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What's Happening at the Denver Wildlife Research Center?¹ Part 1

Russ Reidinger, Director

Relocation of Golden Eagles

Over the last two years DWRC biologists have been experimenting with translocating territorial golden eagles as a possible management technique for resolving eagle/livestock conflicts. Eagles have been moved several directions to determine how long they remain away from their territories. To date, 16 relocations have been made involving 14 individual birds (6 males and 8 females). Eleven of the 14 relocated eagles have returned to the vicinity of their territories after time periods ranging from less than 31 days to more than 162 days. Birds moved in an east or west direction were absent from their territories longer than those moved to the south of their former territories. Mate replacement and reoccupancy of vacant territories by golden eagles occurs rapidly, usually in less than 3 days. In some cases, when relocated eagles attempted to reoccupy their former territories they were challenged by the "replacement eagles." Fighting apparently occurs and in most cases the original birds re-occupied their territories. Two of the eagles relocated in this study died shortly after returning, apparently from injuries resulting from territorial disputes. The results of this preliminary study suggest that relocation of territorial eagles would offer only a short-term solution to livestock depredations caused by eagles. Further research is needed to develop more long-term and effective tools for handling eagle damage problems.

Breakaway Snare Development

Seven types of breakaway snares were evaluated for breaking strength and variability using a universal testing machine. Maximum tension before breakage for individual snares ranged from 142 to 486 pounds. Sheet metal locks which ripped out and S-hooks which straightened, provided the least variable results. Coyotes, mule deer, domestic calves and lambs were tested to determine the tension loads they applied to snares. Differences in tension loads among coyotes and nontarget species should allow for the development of snares that will consistently hold coyotes and release most larger nontarget animals.

Goose Repellents

DWRC biologists conducted extensive pen trials with methyl anthranilate formulations and fungicides with potential bird repellency. This work resulted in identification of repellents that were active for more than 40 days. They are currently trying to develop a cooperative agreement that will allow field testing of these candidate repellents this fall.

North Dakota Habitat Management

The DWRC is currently in the middle of their first full field season of testing the feasibility of altering marsh roosting habitat as a method to disperse and reduce blackbird damage to sunflowers. This multi-year study involves reduction of cattail densities and subsequent monitoring of the activity of blackbird and other important marsh species and assessment of bird damage in surrounding sunflower fields. Several research projects continue as a result of the Congressionally mandated funding to NDSU. These include continuance of the bird resistant hybrid breeding program, evaluation of the effectiveness of various rates and formulations of herbicides used to control cattails, evaluation of these herbicides on marsh invertebrates and assessment of the status of redwinged blackbird, yellowheaded blackbird and common grackle populations in North Dakota.

Impact of Cormorants on the Catfish Industry

In an effort to produce an objective and reliable description of the impact of cormorants on the catfish industry, several studies were begun this winter. Transmitter packages for cormorants were developed and field tested. This technology will allow biologists to gather information on feeding ecology. Observational studies were conducted to estimate parameters such as feeding rates, and food habits studies have produced information on utilization of

¹Information presented at the Four Corners ADC Rendezvous, Mancos, Colorado, August, 1990.

Continued from page 1

Denver Wildlife Research Center

catfish and gizzard shad populations. Cage studies with captive cormorants have been initiated to estimate bioenergetic parameters. The ultimate objective of these studies is to produce realistic models of the catfish depredation situation that can be used to support local population management strategies for cormorants.

Strychnine Registrations

The Denver Wildlife Research Center continued its coordination of the Strychnine Consortium, a group of private companies and public agencies who have contributed funds to reregister the technical strychnine product with EPA. A total of 20 data submissions (studies) were completed by the DWRC and submitted to EPA, including 9 Product Chemistry, 2 Toxicology, 2 Wildlife and Aquatic Organisms, 1 Environmental Fate, and 7 Efficacy Studies. Studies were either conducted at DWRC or contracted to private laboratories and monitored by Center staff. To support the contracts and the in-house research DWRC developed and validated analytical methods for technical strychnine as well as for strychnine in water, avian feeds, soils, and animal tissues. Considerable efforts were devoted to development of improved formulations of strychnine feeds for use in avian reproductive studies and the development of methods for analyzing strychnine in soil.

These are only a few of the projects currently under way at the Denver Wildlife Research Center. If you have questions about their work, please contact the DWRC.

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

Editors: Robert H. Schmidt and Robert M. Timm
Editorial Assistant: Pamela J. Tinnin

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.



Have You Heard This One?

Bill Fitzwater

From "Bunny" Fennessey (rtd. CSIRO, Canberra, Australia), a hatful of hateful remarks (I love'em) about cats. "The greatest immediate threat to the Australian environment—the native flora and fauna and perhaps even the productive capacity of the continent itself...is a small animal with silken fur and an unmatched capacity for finding the warmest place in the house—the house cat. Despite its long record as an associate with man, the cat did not make an appearance in Australia in company with our first migrants (the Aborigines)...it was not a suitable for a nomadic tribe unlike the wild dog which was companionable and earned its keep running down kangaroos for the family... It was a quintessential European import, arriving with the First Fleet, almost unnoticed but bearing within its genes a capacity to transform its surroundings...As its breeding habits outstripped the demand for some creature to 'pet' it moved into the brush and discovered a smorgasbord of culinary delight in small native rats and mice, marsupials, bats, birds, and other prey that had never known feline dangers in their lives... Everywhere you go in Australia, cats have beaten you there...graziers are losing lambs...fewer birds to eat the insects which destroy vegetation in turn causes soil erosion... In cities, it should be against the law to keep a cat which has not been neutered. All litters should be deposited with RSPCA. In the country, an open season on all feral cats should be supplemented with a bounty on tails. Cat breeders should be taxed out of existence. A search should be started for an alternative Australian animal to take the place of the cat among pet lovers—a happy little kangaroo rat that would lie on your lap while you watched television and would shed its fur on any dark clothing and would get under your feet when you were coming through the door loaded with groceries. Why, you would hardly know the difference."

Bunny comments, "I think you will like this "in-depth" article. The author is deeply insightful, perceptive and well-informed—well, informed anyway. I bet you didn't know that cats in Australia take lambs and are an indirect cause of erosion!" (So maybe he went a little overboard in his enthusiasm. And I'm over, too — I can't say anything in less than 500 words!)

PREVENTION AND CONTROL TIPS

This month's information is reprinted from *Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage* (1983), published by Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Bird Dispersal Techniques

INTRODUCTION

Birds, especially migratory birds, create enjoyment and recreation while greatly enhancing the quality of life. These colorful components of natural ecosystems are studied, viewed, photographed, enjoyed, and/or hunted by most Americans.

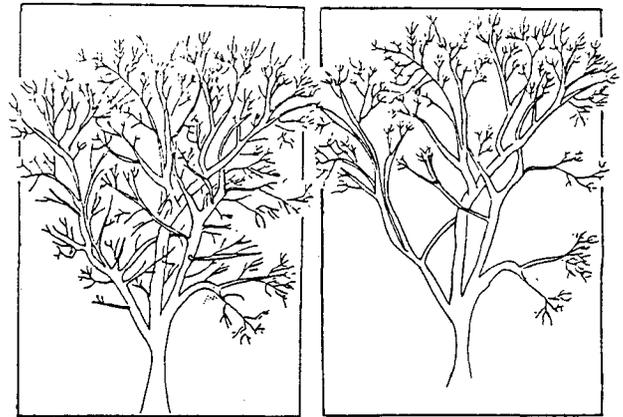
Unfortunately, some birds' activities at times conflict with human interests. Birds depredate agricultural crops, may create health hazards, and in a variety of ways can be a nuisance. The management of bird populations or the manipulation of bird habitats to minimize such conflicts is an important aspect of wildlife management. Many problems are associated with large concentrations of birds. The dispersal or relocation of such concentrations often serves to reduce the conflicts between birds and humans.

DISPERSAL TECHNIQUES

- Habitat Modification
 - Thinning or pruning vegetation.
- Scaring Devices
 - Recorded alarm and distress calls
 - Electronic alarms & noisemakers
 - Pyrotechnics (shell crackers, etc.)
 - Exploders (LP gas)
- Chemical Frightening Agents
 - Avitrol

BIRD DISPERSAL OPERATIONS

Remember, the keys to successfully dealing with bird problems where dispersal is called for are timing, organization, and diversity. Timing of a scaring program is critical. Birds are much more apt to leave a roost site that has been occupied for a brief period of time than one that they have used for many nights. Prompt action in dealing with roosting concentrations greatly reduces the time and effort required to successfully relocate the birds. As the



Before/after pruning trees to reduce attractiveness as a bird roost. Figure adapted from Good, H.B. and D.M. Johnson. 1978. Nonlethal blackbird roost control. *Pest Control* 46(9) : 14ff.

restlessness associated with nearing migration time increases, birds become more responsive to scaring devices and less effort is required to move them. When migration is imminent, the birds' natural instincts will do your work for you.

Whether dealing with rural or urban situations, it is important that someone be in charge of the entire operation and that all activities are planned and organized. The more diverse the techniques, timing, and mobility of the operation, the more effective it will be. Once initiated, the program must be continued until success is achieved.

Author: Thurman W. Booth

Readers are reminded that the status of registrations for pesticides differ among states and are constantly changing.

Pesticide Updates

Successful reintroductions of peregrine falcons on the East Coast and increased concern for all wildlife is focusing more attention on the secondary and non-target effects of pesticides used for pest bird management.

Illinois has passed legislation requiring special training for all PCOs using toxicants for bird control. This legislation was passed after fenthion used in Rid-a-Bird perches at large starling roosts resulted in secondary poisoning of hawks, owls, and mammalian scavengers.

Maryland requires PCOs to stop using Avitrol for pigeon control in the Annapolis area from 1 April to 30 June to protect young peregrine falcons which might be fed the crops of pigeons containing undigested Avitrol bait. In the Baltimore area, Maryland prohibits the use of Avitrol during this same period within two miles of a peregrine falcon nest.

— WILDLIFE DAMAGE IN THE NEWS —

GULLS DAMAGE SILAGE BAGS IN NEW YORK

According to Jim Forbes, New York ADC State Director, a new gull damage problem appears to be developing in New York. Gulls are damaging silage bags by cutting the bags open with their bills. The result is oxygen is let into the bag which destroys the silage and renders the bag non-reuseable. These large plastic bags (40 yards long) cost \$800 per bag.

COYOTE SNARING PROGRAM STOPPED AT AIRPORT

According to Eugene A. LeBoeuf, wildlife problems are on the rise at airports. LeBoeuf, an ADC consultant with the FAA in Washington, D.C., reported a case that involved coyotes at the Kansas City International Airport. In response to increased coyote sightings, airport personnel implemented a snaring program. When the public discovered that the trapped animals were to be dispatched with a small bat, the response from animal rights groups brought the program to an abrupt halt. LeBoeuf reports that in less than a week after removal of the snares, a 727 struck and killed a coyote on the runway.

DEER HERD STRUCK BY BUSINESS JET

In another wildlife incident, LeBoeuf states that he received a newspaper clipping from Ken Garner, Tennessee State FAA Director, that reported an incident when a business jet struck a herd of deer at lift off. Apparently one animal was tossed high enough to be sucked into an intake. The impact was great enough to knock the engine off the plane. The pilot was able to get the plane off the ground and return to Nashville International for a safe landing.

GROUNDHOGS BLACK OUT AIRPORT LIGHTS

In another airport incident, ground hogs blacked out runway lights at a Columbus, Ohio, airport. LeBoeuf states that airport officials tried to obtain city approval to use firearms on airport property to supplement the ongoing control efforts. After a controversy erupted, ADC State Director Doug Andrews, the FAA, and airport officials were successful in convincing the local community that such control measures were necessary.

WLFA INTERVENES IN CALIFORNIA BEAR SUIT

According to a press release from The Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, the WLFA has fired the first shot in a major effort to overcome the massive anti-hunting campaign in California by intervening in opposition to a lawsuit that would stop bear hunting.

Jim Glass, WLFA's president, says this action clears the way for sportsmen to be a full partner in defending the scheduled bear hunt, including any appeals that may stem from the lawsuit. "By holding the line in California, we may be able to diminish the intensity of 'anti' actions in other states," Glass said.

PRAIRIE DOGS EVICTED FROM NATIONAL GUARD BASE

Officials at the Buckley Air National Guard Base have made peace with the enemy, at least for now. According to the Sept. 13 issue of the *Rocky Mountain News*, airmen will relocate numerous prairie dogs to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal instead of gassing them. The prairie dog population at the base has risen to 70,000 and they have burrowed thousands of holes at the 3,300-acre Buckley, Colorado base. Authorities are especially concerned with the tunnels that lie in close proximity to buildings and runways. The Rocky Mountain Arsenal, adjacent to Denver's northeast boundary, has requested the transfer of the prairie dogs. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported that prairie dogs at the Arsenal have been decimated by the plague, which drastically reduced the food supply for the local eagle population.

Send interesting news items to The Probe, c/o Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. For accurate quoting, please include the publication, date, and page number. Thanks to the contributors to this issue: Eugene A. LeBoeuf, James E. Forbes, Sherm Blom, and Ken Garner.

Research Notes

Erickson, W. A., R.E. Marsh, and W.L. Halvorson. 1990. A roof rat bait station that excludes deer mice. *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 18:319-325.

Erickson et al designed and tested an elevated roof rat bait station which excluded non-target deer mice. The width and height of the Station's pipe pedestal were the key factors excluding the smaller deer mice. They concluded that stations elevated 45 cm. above ground on 7.6 cm. diameter pedestals will exclude deer mice, but their effectiveness for a roof rat eradication program remains to be evaluated.

Recent Publications

Mammals as Pests (1989). 271 pages. \$65 per copy. Edited by R.J. Putnam. Chapman and Hall, New York. Includes chapters on *Moles as pests; deer habitat relations in managed forests; rabbits as pests of winter wheat; British seals—vermin or scapegoats*; and other chapters on pest animals in the United Kingdom.

Proceedings, 14th Vertebrate Pest Conference (1990). 372 pages. \$15.00 per copy plus \$4.00 postage and handling (+6.25% sales tax if CA resident) to: Vertebrate Pest Conference, c/o Terrell P. Salmon, DANR-North Region, University of California, Davis, CA 95616. Checks payable to "Vertebrate Pest Conference".

Proceedings, Predator Management in North Coastal California (1990). 95 pages. \$5.00 per copy (includes postage) to: Predator Proceedings, Hopland Field Station, Univ. of California, 4070 University Road, Hopland CA 95449. Checks payable to: "Regents, University of California."

Proceedings, 9th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop (1989). 181 pages. Publication available free of charge; specify request for General Technical Report RM-171, to: Publications Distribution, Rocky Mtn. Forest & Range Expt. Station - USDA, 3825 E. Mulberry, Fort Collins, CO 80524.

"WHERE ARE THEY NOW?"

"Where are they now?" will be the title of a column to appear periodically in future issues of *The Probe*. The column will feature updates and current exchanges of information on retired former ADC people. "Old Timers" who would like to contribute and participate should send their item to: Jim Forbes, NADCA-RD, RD 3, Box 33, Averill Park, New York 12018. Jim would like to hear from retired PCO's, trappers, retired extension wildlife specialists, APHIS-ADC people from all around the country.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR NADCA

The officers and board of NADCA have established a committee to prepare draft responses, position statements, and news releases to counteract animal rights, anti-trapping, anti-hunting and anti-wildlife damage control propaganda for the officers. Two members, Thurman Booth of Arkansas and Dwight LeBlanc of Louisiana, have already volunteered. Others from other agencies and/or geographic locations are needed. Please submit your willingness to serve to: Terry Salmon, DANR-North Region, University of California, Davis, CA 95616; or Bob Willging, 928 Banks, Fort Worth, TX 76114.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

March 22-27, 1991: 56th North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference, Edmonton, Alberta. Includes a session on "Managing Predator/Prey Populations". For further information, contact: Wildlife Management Institute, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 725, Washington, DC 20005.

April 15-18, 1991: 10th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, Lincoln, Nebraska. Abstracts for papers to be presented are due Dec. 31, 1990. Contact: Scott Hygnstrom, Dept. of Forestry, Fisheries & Wildlife, 202 Natural Resources Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0819. Phone (402) 472-6822.

July 29-31, 1991: "Wildlife 2001: Populations", Oakland, California. For researchers and agency personnel interested in the science, conservation, and management of vertebrate animal populations. For further information or to submit an abstract to give a paper, contact: Dale McCullough or Reg Barrett, Dept. of Forestry and Resource Mgmt., 145 Mulford Hall, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720.

October 6-9, 1991: 5th Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference, Ithaca, New York. Contact: Carol Rundle, Cornell Coop. Extension, Dept. of Nat. Resources, Rm. 108 Fernow Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853-3001.

March 2-5, 1992: 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Newport Beach, California. Contact: Mr. John Borrecco, USDA-Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111.

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