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## In the News, Spring 2008

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## In the News

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### Wisconsin deer can't share food with elk or bear

The *Daily Globe* of Ironwood, Michigan, reported on a new Wisconsin regulation that



Elk about to cross highway. (Photo by Carol Gaddy Porter, USDA/APHIS.)

went into effect on October 1, 2007. People who feed deer for non-hunting purposes are required to stop doing so for at least 30 days if bear or elk begin using the site. Deer-feeding currently is banned in 26 Wisconsin counties. The amount and location where bait or feed may be distributed is regulated in all of the other counties in the state. This new regulation is aimed at protecting homeowners, motorists, and the small but growing elk herd by reducing disease transmission, automobile collisions, and other human–wildlife conflicts with bear and elk.

### Leaping sturgeon injure and enrage boaters with slap in the face

Leaping sturgeon on the calm waters of Florida's Suwannee and Choctawhatchee rivers cause several serious injuries to humans each season. As the large fish, some of which may reach 200 pounds, unexpectedly jump out of the water, they sometimes slap speeding boaters in the face and upper body, breaking limbs and crushing chests of unsuspecting victims. Locally, the phenomenon is referred

to as sturgeon strikes, a *New York Times* article reported on July 4, 2007.

The strikes have boaters apprehensive and angry. Wildlife officials have posted speed limit signs. But boaters resent the restrictions; they want the sturgeons destroyed.

Sturgeon have been on the federal threatened species list since 1991. The sturgeon's future is more at risk than ever, as more farm waste pours into Florida's rivers and an increasing human population looks to the rivers as sources of water.

### 9/11 seen as cause of deer population explosion

The U.S. Army base at Fort Detrick, Maryland, experienced a deer population explosion after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, according to the *Frederick News-Post* of Frederick County, Maryland.

The deer population on the military base jumped to 145 from 45 in the years following the terrorist attacks because deer hunting was suspended for 2 seasons. By then, the deer population had swelled so much that the 800-acre base was unable to support it. Deer were eating up most of the area's vegetation, including the new trees the base planted. Hunters alone were unable to control the herd, according Bob Craig, the base's environmental coordinator.

The USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services, which recommended cutting the herd size, conducted a deer sharpshooting program in 2006, bringing the deer population to about 45. Another sharpshooting season planned for 2007 aimed at reducing the herd to 20 deer. That number would make a sustainable population for the base, according to wildlife officials.

### U.S. gift of gray squirrel becomes British problem

The *Daily Mail* of Britain reported on a growing problem with gray squirrels (*Sciurus*

*carolinensis*) in England. Gray squirrels were introduced to Great Britain from America in 1876. The squirrels steal and eat bird eggs, bird food, and bulbs from gardens, as well as damage trees and lawns and threaten to drive the native red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) to near extinction. In an attempt to address this problem, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs proposed to work with the United States to develop an oral contraceptive for squirrels. However, this method poses many of the same challenges as they do in the United States, including affecting nontarget animals, bait acceptance, and the expense of treating >5 million squirrels. The author of the *Daily Mail* article suggests that shooting squirrels may be the only viable option for reducing the gray squirrel population before populations of native birds are further impacted and the red squirrel becomes extinct. The article's author went on to suggest that Britain's celebrity chefs could assist with the problem by developing casseroles and other dishes based on squirrel meat, thus, providing a use for squirrels that are shot. The author, however, noted that this plan could be thwarted by public opinion, which is conditioned by BBC wildlife documentaries favorable to squirrels, bird watching associations that advocate feeding squirrels, and people who persist in feeding squirrels as a hobby.



The gray squirrel: cute but unwanted alien.

Responding to the article, one woman commented, "Most things in England, including its people, were imported, and the native red squirrel population was destined to decline naturally."

**Green group takes aim at WS aerial control**

### Green group takes aim at WS aerial control

In the spring 2007 issue of *Human–Wildlife Conflicts*, Caudell (2007) reported on a plane crash that killed 2 USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services employees. Since then, certain groups have used this incident to gather support for a movement to end aerial gunning. In August, the Billings, Montana, *Gazette* reported that a Colorado group, Coalition to End Aerial Gunning of Wildlife, was

created to try to end this practice by Wildlife Services and state agencies that address wildlife damage by coyotes.

### Bird strikes raise safety, monetary concerns at foreign airports

The *Cyprus Mail* reported 28 bird strikes by aircraft at the island's 2 airports during a 5-month period this year. Cypriot pilots are aware of the danger of colliding with flamingos that inhabit Larnaca Salt Lake, which is adjacent to one of the country's principal airports. But there is concern for foreign pilots who might not be aware of the danger, and little is known about government action on the issue, according a spokesperson for Birdlife Cyprus, an environmental organization.

"It's not that the government was not doing anything," said Martin Hellicar, executive director of Birdlife Cyprus. "There is something going on [at the government level], but there is no bird strike plan, and this is an urgent issue," he said. A Cyprus Airways spokesman agreed. "There are bird strikes every year, and some are



Bird strikes are an international concern.

dangerous, and they cost a lot of money for the airlines," said Kyriacos Kyriacou, adding that aircraft repair costs could run into hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. "However, the most important issue for us is the safety aspect, because this is really a dangerous phenomenon to aircraft," he said. \*

### Literature cited

Caudell, J. N. 2007. In the news. *Human–Wildlife Conflicts* 1:132–134.

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(Photos courtesy USDA/APHIS.)