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EEC's Wild Fur Regulations and Wildlife Damage Implications

Mahadev G. Bhat and Rick White¹

The European Economic Community (EEC) may have accomplished with the stroke of a pen, goals which U.S. animal rights activists have struggled unsuccessfully for years to achieve. On Nov. 4, the EEC's chief decision-making body, the European Council of Ministers, adopted unanimously and with little discussion the Wild Fur Regulation (WFR). Beginning Jan. 1, 1995, the regulation will ban fur imports originating from countries which fail to (1) stop foothold trapping, and (2) adopt international humane trapping standards. Countries which pledge to adopt humane trapping standards will be granted a one-year extension to comply with the WFR. Because the European community is an important market for American furs, the regulation will affect the trapping of many American fur-bearing species, including racoon, beaver, bobcat, muskrat, coyote, otter, badger, lynx, marten, sable, and ermine.

Ironically, the call for international, humane trapping standards did not exist until now, in part because developing such standards requires substantial research. But even when humane standards are developed, implementing the European Council's measures will be a herculean task for several technical and economic reasons.

Banning foothold traps, in particular, will be difficult because of their pervasive use. Paul Bishop of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation said such traps are used on more than 60 percent of all furbearing animals captured in New York, the U.S.'s most popular fur-trade center. That state agency is part of an international effort to develop humane standards for live-capture and instant-kill trapping. However, foothold traps are considered the most effective traps to capture species like fox and coyote, which currently cannot be captured effectively by other means.

Further, most longtime trappers primarily employ foothold trapping, and they may

quit trapping if it is banned. Already, some states—such as Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Florida—have banned such trapping and observed such an effect. Those bans resulted in less overall trapping activity and an increased wildlife population which is becoming a nuisance. However, because of the relatively low average fur harvest in these states, the overall impact of these foothold trapping bans on fur supplies is insignificant.

On the other hand, failure to implement humane trapping standards or ban foothold trapping will have severe direct and indirect economic repercussions. Noncompliance with the WFR will close the European fur market to U.S. fur and reduce fur prices, which in turn will create economic hardships for trappers, suppliers, dealers, fur buyers, and a large number of fur industry employees. Since fur trapping is a seasonal activity, private trappers who depend on its marginal income will be affected severely.

The WFR's indirect and long-term impacts also could be severe. Federal and state officials consider fur trapping to be an effective means of regulating wildlife populations and wildlife damage to agricultural and forest lands. If WFR-regulated fur trapping is unprofitable, trapping activity will decline. In turn, fur-bearing animal populations will increase—even in areas where their numbers already require extreme regulatory management to avoid overpopulation.

Similar effects can be seen in several past fur market failures which allowed sharply increased wildlife populations and their nuisance activities. For example, northern coyote pelts fetched low market prices after their heavy-coated black fur fell out of style in the last two decades. As a result of decreased coyote trapping, northern U.S. wildlife agencies have observed an increase in coyote populations and associated agricultural

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

June 25-28, 1992: North America Fur Taker's Rendezvous, Cobleskill Fairgrounds, Cobleskill, New York. Contact: Earl Van Wormer, RD No. 1, Box 9, Sloansville, NY 12160, (518) 866-9344.

August 3-7, 1992: Bird Strike Committee—USA, FAA Regional Office, JFK International Airport, Jamaica, NY, will include two days of conference papers and a one-day field trip. Contact: James Forbes, USDA/APHIS/ADC, P.O. Box 97, Albany, NY 12201, (518) 472-6492.

August 25-27, 1992: 2nd North American Wolf Symposium. Contact: L.N. Carbyn, University of Alberta, Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 215 Central Academic Bldg., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G1.

September 11-16, 1992: International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting, Portside Marriott, Toledo, OH. Contact: Richard Pierce, Chief, Ohio Division of Wildlife, 1840 Belcher Dr., Columbus, OH 43224-1339. (614) 265-6300.

September 13-16, 1992: International Conference on Avian Interactions with Utility Structures, Hotel International, Miami, Florida. Will focus on avian interactions with powerlines, towers, buildings, and aircraft. Contact: Ed Colson, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, 3400 Crow Canyon Road, San Ramon, CA 94853, (510) 866-5461; FAX (510) 866-5318.

September 17-19, 1992: 5th U.S./Mexico Border States Conference on Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, Hilton Hotel, Las Cruces, NM. Contact: Border Research Institute, New Mexico State University, Box 30001, Dept. 3BRI, 1200 University Avenue, Las Cruces, NM 88003-0001.

April 26-29, 1993: 11th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, Hyatt Regency, Kansas City, MO. For further information, contact: F. Robert Henderson, Ext. Wildlife Specialist, Kansas State University, (913) 532-5654, or Robert A. Pierce II, Ext. Wildlife Specialist, University of Missouri, (314) 882-7242.

May 25-26, 1993: The Wild Pig in California Oak Woodland: Ecology and Economics. Embassy Suites Hotel, San Luis Obispo, CA. Contact: Dr. William Tietje, Forestry & Resource Management, 2156 Sierra Way, Suite C, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. (805) 549-5940.

July 4-10, 1993: Sixth International Theriological Congress, Sydney, Australia. This is an international meeting of scientists interested in mammalogy, and will include symposia and workshops including such topics as population biology of mammals, the role of disease in population regulation, and wildlife management. Will include sessions on *Management of Problem Wildlife and Predation As a Regulator of Mammal Populations*. For further information, write: The Secretariat, 6th Int'l Theriological Congress, School of Biological Science, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2033.

October 1993: 6th Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference, Asheville, NC. For further information, contact: Peter R. Bromley, Ext. Wildlife Specialist, NC State University, (919) 515-7587.

Is National Park Service Anti-Hunting?

Recently *Hunting Report* editor Don Causey alerted The Wildlife Legislative Fund of America (WLFA) to a slur against hunters featured on a sign at the National Park Service's Muir Woods National Monument in Marin County, California. According to a report in the April, 1992 *WLFA-gram*, the sign stated that black bears in the forest, "Once common...have been hunted to extinction." The Park Service ranger at the site, while admitting the sign was wrong, refused to remove it until a new one can be erected in "six months or more."

The WLFA has written a letter to the National Park Service demanding immediate removal of the sign. The WLFA is calling for letters from sportsmen with the same message. Address your letters to: Mr. James Ridenour, Director, National Park Service, Interior Building, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7217.

Article contributed by Wes Jones

The Probe is the newsletter of the National Animal Damage Control Association, published 10 times per year.

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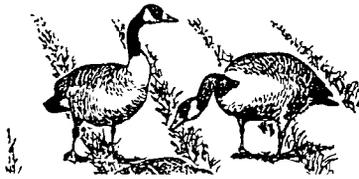
Pamela J. Tinnin, Laurelwood Press, Cloverdale, CA

Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting material is the 15th of each month.

Animal Damage Control in the News

Pelicans Continue to Plague Crawfish Producer

Earlier this year, a Louisiana crawfish producer from Lafourche Parish created quite a stir when he complained that a flock of "1,000" white pelicans had eaten most of the crawfish in his ponds. APHIS/ADC personnel from the Crowley office conducted an on-site visit of the site and found approximately 200 pelicans using the pond. Two birds were collected and each had consumed approximately one pound of crawfish. Although the producer was successfully scaring the pelicans from his pond, he requested a depredation permit. Because of the success of the scaring operation, the permit was denied. APHIS/ADC officials are continuing to monitor the situation.



Hard-Boiled Answer to Greedy Geese in England

Hard-boiled eggs could be the answer to Britain's plague of Canada geese, so long as geese elsewhere in the country prove as stupid as the ones around Milton Keynes. According to the November 9 issue of the *London Independent*, a team of wildfowl researchers has successfully fooled a flock of laying geese at Great Linford, Buckinghamshire. The birds believe that hard-boiled eggs, and even wooden dummies, placed in their nests are the real thing. The geese are persuaded not to lay eggs of their own, thus helping curb the burgeoning goose population, which threatens to reach 100,000 by the year 2,000.

The Game Conservancy, an independent umbrella organization whose wetlands unit carried out the experiment at its wildfowl center in Great Linford with the permission of the Ministry of Agriculture, says that Canada geese have become a menace in recent years, trampling and eating crops and vegetation.

A spokesman explained, "They are enormous public nuisance on golf courses and in parks, thanks to their poor digestive system and high food intake. During intensive feeding, a Canada goose produces a large dropping every three to four minutes; in a flock of 1,000 geese, as at Great Linford, the effect is quite considerable..."

Brochure Available on Wildlife Depredation of Pecans

A new publication titled *Identifying Wildlife Depredation of Pecans*, may prove to be a helpful tool for pecan producers in their efforts to prevent animal damage to their crops. Written by J. Grant Huggins, a Wildlife & Fisheries Specialist, the 4-page brochure features photographs of a variety of species and the specific damage they cause to pecan crops. Included is the American Crow, the Blue Jay, Eastern Fox Squirrel, Eastern Woodrat, Southern Flying Squirrel, White-footed mouse, and the Hispid Cotton Rat. According to the text, "Wildlife reduce pecan production in three ways: tree injury - damage to the pecan tree itself, nut damage - consumption or spoilage of pecan nuts within the orchard, and caching - the removal, burial, or storage of pecans, rendering them unavailable for harvest." (*Identifying Wildlife Depredation of Pecans* addresses nut damage exclusively.) The pamphlet is available free of charge from J. Grant Huggins, The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 2180, Ardmore, OK 73402.

Arizona May Require Trapping Course Before Issuing Licenses

Applicants for trapping licenses in Arizona will have to complete a trapper's education course before receiving a license if a recent hearing by the Arizona Senate Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee is any indication.

According to an article in the March 18 and 19 *Tri-Valley Dispatch*, Casa Grande, Arizona, the bill's sponsor, Sen. August "Bill" Hardt, D-Globe, said the bill is partly an attempt to alleviate concerns driving a ballot proposition to ban all leghold and body-gripping traps as well as snares and explosive devices.

"We want to assure those people that trapping is a clean business, and we want to make it even cleaner so the public has more confidence in it," Hardt said. He called Proposition 200 "dangerous" in its attempt to what many say is to ban trapping, hunting, and fishing altogether. The bill, which was approved by the committee 10-1, mandates instruction in trapping regulations, ethics, and equipment, as well as considerations for public health and safety and techniques for releasing non-target animals caught in the traps.

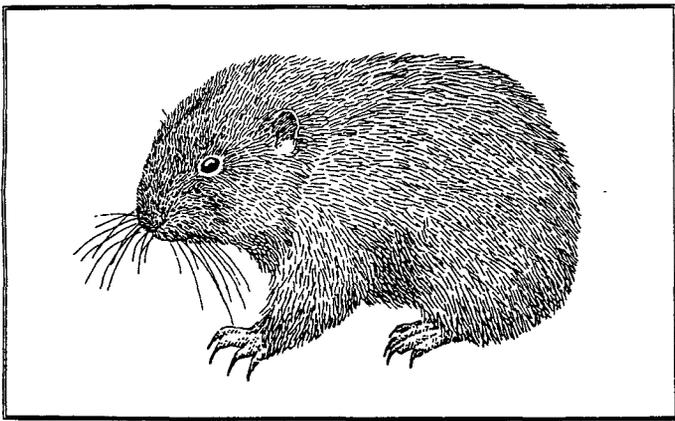
The editors of The Probe thank contributors to this issue: Ron Thompson, Pink Madsen, J. Grant Huggins, James E. Forbes, and Wes Jones. Send your contributions to The Probe, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.

Some Considerations for Mountain Beaver Control

Amy Hacker

Mountain beaver, deceptively cute burrowing rodents, are widely distributed throughout much of Oregon's Coast Range and Cascade Mountains. They are considered pests because they damage regenerating Douglas-fir seedlings by clipping the branches or main stems for use as forage or in building nests.

Control programs are frequently conducted in regenerating stands with potential or actual damage. Management normally consists of kill-trapping all mountain beaver in the clearcut. Although they are relatively easy to trap, trapping is a labor-intensive, high-cost method of control and is only partially effective in mitigating damage to young Douglas-fir.



While I was a graduate student at Oregon State University (1988-91), I conducted a study to determine how long it takes mountain beaver to reestablish populations in areas where they have been removed, and which habitat features attracted these colonists. Mountain beaver were found to rapidly recolonize clearcuts from which they had been eradicated. It seems that even within one year of removal trapping, animal densities can be as high as those in stands that haven't been trapped. This finding may help to explain forest managers' reports of persistent mountain beaver damage despite extensive trapping efforts. Given that mountain beaver are capable of rapidly reestablishing themselves when suitable habitat is available, it seems unlikely that long-term control can be established through physically removing the animals. Habitat manipulations that either discourage colonization or that provide alternate food sources will probably provide the most efficient long-term damage control.

Mountain beaver were found to colonize moist areas with plentiful wood debris and lush vegetation. Foresters may be able to reduce invasion by avoiding the creation of downed wood accumulations during tree harvest. In particular, such accumulations should be avoided in conjunction with particular geographic features. Such features include stream drainages, northerly aspect and steep slopes. Recolonization is most likely in areas with greater amounts of small (<25 cm diameter) woody debris. To avoid such accumulations, managers should ensure that the entire clearcut is broadcast burned. Piling logging debris should be avoided because slash piles are particularly attractive to mountain beaver. Depression of animal numbers through long-term forage reduction is probably impractical in western Oregon.

However, habitat manipulations that are aimed at reducing damage to conifers without reducing the number of colonists may have merit. Conifers are not a preferred food source but are consumed when availability of alternate foods is limited, such as during the winter or at the time of canopy closure. Management strategies that emphasize alternate winter food sources may reduce damage to conifers. Efforts to retain sword fern and salal should be made in stands that support these species. Low intensity burns will remove small woody debris without destroying the root systems of these forage plants. Habitat manipulations that provide alternate food sources for mountain beaver may avoid problems associated with reducing habitat suitability by removing downed wood. Decaying wood is important to many forest species and provides nutrients essential to soil productivity. Forest ecosystems are extremely complex and their overall health should be considered when managing any single species.

This article is reprinted from Oregon's Wildlife Resources, Spring 1992, Vol. 2, No. 2.

California Research Documents

Cougar Attacks

Although cougar attacks on humans are much rarer than many animal-related hazards, they are definitely on the rise. According to Paul Beier of the University of California, Berkeley, there have been as many cougar attacks on humans in the last twenty years as there were in the previous eighty years. Beier's article, *Cougar Attacks on Humans in the United States and Canada*, appeared in the *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, Winter 1991, Vol. 19, No. 4.

Using a variety of sources including scientific and even popular literature such as *Outdoor Life*, Beier documented mountain lion attacks from January 1, 1890 through December 31, 1990. He found 9 fatal attacks and 44 nonfatal attacks resulting in 10 human deaths and 48 nonfatal injuries. There were multiple victims in 5 of the attacks. As a result, the fatalities and injuries outnumber the actual attacks. The one double fatality was believed to be caused by rabies, the only known documentation of apparent transmission of rabies from cougars to humans.

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EEC's Wild Fur Regulations and...

damage in recent years. The southern beaver population is a classic example of such a market failure. The poor quality of beaver pelts coming from southern range always fetches low pelt prices and results in little trapping. Consequently, southern beaver populations have boomed during the past 30 years. Beavers alone are now responsible for \$10 million in annual southern forest damage, according to the results of a survey of Southern foresters conducted by James Miller of the USDA Extension Service. Further, beavers were the only source of damage to forest lands found in the survey, which examined forest damage caused by wildlife species. The creatures also damage crops, alter drainage patterns, and block culverts. As a result, beaver management in the Southeast has become pest management in most cases.

In the North, fur trapping remains economically profitable because pelt quality and prices are high. To protect furbearing species from excessive trapping during periods of favorable market conditions, wildlife agencies have regulated trapping through quotas and trapping seasons. In the case of beavers, agencies work to improve public tolerance by explaining the long-term benefits of beaver populations in terms of their habitat creation for other wildlife species. However, with the implementation of WFR, wildlife agencies will face a tough time convincing the public of the benefits of regulating furbearer populations. Furthermore, private

Many observers feel that the increase in cougar attacks are a result of two recent trends. Cougar populations have increased markedly, especially in British Columbia, California, Colorado, Nevada, Texas, and Wyoming. At the same time, human use of wildlands has also dramatically increased. Beier also speculates that with the establishment of large "hunting-free" zones, cougars may grow accustomed to the presence of humans. But, he says, that doesn't seem to impact the frequency of attacks—57% of all attacks occurred in British Columbia, where hunters take 200 cougars each year.

According to Beier, "Attacks by cougars are rare but increasing. It is unlikely that sport hunting will remove enough cougars to reduce the risk." Beier suggested that wildlands managers might be able to use some of his data on cougar behaviors, as well as human responses, to "offer advice that may reduce risk to the human visitors."

landowners will face a shortage of fur-trapping activity and an increase in wildlife nuisances. Unless cost-effective and practical techniques of humane trapping are devised, the control of furbearer populations and their nuisance activity will pose a severe challenge to wildlife agencies. The ultimate cost of this new development in the international fur market will be borne by landowners and the trapping industry in the U.S. and other countries outside Europe.

The WFR is a strong articulation of an international call for humane trapping and appears much more effective than the sporadic, bullying tactics which animal rights activists have for years used to express their call to ban animal trapping and hunting. The WFR is very similar to EEC's import ban on U.S. beef produced with bovine growth hormone, and the market repercussions of such trade restrictions are undisputed. Now it is time for wildlife agencies, private landowners, and the trapping industry to coordinate their efforts toward public education, trapper education, and research and to develop humane trapping methods, lest they lose one of the fur industry's biggest markets.

Membership Application

NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Mail to: Wes Jones, Treasurer, Route 1 Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871

Name: _____ Phone: (____) ____ - ____ Home

Address: _____ Phone: (____) ____ - ____ Office

Additional Address Info: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

Dues: \$ _____ Donation: \$ _____ Total: \$ _____ Date: _____

Membership Class: Student \$7.50 Active \$15.00 Sponsor \$30.00 Patron \$100

(underline one)

Check or Money Order payable to NADCA

Select one type of occupation or principal interest:

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Pest Control Operator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USDA - APHIS - ADC or SAT | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USDA - Extension Service | <input type="checkbox"/> ADC Equipment/Supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal - not APHIS or Extension | <input type="checkbox"/> State Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign | <input type="checkbox"/> Trapper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____ | |