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In Memory: Paul Eugene Bucklin

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IN MEMORY

Paul Eugene Bucklin

PAUL EUGENE “GENE” BUCKLIN (1942–2008), a wildlife specialist with USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services, was killed in a fatal car accident near his home in Chinook, Montana, on February 16, 2008. Born in Billings, Montana, he was raised on a sheep and cattle ranch in Redstone, Montana, where he learned to trap and hunt. Gene spent his life on the prairies of the “Highline,” the northern part of Montana that stretches from the Rocky Mountains of Glacier National Park to the North Dakota border. In 1979 he began a lifelong career with USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services in Chinook.

Gene’s duties involved protecting livestock from predators, including coyotes, mountain lions, feral dogs, wolves, eagles, magpies, and ravens. His area of expertise was coyote control. Gene was a trapper’s trapper. He was continually learning. He would try new ideas or develop different approaches to old problems on how to stop coyotes from killing livestock. He could do it all, and do it well. He could make bait, leg-hold trap, neck snare, use m-44s, call, shoot, aerial gun, den, and use decoy dogs.

His was responsible for protecting livestock in several counties covering 11,742 square miles. The area is a mix of private land, Bureau of Land Management, state-leased lands, and 2

Indian reservations. It currently has over 6,000 sheep and 110,000 cattle.



Paul Eugene Bucklin

Gene logged close to 3,500 hours aerial gunning in fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters with 21 different pilots. That is incredible considering he was never a designated gunner. Gene was the first specialist to deal with wolf depredations in Montana since the 1930s.

Gene was highly respected and loved both by livestock producers and his colleagues. Every producer in Gene’s territory has countless stories of Gene saving their sheep or

calves from coyotes and his willingness to assist whenever he was needed, regardless of the time of day, month, or year.

Gene did not just work for the government; his job was a family lifestyle. Many of the producers that Gene provided services to had become close family friends. Gene and his wife Helen would invite them into their home for a meal every time one was in town. He was as dedicated a person as I have ever met and a true public servant.

Kraig L. Glazier, District Supervisor
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