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November 1993

## The Probe, Issue 138 – November 1993

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# Happenings in ADC's Western Region

*Jeffrey S. Green, Wildlife Biologist, Staff Specialist, USDA/APHIS/ADC, Western Regional Office, Lakewood, Colorado*

Helping the livestock industry deal with predators and predation is still the major endeavor of the USDA, APHIS, Animal Damage Control Program (ADC) in the west. About three-fourths of ADC's efforts in the 17 western states are focused toward that end. But over the past several years, ADC's effectiveness in managing the predator problem has come into question. Responding to the American Sheep Industry's concern of increased levels of predation and the related "deterioration of the ADC program," ADC's Deputy Administrator directed a panel of western ADC leaders to focus on the allocation and expenditure of funds, staffing aerial hunting, the impacts of Federal legislation including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), research priorities, and other pertinent issues to the current program.

After several months of work, the panel concluded that, in general ADC's effectiveness in protecting livestock has decreased since 1985. The panel also concluded that ADC funding within APHIS is insufficient to restore the western program's capabilities. The panel's review of data identified several key determining factors and related issues that influence the program's effectiveness. Public lands policy, changing human perceptions about wildlife, environmental regulations, and increasing costs have all served to reduce effectiveness of the livestock protection program.

## Becoming NEPA Proficient

To increase its capability to deal with the problem of livestock predation, ADC is leading the way in complying with NEPA on western lands. Over 40 ADC personnel have received a week-long training course dealing with NEPA, and in Oregon, ADC is taking the lead in pursuing the NEPA process in one of its districts. ADC is taking an ADC district approach that covers an area irrespective of

land class or ownership. Consequently, it is proposed that Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and ADC personnel serve on the ID team, with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife performing an advisory function. This approach will tie site-specific NEPA compliance with ADC's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement scheduled for completion early in 1994.

## Threatened and Endangered Species

An expanding role of ADC deals with protecting threatened and endangered species. For the past few years, desert tortoise numbers have declined due to a number of factors, one of which is predation by ravens. ADC in California requested BLM's assistance in identifying and removing ravens that prey on the tortoises. With help from the BLM, ADC mapped raven nesting sites in the Desert Tortoise National Area in southeastern California and monitored their feeding habits. Once a pair of ravens began to prey on young tortoises, they were removed. This selective control is hoped to curtail the loss of this threatened reptile.

In July 1993, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) published a proposal to list the southwestern willow flycatcher under the Endangered Species Act. An imminent threat to the remaining populations of the flycatcher is brood parasitism by cowbirds. Cowbirds also threaten the already listed Kirtland's warbler, golden-cheeked warbler, and least Bell's vireo. ADC will be assisting the FWS and state agencies in cowbird control programs.

## Brown Tree Snakes

In the past, when it came to snakes, some ADC specialists occasionally dealt with rattlers that were posing a threat to human health and

*Continued on page 4*

# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 8-9, 1993: Ground Squirrel/Pocket Gopher Symposium, Reno, NV.** Deals with current and future technology for control, especially rodenticides. Contact: Kathleen Fagerstone, USDA Denver Wildl. Res. Ctr., P.O. Box 25266, Denver, CO 80225-0266, (303) 236-2089.

**December 11-15, 1993: 55th Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference, St. Louis, Missouri.** The theme is *New Agendas in Fish and Wildlife Management: Approaching the Next Millenium*. Features include an *Urban Deer Management Symposium*. For more information, contact: Wayne Porath, 1110 S. College Ave., Columbia, MO 65201, (314) 882-9880.

**December, 1993: 2nd International Symposium on Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) And On Order Suiformes, Torino, Italy.** For more information, contact: Secretariat, 2nd International Symposium on Wild Boar and on order Suiformes, c/o Prof. P. Durio, Dipartimento Produzioni Animali, Epidemiologia ed Ecologia, Via Nizza 52, 10126 Torino (Italy), Telephone 39.11 . 6503734 - FAX 39.11 . 655455.

**February 21-23, 1994: 1st Eastern Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators Short Course, Lexington, Kentucky.** For more information, contact Tom Barnes, Extension Wildlife Specialist, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0073.

**April 12-15, 1994: 12th Eastern Black Bear Workshop, River Terrace Resort & Convention Center, Gatlinburg, Tennessee.** The theme is *Human-Bear Interactions*. For more information, contact Michael R. Pelton, Department of Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37901, (615) 974-7126; FAX (615) 974-4714.

**May 1-4, 1994: Northeast Association of Wildlife Damage Biologists Annual Meeting, Sheraton-Burlington Hotel and Conference Center, Burlington, Vermont.** Contact: Rich Chipman, P.O. Box 1436, Montpelier, VT 05601.



## USDA Wildlife Services Honored at Fish & Wildlife Meeting

The following resolution was passed at the 83rd Annual Meeting of the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies in Lake Placid, New York, in September.

### Resolution 93-1 Wildlife Damage Management Program in USDA/APHIS

**WHEREAS:** Most states have cooperative agreements for wildlife damage management and many depend upon Wildlife Services (formerly Animal Damage Control) in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide control for animal damage whose extent and kinds of damage are increasing; and,

**WHEREAS:** The Wildlife Services program has embarked on a new strategic direction based on social acceptability, sound biological principles, and one that improves the leadership, professionalism, and accountability within the program; and

**WHEREAS:** The Wildlife Services program has the only national research center that is devoted entirely to the development of new technologies and alternative methods of wildlife damage control, and is developing cooperative relationships with universities to broaden the understanding of and finding solutions to wildlife problems,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** That the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies supports and commends the Department of Agriculture for its leadership, direction, and cooperation and for being responsive to the need to conduct a socially acceptable, environmentally sound, and effective wildlife damage management program.

*The Probe* is the newsletter of the National Animal Damage Control Association, published 11 times per year.

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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Research & Extension Center, 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. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of NADCA.

Because of the statements from the candidates for NADCA president and the NADCA ballot, **ADC News, Tips, Ideas & Publications...** will not appear in this issue.



*Gary Simmons*

## **A Vision for NADCA**

**A**nimal damage control as a function is presently challenged on virtually every front. Budgets are tight, administrative burdens are growing, public sentiment is shifting while the number and complexity of wildlife conflicts is increasing. Many organizations have aggressively mobilized to block the use of effective control methods. Those groups are committed to disrupting the legitimate activities of the individuals and agencies who professionally manage wildlife conflicts. To survive these challenges, those involved in animal damage control must strive for unity within the profession and for an effective means of communicating the views, interests and needs of the profession. I believe that this is a proper role for the National Animal Damage Control Association.

My vision for NADCA at the end of the next two years is of an organization that has stepped forward professionally to effectively represent the important views and interests of the entire membership. This vision includes an energized and expanded membership working together from the ground up to assure the future of animal damage control. In this view, both the Association's officers and members will be actively communicating the values and interests of the membership through published articles, resolution, and position statements. In short, I believe that NADCA will have grown from an inwardly focused fraternal organization to a professional association that complements its internal dialogue with an assertive external communications effort.

In declaring my interest in serving as President of the National Animal Damage Control Association, I pledge my personal energies to the advancement of the Association over the course of the next two years. If elected, I will strive to make my vision for NADCA a reality.

*Gary Simmons,  
NADCA Candidate for President*



*James E. Forbes*

## **Where Will NADCA Be Two Years From Now**

**I** feel we should build on President Salmon's strong foundation and concentrate our efforts in four areas—all four are doable:

**1. Provide Service to Our Members:** We have several diverse sub-groups in NADCA. I would like to find out the unique needs of each of these groups and then fill the need by providing any necessary service to our members.

**2. Increase Membership:** I would like NADCA to double its membership to reach a goal of 1,000 members by the end of 1995. In Region 7, I have increased our membership from 11 to 130 members and I'm sure we can get similar results nationally.

**3. Take A Stand:** I would like to see NADCA take a stand on issues affecting our members and to address those issues. I would appoint a spokesperson committee. The committee's job would be to develop a set of position papers on topics and issues vital to NADCA members. This would allow NADCA to take a more proactive position on these issues.

**4. Provide Leadership:** I would strive to make NADCA the undisputed leader among wildlife damage management organizations. However, this would be done in a manner that would build good rapport and support among our sister ADC organizations.

*James E. Forbes,  
NADCA Candidate for President*

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## **Happenings in ADC's Western Region continued**

safety. Lately a new reptile has become a focus of ADC in the west. The brown tree snake is an exotic reptile that was introduced to Guam from New Guinea via military cargo after World War II. It was first detected in the 1950s and became conspicuous in the 1960s. Now it is found throughout the island, often in high densities. The snake is arboreal and nocturnal and is responsible for the extirpation of several bird and mammal species on the island. Other species are also threatened by this snake that will kill chickens, pigeons, caged song birds, kittens, and puppies. The snake gains access to electrical transmission lines and transformers by climbing guy wires and power poles and causes numerous short circuits and power outages. It is mildly poisonous and a public health risk. Many bites to people have been recorded, most occurring while the victims slept. Over half the victims were children under six years old.

Since Guam is a focal point of air and ship cargo throughout the Pacific, there is a fear that the snake could be inadvertently introduced to other islands, particularly Hawaii. ADC is working in Guam on a plan to clear shipping areas of snakes and then keep them clear. Among other techniques, specialists will try using detection dogs to find the snakes and help determine the routes snakes use to travel so that other control equipment can be used to remove them.

Representatives from the Armed Forces Pest Management Board, ADC, and others from the Department of

Defense have formed the Brown Tree Snake Control Committee to plan and coordinate control activities. A million-dollar Congressional appropriation to control the brown tree snake has allowed ADC to begin operational control in Guam.

### **Livestock Guarding Dogs**

ADC continues to maintain an active livestock guarding dog program wherein information and assistance are provided to livestock producers interested in using dogs with their stock. Recently ADC teamed up with long-time range sheep producers in Montana to see how livestock guarding dogs would operate where black and grizzly bears were primary predators. In a wilderness area north of Yellowstone National Park bears had been taking sheep quite regularly, and the producer was virtually at the mercy of the bruins. Coyotes were abundant in the area also and had taken their share of sheep.

ADC found two Akbash dogs, a Turkish guarding breed, to spend the seven-week summer with the band and their rather unique herder, a Frenchman with a Ph.D. Thanks to the dogs and the very attentive herder, only two sheep were lost to bears (none to coyotes) in 1992, although the herder documented at least 10 encounters with bears, sheep, and dogs. In 1993, bears again confronted the sheep but were themselves confronted by the guard dogs.

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## **Personnel Changes in ADC**

**DR. RUSSELL REIDINGER**, Director of the Denver Wildlife Research Center, USDA-APHIS-ADC, has resigned his present position in order to become Director of the Center of Excellence at Lincoln University in Kansas City, Missouri. In his new position, Dr. Reidinger remains an employee of USDA-APHIS-ADC and will be recruiting faculty to start a new academic program in wildlife management at Lincoln University. Dr. Reidinger had served as DWRC director for the past 7 years. In his absence, Dr. Dick Curnow assumes the position of Acting Director.

**JOE PACKHAM**, Manager of the Pocatello Supply Depot, retired from USDA-APHIS, ADC on September 30. Joe had a distinguished career in ADC, having served in several western states in operational control and administration prior to becoming Deputy Administrator for ADC with USDA-APHIS in Washington, D.C. Ed Schafer of the Denver Wildlife Research Center has been appointed Acting Manager of the Pocatello depot.

*The editors of The PROBE thank contributors to this issue: Sherm Blom, Gary Simmons, Bill Fitzwater, James E. Forbes, and Wes Jones. We also wish to thank those who sent material that we were unable to use because of space limitations. Send your contributions to The PROBE, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

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# Animal Damage Control—Then & Now

*Bill Fitzwater, NADCA Charter Member, former Editor of The PROBE*

**B**ob Schmidt's call to ask me if I could put together an article on what animal damage control was like in the old days sent my mind reeling back through pleasurable memories long past. Allowing for the fact that as memory dims, we tend to focus on the enjoyable rather than painful events in our past, they were still the "good ol' days." So gather 'round chilluns, while ol' grandpa brags about those halcyon days before the ugly dragon known as EPA darkened the landscape.

I started my ADC career in 1945. I had just finished four years of regular feeding by Uncle Sam (even if it was mostly SPAM), and was facing an uncertain future as a maintenance man in a plush resort in the Catskill mountains, when Walt Dykstra offered me a job in the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Branch of Predator and Rodent Control (PARC), a real mouthful—but it said it all. I had my misgivings about the job as my only contact with ADC was a one-hour lecture from a professor in the New York State College of Forestry who left the impression that this was the dregs of the profession and not an occupation for any all-American boy. Control people were "black-hatted bad guys" in the Fish & Wildlife Service, but the job promised some stability and I had learned to like eating, so I debased myself and signed on, mentally assuring myself that once established I could transfer to a more respectable branch.

In addition to the above "training," my control field experience consisted solely of poisoning a few rats at the resort with a red squill bait. And one of them had the ingratitude to die under the wooden floor of the cigarette stand in the gift shop at the resort, making me persona non grata with the clerks and management for a week before the stench finally dissipated. Walt sent me to the bait-mixing station in Amherst, Massachusetts, for three days canning zinc phosphide for orchard mouse control and learning how to fill out the inevitable government forms. He gave me a truck, a leaflet on orchard mouse control, and told me I was to give a talk on that subject before the New York Horticultural Society next month in Poughkeepsie. He wished me good luck in finding a headquarters place in my new Ohio-New York district and thus ended my formal training in ADC.

Money was tight as our "murderous" activities were frowned upon by the good guys who raised ducks and fish for the hunting and fishing fraternity to catch. However, in those days the ranching community ruled

western politics. There we were respected pillars of the community and ranchers made sure their congressmen gave us enough to continue "killing" (believe it or not, that was politically correct in ancient times) predator and rodent enemies. We had our critics, but the bulk of the country were still on the farm or only a generation away and knew eggs weren't neatly laid in cartons, but needed a lot of hidden help, like trapping foxes and poisoning rats, so we had a more sympathetic backing from the public than you kids have today.

It was even simpler to work for the government, too. You worked until the job was finished, whether it was a 4- or 12-hour day. We had many more control tools then, though not as effective nor as sophisticated as those available today. But then a shadow fell on our happy, haphazard existence. The Environmental Protection Agency was founded in 1970. The original cadre was made up of political puppets and unemployed lawyers for whom a lack of biological knowledge and training was a job prerequisite. They didn't recognize the inherent differences between vertebrate and invertebrate pest control. They wanted a chemical to be environmentally "pure" and effective under all possible situations before it could be registered.

In my own experience, I effectively reduced populations of house sparrows under semi-confined warehouse conditions with strychnine-laced corn particles without adverse effect on neighboring song bird populations or loss of environmental quality. But this is not registered. The regulators are only interested in aggravation and vertebrate pest control is such a limited market, it can't attract the "deep pockets" needed to fund the myriad tasks a confused bureaucracy can dream up.

Good luck, kids !

*Bill Fitzwater, a charter member of NADCA, served as Editor of The PROBE for its first 100 issues. We welcome him back as our inaugural writer for a new column on the thoughts and reflections of the emeritus wildlife damage managers in our profession.*



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**NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION**

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Membership Class: Student \$10.00 Active \$20.00 Sponsor \$40.00 Patron \$100 (Circle one)

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