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HSUS Draft Recommendations
For the Oversight of Wildlife Control Operators

Arthur E. Smith, Certified Wildlife Biologist, NADCA Treasurer;
TWS WDMWG Newsletter Editor; OFWIM President-Elect,
Midwest Region Contact

Editor’s note: The HSUS draft oversight recommendations document can be viewed on the HSUS web site at www.hsus.org/programs/government/state.html. Scroll down to “Recommendations for Wildlife Control Operators.

And although the NWCO industry is expanding at a very rapid rate, human-wildlife conflicts are increasing both in numbers and in variety, and the industry will be hard pressed to keep up with society’s demands on it. Whether the formation...

...he was looking forward to developing a dialogue with state agencies, professional organizations, and other stakeholder groups to further the development of the draft for future implementation

of a draft national standard for NWCOs is derived from a special interest group, from inside the industry itself, or from a consortium of human-wildlife interaction groups remains to be seen. However, developing successful legislation projects which stand the course of time have a much better chance of success by including thoughtful and positive influences by stakeholder groups interested in producing such a product.

Presently in New York, Cornell University is in the process of writing a training/licensing program for Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators. It will personally be interesting to see what’s developed at Cornell and the reaction to it by others. Although I do not agree with many parts of the HSUS draft I saw back in October, I feel guidelines to regulate the NWCO industry will be developed in some way, shape or form. There are many, many players currently interested in the development of such a product for a variety of reasons. Producing a biased document will not advance the science, industry, or interests of any group concerned with managing human-wildlife interactions.
I was very favorably impressed with both the quantity and quality of information presented. Of course, as is the norm for this annual seminar, much insightful and useful information was also garnered from informal discussions in the hallway — and occasionally in the casino. I was also impressed with the esprit de corps and camaraderie exhibited by all the practicing wildlife control operators. Everyone present was willing to share their knowledge and experience — even their “trade secrets.” This annual program is a must for all private wildlife control operators.

Kirk La Pierre, of Rutherford, NJ, was named the NWCOA Professional of the Year and was also recognized for Exceptional Service for his leadership of the Operation NWCOA Support Our Troops program.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

March 4-7, 2002 - 20th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Silver Legacy Hotel, Reno, NV. Sponsored by the Vertebrate Pest Council, this conference makes significant contributions toward understanding and resolving undesirable wildlife-human interactions and wildlife damage problems. The pre-registration cost will be $175/person, with an additional $40 for the optional Monday field trip. Pre-registration deadline is Feb. 8, 2002. Registration cost after this date or at the door will be $210. For information go to http://www.davis.com/~vpc/welcome.htm.

March 5-9, 2002 - 20th Annual Wildlife Rehabilitators Association Symposium, Sheraton St. Louis City Center, St. Louis MO. Information from: http://www.nwrawildlife.org; e-mail: nwra@nwrawildlife.org.

October 22-24, 2002 - 4th Joint Annual Meeting of: Bird Strike Committee USA/Canada, Sacramento International Airport, CA. Theme: practical Wildlife Control Techniques for Airports. Will include papers, posters and demonstrations on wildlife control techniques, new technologies, land-use issues, training, engineering standards, wildlife strike statistics, and habitat management. For further information go to www.birdstrike.org.
Attending “Regular” Fish and Wildlife Conferences

Chad Richardson, NADCA Northern Plains Director

I recently attended the 63rd Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Des Moines, IA. The last time I attended a “regular” fish and wildlife conference was nine years ago as a wildlife student. After taking an interest in the field of wildlife damage, I started attending the damage conferences like the Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop and the Eastern Wildlife Damage Management Conference. Once I started attending the damage conferences, I never returned to the regular fish and wildlife conferences until now. It seems that most of us have probably done the same thing that I have done, that is, abandon these conferences so that we can attend the more specialized damage conferences.

I remember sessions on wildlife damage topics at these regular conferences and at least a small following of wildlife damage folks who attended. This did not appear to be the case at this conference; the session on predators had a sort of anti-predator control tone. I also attended a few talks in the wildlife rehabilitation session that were, in my opinion, borderline animal rights talks. I heard two different speakers use the term “so-called nuisance species” as if there were no such thing as a nuisance species. Of the 900+ attendees, I only knew of a half dozen or so who were wildlife damage people.

I also noticed a large number of students in attendance. These students, much the same as I was nine years ago, were looking for contacts or potential jobs in the wildlife field. This all leads to a couple of things that concern me and should also concern you.

First, I think the wildlife damage field should get back into the practice of attending and presenting at these conferences. Wildlife damage management is an integral part of wildlife management and should be represented at these conferences. Many fish and wildlife biologists do not attend damage conferences and therefore may not be exposed to some of the current wildlife damage issues. By getting back into these conferences and rubbing elbows with “regular” biologists, we could potentially help improve relationships between wildlife agencies and damage control entities like the Extension Service, USDA/Wildlife Services, and the private sector.

Secondly, I think that we should be more involved at these conferences because of the large number of students that attend. Most students graduating from college are unaware of the opportunities that exist in our field. We need to be present to recruit those good students to our field, or at least make them aware of it. Since we have separated ourselves from these conferences, new students aren’t even being exposed to the “rest of the story” as Paul Harvey would say. So, the next time you are deciding on what damage conference to attend, consider taking a leap back to a “regular” fish and wildlife conference.

Graduate Students’ Openings at Berryman Institute

Each year, the Berryman Institute awards a number of research stipends to graduate students with an interest in wildlife damage management and resolving human-wildlife conflicts. Stipends are $10,000 per year plus free tuition.

If interested, please send a letter of interest, resume, GPA and GRE scores to:

Dr. Michael Conover, Director
conover@cc.usu.edu
Berryman Institute
Department of Fisheries and Wildlife
Utah State University
Logan, UT 84322-5210

The Probe
Book Review: by Stephen Vantassel

Joy and Celebration of Mole Control by Jeff Holper. 41 pages. c. 198.
Illustrated by Bob Noonan

Jeff Holper of Missouri is a nationally known writer in one of the major pest control magazines. Having run a pest control business along doing animal damage control, Mr. Holper brings a wealth of practical experience to the topic of mole control. As soon as you see the cover, you realize that this book takes a rather humorous and light-hearted look at mole control. Given the animosity and downright hatred people have for moles, I can see the need for a how to booklet that takes a cheerleading approach to training the public.

Let's be clear about one thing. This booklet was written for the general public. To read this booklet from the perspective of a professional animal damage controller would be to hold the booklet to a standard higher than what was intended.

It opens with a brief introduction as to why mole problems are growing in number. Mr. Holper believes that the care people are taking of their lawns is providing excellent habitat for them, and as we all know, abundant habitat eventually means abundant animals. He proceeds to show his credentials by telling some of his success stories. Chapter Two gets into the heart of it by dispelling various myths about moles. In my opinion, chapter two is a chapter which every American living in mole territory should read. Although I would have preferred some stronger language about the non-effectiveness of some of the techniques, he gets the point across that trapping is the best in practice and an emotional satisfaction.

Next Mr. Holper gives some natural history of the mole to prepare you for the next section on trapping. Mr. Holper spends most of his time with the harpoon trap. I would agree that this trap is a good one for novices. However, the recent introduction of the no-mole trap may change my mind. He provides typical strategies for trapping moles such as gang setting, setting the fresh areas, proper technique etc. I do wish that he emphasized the need for finding the long straight tunnels, however, to stop people from trapping the feeder tunnels. Perhaps he thought the diagrams showed that. Mr. Holper does discuss the out-of-site trap and the Nash trap, but only briefly. The same applies for his discussion of a “live mole trapping” technique. As one who lives in a state that has banned effective mole traps, I would have liked to have seen more information on the live technique.

The booklet closes with lists highlighting the common mistakes people make and the strategies they need to use to catch moles. I did appreciate the brief statement on voles. Voles and moles are so often confused that it is important for people to learn to distinguish them. The last few pages provide letters from satisfied customers and an order form to buy the t-shirts and traps. (I had to admit, I thought the t-shirt idea was a good one).

The booklet is a standard 8-1/2 x5-1/2 inches in size and 42 pages in length. You should be able to read it in less than 20 minutes. Those who know Bob Noonan will recognize his artistic style in the cartoons and illustrations. If you are looking for an inexpensive booklet to sell to clients to teach them mole control, I think this would be a good one. My two concerns would be: First, the booklet should have covered safety a little more. In light of our litigious age, you have to protect idiots from themselves. Second, the booklet really centers on harpoon traps. If you plan on teaching your client to use another trap, I think you should look elsewhere.

To obtain your copy of the booklet, contact Animal & Insect Solutions Inc., 9223 Gravois St. Louis, MO 63123 Phone: (314) 544-7378; 2nd Phone: (314) 544-5133 Fax: (314) 638-3395 jhmolehunter@aol.com Cost is $11 post paid to Continental U.S.

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The editor of The PROBE thanks contributors to this issue: Stephen Vantassel, Chad Richardson, Michael Conover, and Arthur E. Smith.

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Wildlife Damage Management in the News

Roof Rats in Phoenix
The Arizona office of USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services has reported the positive identification of roof rats (*Rattus rattus*) in Arizona. Several carcasses of rats electrocuted on overhead power lines in the Phoenix area have been identified as *Rattus rattus*. Reports of roof rat damage to citrus crops and rats invading residential attics seem to imply an established, at least temporarily, population of roof rats.

Although there have been incidental reports of roof rats in Arizona, this rat is typically found in coastal areas and has not ever been considered established in this arid state. However, the current peak of citrus crops coupled with an abundance of irrigation canals may provide a suitable environment for these rats for some time. The rats were likely introduced into the area through some sort of freight — possibly a shipment of fruit or other foodstuffs. The population may decrease when the citrus season ends and temperatures rise. At that time USDA, Wildlife Services and county vector control personnel will attempt to exterminate the rats.


Pigs’ Last Stands
An estimated 5,000 wild descendants of a herd of domestic pigs are wreaking havoc on Santa Cruz Island. Santa Cruz is the largest of the Channel Islands, a group of islands off the southern California coast, and is part of the Channel Islands National Park. In addition to ripping up plants and terrorizing the environment, the pigs pose a serious threat to the continued existence of endangered animals such as the island fox and the Santa Cruz bushmallow.

Santa Cruz is the last pig stronghold in the islands and plans are underway to eradicate them. The Interior department budget earmarks $2.1 million to corral and kill the destructive swine. Forty-four miles of wire “pig proof fence will be constructed to contain the pigs which will then be trapped or shot.

“We are on the verge of losing species,” park ecologist Gary Davis said. “How long can we hold off extinction of the island fox? Removing the pig is a critical step.”

Animal-rights activists oppose the plan and want the park to use contraceptive darts or euthanasia to eliminate the pig population. “We don’t understand why they are being slaughtered in the name of conservation,” said Stephanie Boyles, a wildlife biologist with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. “They are here because we put them there — it is our fault they exist there in the first place.”

— excerpted from an Associated Press release

Big Cat Caught on Camera
Sittin’ around the campfire tellin’ windies is still a part of the Arizona lifestyle for at least some folks. Many of these stories relate to sightings of “el tigre”, the jaguar. Although these stories may be as plentiful as ticks in a wet spring, actual sightings of jaguars are about as rare as finding bird droppings in a cuckoo clock.

The jaguar (*Felis(Panthera)onca*) is the largest cat, and the only cat that actually roars, in the Western Hemisphere. The jaguar, listed as endangered in 1997 and protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), is the third-largest cat in the world. Adults typically weigh between 125 and 210 pounds and have been known to travel as far as 500 miles in search of food or a mate.

The presence of jaguars in southern Arizona has long been established and the jaguar is considered part of Arizona’s fauna. However, sightings of the elusive cat are rare. Most reports of jaguars in Arizona were made before 1950. Three jaguar kills were documented in the 1950’s, four in the 1960’s, and one in 1971. The last known photographs of a jaguar in Arizona were taken in 1996, one west of Tucson and one east of Tucson along the Arizona-New Mexico border. The most recent photograph of a jaguar in Arizona was taken in early December 2001 by a remote, motion-activated camera that was set out to monitor potential jaguar corridors near the U.S.-Mexico border. These cameras have been in place since 1997, but until this December none had recorded a jaguar. Biologists believe that the three photos represent three separate cats.

“It is great to know that jaguars are roaming our borderlands, at least occasionally,” said Brad Van Pelt of the Arizona Game and Fish department. “We will continue to monitor the area to see if the animal is a transient or attempting to establish a territory.”

Domestic livestock would be a potential food source for these cats. Biologists believe that the three jaguars photographed have mostly preyed upon deer and javelina.

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