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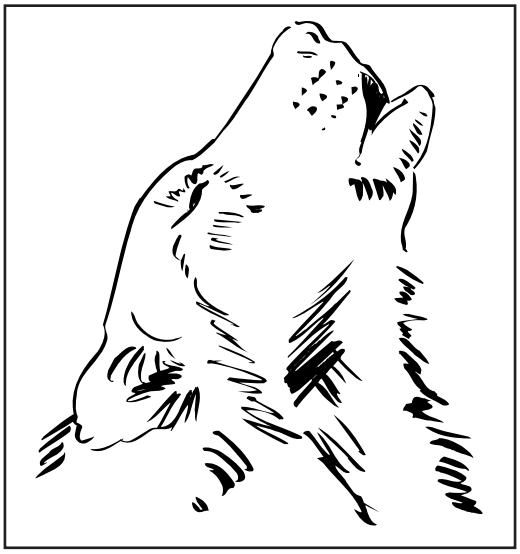
The Probe NADCA
ISSUE 239
July/August 2005

The Conceptual Feminization of of Wildlife in the USA

Dexter K. Oliver

Editor's note: This article appears in this issue to illicit discussions. The opinions expressed in this article may not be those of NADCA, it's members, officers, directors or this editor. Comments received about this article will be run in future issues of ***The Probe****."*

Even today, in a large portion of the world, wildlife is viewed up close and personal by the Homo sapiens who share their turf. Because of such intimate contact, wild animals are understood so well that many of their characteristics have become deeply woven into the fabric of the human cultures that associate with them. That is no longer the case in most of the United States and other "First World" countries. Sure, we may name a motor vehicle after wild beasts - such as the Jaguar and Cougar - in some nostalgic attempt to reconnect severed ties, but these are merely advertising ploys. Not only has the majority of the general public long since fled the hinterlands to congregate in cities and towns, but the professional researchers and managers of wildlife have undergone a startling change in the past hundred years or so.



In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, naturalists who had plenty of hands-on experience with the wild kingdom brought about a veritable sea change in the way we looked at and related to wild animals. People like Charles Darwin, Teddy Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold, Carl Akeley, and Charles Sheldon were of that group. Before this time wildlife was usually seen as food, competition, danger, or a nuisance. The naturalists brought about profound changes in our perspectives and in realistic, lasting conservation, science, and wildlife management.

Following in their footsteps were what I call the "-ologists". They were people who combined more scholarly studies of the biological sciences with some, often fairly extensive, field experience. My father, Dr. James A. Oliver, was of this assemblage, a zoologist specializing in herpetology. He later became the only person to ever achieve New York City's "triple crown', filling the position of director of the American Museum of Natural History, the Bronx Zoo, and the New York Aquarium. I was lucky to grow up in that atmosphere and see how he and his peers dealt with wild animals on a practical, daily basis. This provided the bedrock foundation for my own later fieldwork with wildlife.

But then we arrived at the 1950's and 1960's and two completely different events would once again alter our concepts of the wild world.

Cartoonist Walt Disney expanded his show business to include immensely popular "natural history" films (featuring falsely manipulated, often tame animals, the likes of which later become common fodder for TV programs) to go alongside his animated, moralistic features portraying his utopian idea of the way wildlife should be seen.

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

September 25-29, 2005 - The Wildlife Society's 12th Annual Conference, Madison, WI. Information at: WWW.wildlife.org.

October 2-7, 2005 -- 4th International Congress of Vector Ecology, John Ascuaga's Nuggett Hotel/Casino, Reno, NV. Includes 13 separate, topical symposia plus multiple poster sessions. For additional information see http://www.sove.org To be put on the mailing l ist for further Congress information, contact Jared Denver <jdenver@northwestmosquitovector.org>

October 27-29, 2005 - Human Dimensions of Natural Resources in the Western United States, Prospector Square Conference Center, Park City, UT. For information contact michael.butkus@usu.edu

December 11-14, 2005 - 66th Annual Mid-West Fish and Wildlife Conference, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI. Visit the conference website under "What you need to know" at http://www.midwestfishandwildlife.com

The 9th Annual National Wild Turkey Symposium will be held in conjunction with this event.

March 6-9, 2006 - 22nd Vertebrate Pest Conference. Berkeley Marina DoubleTree Hotel, Berkeley, CA.
http://www.vpconference.org or contact Terry Salmon, UC Coop. Extension, San Diego Co., email: tpsalmon@ucdavis.edu; (858) 694-2864.

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Your contributions 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.

Product Announcement:
Coyote Damage & Control in Rural & Urban Settings

In recent years, concerns regarding coyotes have increasingly made the news. ***Coyote Damage and Control in Rural and Urban Settings*** introduces viewers to various coyote control techniques, including snaring, the Collarum Trap and footholds. This 48-minute presentation, produced by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is available in DVD (product code WD-1) or VCR format (product code WD-2) at the School of Natural Resources online store http://snr.unl.edu/products/ for $17.25 plus S&H.

For more information contact
Map and Publication Store
104 Nebraska Hall
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0506

Looking for Missing Issues of The PROBE

Dr. Michael Conover has graciously offered to archive hard copy issues of ***The Probe*** at the Berryman Institute. This collection is contains at least one copy of every issue except the following.

Missing issues:

#20 - Mar/Apr '82	*#44 - Jun/Jul '84*
#28 - Jan '83	*#46 - Sep/Oct '84*
#29 - Feb '83	*#60 - Feb '86*
#31 - Apr '83	*#65 - Aug '86*
#34 - Jul '83	*#121 - May '92*
#42 - Apr '84	*#129 - Jan/Feb '93*

We are asking NADCA members to check their files for any of these issues and please send the issues, or a photocopy, to Dr. Conover at:

The Berryman Institute
5210 Old Main Hall, NR206
Logan, UT 84322-5210

Video Review

By Stephen Vantassel, Project Coordinator, Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln, http://icwdm.org

"MOLES: Removal Made Simple!" with Alan A. Huot. By Wildlife Control Supplies. LLC. 43 minutes. VHS Retail $49.95

Wildlife Control Supplies has expanded their involvement in wildlife damage management education with the release of a mole control video. Mr. Huot wanted a video that was professionally done with clear and accurate content that showed people the basics of controlling moles with traps. To those who know him, it should come as no surprise that he accomplished his goal.

Moles: Removal Made Simple takes the homeowner through the entire mole control process. It correctly assumes precious little on the part of the viewer, other than the viewer's experience with mole damage. The video covers the basics. Viewers learn about mole biology and behavior, how to "read" mole sign, to identify preferable trapping locations and to use equipment that helps make mole trapping easier.

The bulk of the video discusses how to use four main mole traps, harpoon, scissor, Nash® and the NoMol®. The breadth of trap instruction makes this video is unique as most videos only cover one or maybe two types of mole traps. Mr. Huot takes care to teach the viewer about proper safety as well as proper setting techniques for each of the traps. I particularly appreciated how he modeled safe trapping by wearing gardeners gloves during his demonstrations.

Another interesting aspect of the video is the footage on an actual mole foraging and digging in and on the soil. As someone who loves moles, I found it fascinating to watch a mole in action. Alan Huot is to be commended for getting this footage.

I have only a couple of negatives about the video. First, Mr. Huot didn't explain how to kill a mole if the trap failed to do so. I understand that the killing of animals is an unpleasant subject and that relevant laws may vary from state to state. But I do believe that how-to videos need to provide all appropriate information, including how to kill the animal. Second, the video didn't educate the viewer on how to distinguish pocket gopher damage from mole damage. It is an understandable oversight since; pocket gophers don't reside in the North-east where Mr. Huot runs his business.

The video has excellent audio and generally excellent video. It is obvious that this was a professional production. Presentation problems, such as repetition and transition issues, are small and don't diminish the overall educational value of the tape.

I would recommend this video for those who are beginning to trap moles or who wish to learn how to use a different mole trap. Experienced mole trappers will probably find the material too basic. However, the equipment tips might be worth the price of the video if your mole business is quite large.

**Readers should be made aware that I have had a long personal and business relationship with Alan Huot and Wildlife Control Supplies.*

Video can be purchased for shipment within the continental U.S.by sending a check for $49.95 plus $4.35 S&H to:
Wildlife Control Supplies
P.O. Box 653
Simsbury, CT 06070
Orders can also be placed on-line at http://www.wildlifecontrolsupplies.com
by telephone Toll Free: 877-684-7262 or
by 24 Hour Fax: 860-844-0102

To have your item reviewed for the Probe, please send a copy with contact and purchase information to:
Stephen Vantassel
Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln
306 B. Biochemistry Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583-0759

Wildlife Damage in the News

"Big Cats" Seen Once Again in Kansas

Mountain lion sightings are increasing in frequency in Kansas, a state where the last "verified" report of a cougar was in 1904. According to an article in the July 21, 2005 issue of the ***Mt. Hope Clarion***, in mid-July the Maize Police Department alerted Maize residents of the possible presence of one of the large felines. (Maize is a suburb of Wichita.)

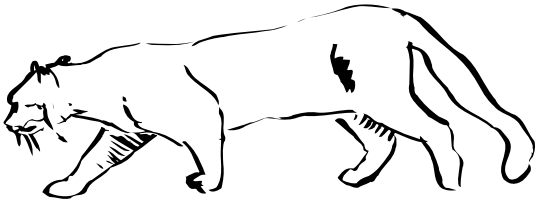
One farmer reported that a good-sized animal had spooked his cattle. Large tracks were found near the cattle pens. Another rural resident saw what appeared to be a large cat near his duck pens. The creature tore off the screen door and left large paw prints.

While mountain lions are native to the state, Kansas Wildife and Parks officials say that the animals began disappearing shortly after settlers moved in. The appearance of more and more people in a formerly wilderness area, coupled with a decrease in the cats' natural prey (elk and deer) caused the cougars to move to easier pickings.

In the last few years, deer populations have increased, perhaps nmaking the area more attractive to mountain lions and other predators. Authorities also state that the rabbit population is on the rise.

Some wildlife officials believe that if there are cougars in the state, they are probably nomads, younger or weaker animals that have been pushed off their territory. They are territorial and cover a radius of 60 to 75 miles.

—Adapted from an article in the July 21, 2005, ***Mt. Hope Clarion****, Mt. Hope, Kansas*



The editor of ***The Probe*** *thanks contributors to this issue: Dexter K. Oliver, Pamela J. Tinnin, and Stephen Vantassel*

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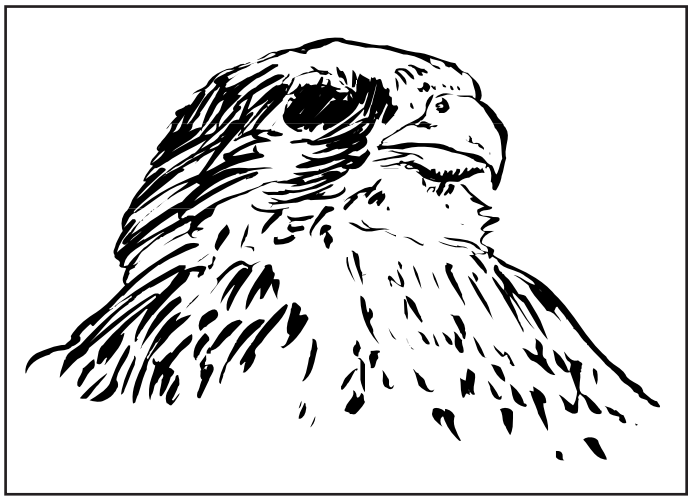
Conceptual Feminization of Wildlife In U.S.

And, along with civil rights and Vietnam War protests, the women's rights movement burst upon the scene. Traditional social restraints in the roles women might choose to follow were torn down, cast aside, and trampled into the dust. Rightfully so, but a combination of these two phenomena quickly and irrevocably (it seems) brought something new and debilitating to the dignity, austerity, and reality of both wildlife and any human attempts to manage it. As the general populace bought the Disney fantasies as truth and more and more women moved into the wildlife work arena they brought the completely inappropriate, yet apparently compelling, word "cute" to the natural world.



Trust me when I tell you that "cute" is now entrenched as one of the foremost concepts guiding professional wildlife/wild lands management from the federal, to the state, to the private biological consulting level. I have worked at all of these divisions in the wildlife business and taken my notes as a nonpartisan, nonsexist, but realistic reporter. If you look at this situation through the Oriental traditions of Yin (female, soft) and Yang (masculine, hard) it is easy to see that the perpetuation of this pattern is coming from the former, much more than from the latter. And there should be no forgiveness for this improper, injurious attribution at a professional level.

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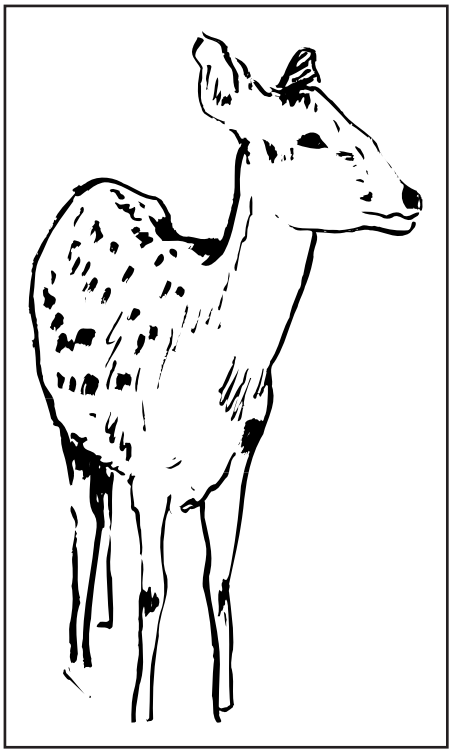
Conceptual Feminization of Wildlife In U.S.

It is making a mockery of the federal Endangered Species Act; it is applying detrimental bias to wildlife field research and endangered species reintroduction programs; and it is somehow (!?) providing an unassailable high moral platform for animal rights activists and home-grown animal rights terrorists. Rules and regulations concerning handling threatened and endangered species are ignored by professional biologists (yet rigidly enforced on the general population) should they feel it necessary to save a "cute" owl nestling that has fallen to the ground or provide supplement food to a "cute" starving Mexican gray wolf pup. Tinkering with wildlife is now a mainstay with them. But, unlike the naturalists of a century ago, our current "experts" are so far removed from being true participants in the wild world that they are really little more than tourists posing as seasoned guides.



One of the reasons that women flocked to wildlife agencies where they might come into contact with these "cute" animals was because of their newfound freedom in the work place and access to money that could provide a college degree, which is now all they needed to make them "specialists" or "experts". Apprenticeships in the field, accumulating years of actual experience with wildlife are no longer necessary to get a biological position with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Geological Survey, the division of wildlife within the U.S. Forest Service, or any state game and fish department. In fact, in might be a stumbling block because more and more supervisors in these agencies don't want some underling with more practical knowledge questioning their directives. Politically correct hiring practices, based on gender and ethnicity, may look good on paper, but if the folks aren't qualified for the job, no matter how compliant they might be under questionable circumstances that always seem to arise in bureaucracies, they shouldn't be employed. Yet government laws are bypassing this fundamental common sense reasoning.

The one niche in the wildlife game in the United States where you don't see the feminization of wildlife is animal damage control, at any level, from federal down to private. This isn't to say that you won't find women working here, but they are experienced, practical realists who, like anyone doing this work, are constantly being tested. If you can't catch the wolf that's eating a rancher's domestic calves or the beaver that are flooding portions of a highway, you won't have a job very long. Yet there are no tests or culpability in the soft biological science positions in federal and state wildlife agencies and that omission attracts the Yin crowd with its fashionably abstract concept of what the natural world is supposed to be like.

They say that change is the only constant in life, and one can only hope this will soon apply to the way our natural resources are being administered. But I have been working in this field for three decades now, which includes my current position leading a seasonal wildlife crew for the U.S. Forest Service, and I only see it getting worse. The quality of the people is plummeting and the agendas they haul around with them are often even counterproductive to the well being of the "cute" wildlife they profess to love so much. It is past time for a reality check here, by the people who control the purse strings, if not the populace who vote them into office.

Send Your Articles!

The Probe wants your input! Send your articles to the editor Lawrence Sullivan at the address listed in the lower lefthand corner of page 2. This is your newsletter—be a part of it!