Pocatello, Idaho; South Dakota; Indiana; and Amherst, Massachusetts. They would manufacture

*Continued on page 7, Col. 1*

# Book Reviews: "The Humane Approach to Living with Wildlife"

*Edited by John Hadidian, Guy Hodge, and John W. Grandy, Humane Society of the United States. Fulcrum Press, 1997. 255 pags with indices. $16.95 Softcover.*

## Review by Stephen Vantassel, NWCO Correspondent

*Wild Neighbors* is a revision of the HSUS's earlier foray into urban animal damage control entitled *The Humane Control of Wildlife in Cities and Towns*. Those of you familiar with the earlier book will find that *Wild Neighbors* is a substantial improvement.

*Wild Neighbors* can be seen as consisting of three conceptual divisions, each of which I will discuss in turn. The first division focuses on the larger issues of animal damage management, such as strategies and tools for conflict resolution and potential health concerns. The authors have done a fine job in taking the reader by the hand and walking him/her through various questions and issues that must be addressed before responding to animal damage. The reader is even advised on where to seek additional assistance. In the subsection on NWCOs (p. 5f), readers are presented a list of questions that NWCOs need to be asked before they are retained. Most of the questions are certainly legitimate and should be asked before any contractor is hired. However, for the HSUS to say *when* NWCOs should talk about potential fees certainly demonstrates a non-business perspective. Speaking personally, I can get a pretty good idea very early in a call about whether the caller knows I charge for my services. I have found that talking about money very early saves me a lot of time and aggravation by ending conversations with people who have no intention of paying services. (By the way, we do give free advice on how people can solve their own problems, but many are not interested). The suggestion by HSUS that NWCOs should meet customers and give estimates in writing is also problematic. I quote prices over the phone; in 90% of the cases, there is no need to do on-site quotes. I provide written quotes and free consultations only when I cannot give a quote over the phone. Unlike exterminators, NWCOs who do the job correctly will rarely be called back for future service. It seems that the HSUS hasn't hired many NWCOs before writing these questions.

The chapter on health concerns was well written. The most common of the 175 potential diseases transmitted to humans are

*Continued in col. 1, page 5*

## Review by Gregory A. Giusti, Forest & Wildlands Advisor, Cooperative Extension, University of California

Any book that offers advice on wildlife damage management must have to deal with appealing to a broad audience. This book does a good job of identifying the target audience: residents of urban and suburban areas. That said, the first fallacy in the book appears in the Preface. The statement "...For far too long, the so-called 'solutions' have been simply to kill the offending animal..." If that statement were true then I suspect that such tools as Havahart® live-traps would never have found a market niche. Now, if the authors are referring to ADC programs or municipal animal control programs, then they are mixing audiences and are misleading the reader.

The second misleading statement appears on page 1. The authors state "...Noticeable damage often literally takes years to develop." I would not make that statement if I were talking about raccoons eating koi fish from a backyard pond or deer feeding in a suburban garden or raccoons removing shingles from a roof to find shelter. In none of these cases would I justify a lethal solution, but I would not mislead the reader with the misguided concept that some types of damage cannot occur in a very short time frame. The authors would have done more justice to the section regarding damage assessment if they had simply been honest with the readers and had stated that some levels of damage can occur in a short time while others are more subtle and less noticeable. In other words, they should have given their readers a more objective view of assessing damage.

I'm not sure why the authors decided to include a chapter on Health Concerns in Dealing with Wildlife in a book that states its intention is to create an air of "tolerance" toward wildlife neighbors. Given the hypochondriac response many urbanites have toward dirt, I see no value in alerting an uneducated public about the potential health issues when dealing with wildlife. I think they would have done their readership more service if they had simply provided assistance in helping people recognize when an animal is sick and how to best respond to the situation. When I finished reading this section, I found myself imaging a scared public racing in and out of their houses with scarves covering their mouths, emulating an artisan's depiction of black death outbreaks during the dark ages...not a pretty picture.

I agree with the third chapter's premise of preaching the need for tolerance when dealing with most human-wildlife conflicts. However, I was a bit troubled about the simplistic examples that were provided to illustrate this point. Certainly, the problem of a raccoon removing the lid off a garbage can easily be remedied with a bungee cord. However, other scenarios—for example, coyotes chasing joggers in L. A. County, California—might test one's tolerance toward human-wildlife conflict. In general, the examples given throughout the book were often simplistic and narrow in scope, suggesting that all conflicts can be easily mitigated without direct action.

I found the chapter on Tools and Tactics to be generally well-written and straight-forward. The illustrations are understandable and well presented. I appreciate the authors stressing the need for understanding the role of habitat manipulation to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts and the need to integrate non-lethal approaches into an overall management strategies. The section dealing with

*Continued in col. 2, page 5*

*Continued from page 5, Col. 2*

# Vantassel Book Review: Wild Neighbors—Humane Approach

covered. The reader is provided with the scientific name of the disease, the various animal hosts that carry the disease, background of the disease, the disease's clinical symptoms, and advice on how to prevent the disease. One frequent refrain throughout the book is that the risk of contracting a disease from wildlife is small. I agree with the HSUS's stand. We NWCOs should not be overstating the potential disease threat to our customers as a tool to get business. On the other hand, the HSUS needs to understand that legal liability has little to do with facts in the present court system. Until tort reform occurs, NWCOs may need to overstate dangers to protect ourselves from accusations of negligence.

The chapter on tools and tactics covers a broad range of animal damage control methods. Methods listed include exclusion (including a wide variety of fences), noise deterrents, chemical deterrents etc. Lethal control methods, such as trapping, are notably absent. One should note that many recommendations and suggestions also come with various escape phrases such as "may repel" (p. 103), and "may be effective" (p. 150). Personally, I find it very interesting that despite all the financial and technical resources available to the HSUS, even they couldn't be more definitive about the effectiveness of many of their "non-lethal" recommendations.

The second division constitutes the bulk of the book, and is spent covering animal damage control of 32 animal groups. I use the term 'animal groups' because *Wild Neighbors* discusses tree squirrels, for example, as a group and not by individual species. Each animal or animal group is covered in the same fashion: 1. a brief narrative about the animal historically or in the popular psyche, 2. natural history of the animal including scientific name, breeding etc., 3. public health concerns including diseases that may be contracted by humans, 4. Problems and Solutions': here the reader is told about various complaints people have with the animal. Solutions are then given that range from tolerance (included in every case), to repellents, to habitat management etc., 5.'A Last Word': here the authors write some concluding thoughts about the future of our relationship with the species, and 6. Additional Sources': where books of interest may be found to further one's understanding of the species.

The third and final section of the book consists of the various resources that may be helpful to the reader. Appendix 1 provides lists of informational resources including books and societies. Unfortunately, the book list is limited due the Society's unwillingness to suggest lethal solutions. In fairness, the HSUS did list the two-volume *Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage* published by the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service. Kudos also need to be given to the editors for including NADCA in their society list. Various federal and state government organi-

*Continued on page 6, col. 1*

*The Editor thanks the following contributors to this issue: Richard Dolbeer, Jim Forbes, Greg Giusti, Charles Lee, Jim Miller, Stephen Vantassel, and Desley Whisson. Send your contributions to* **The PROBE**, *4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

*Continued from page 5, Col. 2*

# Giusti Book Review: Wild Neighbors—Humane Approach

Toxicants is certainly filled with HSUS dogma (as it should be, given the publication's affiliation); however, the authors are sincere and honest in their presentation.

Section Two of the books deals with information and species accounts for 35 species or taxa (many species are appropriately grouped together i.e. waterfowl, woodpeckers, voles, tree squirrels). Here is where the dogma hinders the authors and limits their ability to provide clear guidance to the reader. For example, telling a reader that they should be "tolerant" of pocket gopher damage does not help the person "live" with the species. The authors missed an opportunity to stress and illustrate the utility of exclusionary raised-bed gardening or window-box gardening as a method of minimizing gopher-gardener conflicts in a suburban setting where space is often limited. The authors' determination to have the reader understand pocket gopher ecological functions prevented them from providing assistance and direction on how to cope with the animal and associated damage.

The same myopic approach is taken with commensal rodents. The authors suggest that through habitat manipulation a suburbanite can minimize rodent conflicts. In most suburban subdivisions, where housing densities may be as high as five homes per acre, one individual's attempt to diminish rodent populations may be futile without the use of lethal methods used in combination with non-lethal habitat manipulations. Additionally, they fail to address the attractiveness of compost bins and fruit trees (both commonly found in suburban settings) and how to deal with these situations. The failure to address the spatial considerations necessary to minimize commensal rodent conflicts prevents the reader from fully understanding the scope of the problem. Again, the authors have taken the easy route to illustrate their point of view and previously-stated convictions.

Personally, I wish the authors had not included coyotes, black bears and mountain lions in the book. The public already has a distorted view of these species and making statements such as, "...[mountain lions] are not usually found where people are; contacts and encounters are infrequent and uncommon..." further confuses the issue. In the West, particularly California, this false statement gives an armchair quarterback's view of reality. I see no usefulness of these sections in this publication.

"The Last Word"—Each species account ends with this section title. The philosophical parting shots that are included with each species are enjoyable to read but provide the reader with little substance. I couldn't help but think that the "Last Word" was provided to serve as a primer for the six o'clock news in the event that someone needed some well-written sound bites to make a political statement.

In my opinion, the book is lacking in substantive guidance and direction. It leaves the reader with more questions than answers, and it is as obvious in its omissions as it is with its doctrine.

*The Last Word*— the book retails for $16.95; use the money to take your spouse out to lunch.

* Editor's Note: Greg Giusti authored the book *Protecting Your Garden from Animal Damage* (1994), Ortho Books, The Solaris Group, San Ramon, Calif. and is a member of NADCA.

*Continued from page 5, col. 2*

# Vantassel Book Review: Wild Neighbors—Humane Approach

zations are also listed. Appendix 2 lists various manufacturers and product suppliers of animal damage control equipment. The list is broad and well-organized. This appendix, as well as the first, may alone be worth the price of the book. I wish the editors had included web resources in the appendices.

Before providing my evaluation, the reader needs to know of my biases because these biases certainly affect my view of this text. It is only when we recognize our biases and presuppositions that we can hope to be fair and objective on difficult issues. Let me list a few of my presuppositions. First, I believe that animals are not humans. To equate an animal's life as on par with a human's is deeply offensive to me. Second, killing animals is not the moral equivalent of murder. Humans have a positive role in animal management. I reject the notion that the best and most moral humans are those that stay out of an animal's way.[1]

*Wild Neighbors* is an easy read. It has been professionally put together, and if you look closely you will see various cute things about the book. For example, the cover depicts a raccoon in a pine tree. Look carefully at the raccoon's eyes and you will see a city skyline. Many chapters have the tracks of the animal in the background. Yet for some reason this printing technique is not used for every animal where tracks are known (for example compare the chapter on chipmunks with skunks). The book contains no photographs but has an excellent batch of line drawings and diagrams. The biological information demands high praise. I have been exposed to many useful technical words that describe animal behavior. For example, rabbits are "crepuscular": they are most active at dawn and dusk. Any reader will be benefited from knowing such terms. Readers are provided with easily understood information on the natural history of the covered species. This information alone should go a long way in resolving so-called psychological damage conflicts. In other words, this information will help people overcome their general and often-times irrational fears of animals.

*The book contains no photographs but has an excellent batch of line drawings and diagrams. The biological information demands high praise.*

There is much to condemn in this book as well. First, the writers pay homage to the gods of natural selection (evolution) while implicitly criticizing those gods for failing to make humans more hospitable to wildlife. To this day, I still cannot understand how someone can logically believe in evolution and still be in favor of animal rights. While understanding that the HSUS claims to be an animal welfare organization, I think it to be almost axiomatic that they have decidedly moved very close to, if not into, the animal rights camp. It appears from the afterword that the HSUS doesn't believe that arguments concerning human superiority fit into any system of logic. I find that statement to be absolutely ludicrous, if not laughable. However, if I am only an animal, then I can morally keep on killing them because that is what animals do as part of an integrated ecosystem. After all, doesn't the HSUS teach tolerance of our fellow predators (cf. pp. 93, 147)?

As I have written elsewhere, the HSUS begs the question on its use of the term 'humane'. It suggests that squirrels be evicted from homes with one-way doors (p. 186). Fine. But is it humane to do this in the wintertime? In urban areas, isn't it reasonable to conclude that proper homes for squirrels are already being used given the high population densities? So to thrust a squirrel out of its home (namely a customer's house) in effect sends that squirrel to the ghetto of squirrel homes? One would also question the appropriateness of fences being erected to prevent wildlife damage. Sure, in limited situations, this method is fine. But can you imagine if everyone with significant deer damage (especially if sport hunting was banned, as the HSUS wants) put up a fence? I thought we were trying to stop the checker-boarding of wildlife habitat. What about people who instituted all the other techniques that change backyard habitats? It would seem that the HSUS needs to evaluate the potential impact of some of its suggestions. They, too, will probably have unintended harmful consequences to the animals as a species (and individually) and to the environment.

The HSUS condemns the lack of spending on urban wildlife studies (p. 111), yet they fail to list the studies they have funded. As a side note, you may want to know about an urban wildlife study the HSUS didn't fund. I recently spoke with the president of the CT NWCO Association about the chimney raccoon study being done. Essentially, the study seeks to answer the question: "Do released chimney-dwelling raccoons simply return to another chimney?" I asked him if the HSUS contributed any money to help finance the study? He said "No." Funny, how a study being performed on urban wildlife damage issues couldn't get even a token amount from the HSUS. Yet they preach the need to do so.

On a less philosophical note, this text is also marred by the lack of openness about the damage certain animals cause. I found their discussion of muskrat damage to be understated and the so-called proper solution to be so costly that only the elite could afford it. The same could be said for rats. I found their lack of candor about the need for the lethal control of rats to be downright funny. It is odd that they suggest trapping of rats, but only if it is done "humanely." The problem is that the HSUS doesn't define what constitutes the "humane trapping of rats" (p.164). Thereby, it tells its readers to do something they don't know how to do. By the way, I have captured a rat that came up through a toilet, so the HSUS can change their wording on p. 161 to the affirmative.

There are also, throughout the book, strange statements that don't seem to fit into the text's overall purpose. For example, when talking about how muskrats "eat out" a habitat, the writers say that there is a problem, but not with the muskrats (p.126). What is the point of this stupid statement? On page 101, the authors talk about overpopulated deer and the resultant browse line. Yet, for some reason, they mention that the same phenomenon occurs when cattle are overgrazed. Again what is the point? The last problem I will mention here is the inconsistent ideology portrayed in their 'Last Word' comments found at the end of each discussion

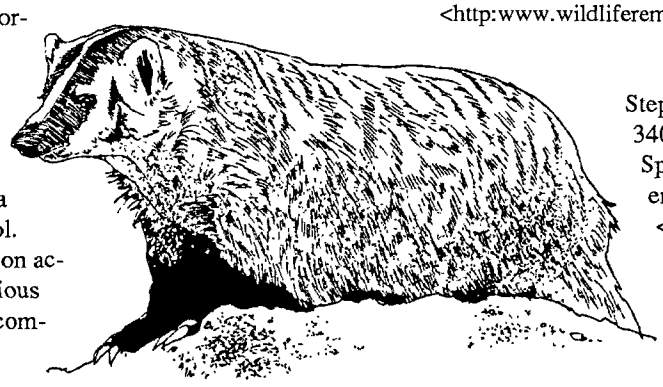
*Continued in col. 1, page 7*

*Continued from page 6, Col. 1*

## Vantassel Book Review

on a particular species. They persist in the illogical notion that trapping this individual animal means you wish the entire species to be eradicated. I would like to remind the HSUS that it was the work of sportsmen that caused laws to be established and lands to be set aside that protected many species from extinction. Yet none of those people are ever given proper credit in the book. Speaking personally, I don't want to see skunks exterminated from the planet; I earn my living off skunks.

I haven't given this text an animal damage control grade. I don't think that the book is of much use to working NWCOs, except for the appendices and the health information. The book lacks the required specificity regarding many of the recommended exclusion techniques, for the reader to develop the confidence needed to put them into action. As an olive branch to the HSUS, I would love to see a real world book on animal damage control. By "real world", I mean techniques done on actual houses throughout the country in various seasons. I would be happy to submit my company as a tester.



However, if you wish to learn about biology, new terms, and see what the Humane Society recommends, then this is a book you will want to read. You can obtain a copy of *Wild Neighbors* through any local bookstore.

[1]For a more extensive accounting of my beliefs, see "The Uneasy Conscience of the Animal Rights Movement" (**The PROBE** #179 & 180), and "A Christian Minister Explains How He Can Morally Trap God's Little Creatures" (**The PROBE** #160). These articles can also be found on my web site

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*Continued from page 3, Col. 2*

# Recollections, 1966-1996

and sell Animal Damage Control equipment and supplies directly to farmers and orchardists. The Rodent Control Fund, as it was called in Amherst, would sell products at cost that were not commercially available from other sources. All the bait stations, except Pocatello, were phased out when we made the transition from PRC to WS. In fact, I was the last bait station manager in Amherst when it was disbanded.

One thing that has not changed over the years has been our excellent relationship with our colleagues in research. Originally, there were two research centers: the Denver Center specializing in mammal research, and the Patuxent Center did bird research. With the transition from USDI to USDA all research was moved to Denver, and in 1996 the new National Wildlife Research Center was relocated to Fort Collins, Colorado. We in operations field tested for research such products as DRC-1339 for blackbirds, starlings, and gulls; Avitrol for gulls, pigeons, starlings, and blackbirds; prolon for pine mice; and Mesurol for corn sprouts, cherries, and grapes. Frank Gramlich did the first field testing of Ornitrol, the chemosterilant for pigeons. Paul O'Neil and I collected data for research on earthworm populations along airport runways and movements of color-marked gulls at landfills in relation to airports.

One of the most amazing weeks in my life occurred when I first came to work for WS shortly after the transfer from PRC. I was sent to work on a project to field test Avitrol to move a colony of gulls from Plum Island (off the tip of Long Island). I was to be the assistant to a wildlife biologist named Alfred J. Godin. I had never met him before. I can't begin to tell you about that week— it was like a combination dream and nightmare. I'll summarize it by saying I have never worked so hard, had so much fun, learned so much, and made such a good lifelong friend as Al.

Well, by now you are asking, "What about the women?" There were no women! In the old days, this was an all male operation— not by design. There simply were no female wildlife biologists in those days. My wife, Diane, sure perked up her ears the day I told her "Hey, Hon, I'm getting a new young wildlife biologist and *she* and I will be going into the field together for the next two weeks." Janet Sillings Bucknall turned out to be a very smart, competent wildlife biologist and one tough cookie. A few years later, I had the pleasure of meeting and working with another outstanding woman, Laura Henze, the nation's first female ADC State Director. Today, we have a whole group of fine, competent, young women in ADC coming up through the ranks including NEAWDB's secretary, Jessica Dewey, and our editor, Jennifer Lynch.

As Walter Cronkite used to say: "And that's the way it was." At least that's the way it seemed to me. I invite any of the other retired members to write a letter to the Editor to straighten out any misconceptions I may have had or implied.

*Editor's Note: This article, written by Jim Forbes, is reprinted from the Winter 1997 issue of* ***Technical Notes****, newsletter of the Northeast Association of Wildlife Damage Biologists. Jim says, "Maybe a retired western state director would write a similar article with a western perspective." Any takers?*

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