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The Probe
ISSUE 120
APRIL 1992

Laughing Gulls-Aircraft Collisions Increasing Hazard at JFK

Janet L. Sillings, State Director, USDA/APHIS ADC,Basking Ridge, New Jersey
Richard A. Dolbeer, Project Leader, Sandusky Field Station, USDA/APHIS ADC, Sandusky, Ohio

The collision of birds with aircraft is a serious problem at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), posing significant threats to human health and safety and causing millions of dollars in equipment damage annually. Between 1979 and 1991, bird-aircraft strikes at JFK resulted in 44 aborted take-offs, and 40 engines damaged or destroyed. Gulls accounted for more than 75% of all strikes. Laughing gulls from an 8,000 plus-nest colony immediately adjacent to JFK in Jamaica Bay on National Park Service (NPS) property at Gateway National Recreation Area (GNRA), were the most frequently struck species, averaging 169 strikes per year between 1988 and 1990. This colony has grown to its present size from only 15 nests, which were established in 1979.

JFK is one of our nation's busiest airports. Since the 1960s, meetings between the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA) and Animal Damage Control (ADC) have contributed to the development of a bird hazard reduction program at JFK that includes habitat modifications at JFK, operation of a Bird Control Unit, negotiations with the NY City Department of Sanitation to close nearby landfills, and the establishment of a "Laughing Gull Task Force." Although these procedures have contributed to reducing the birdstrike hazard at JFK to some extent, they have not prevented laughing gulls from flying through JFK airspace between the NPS nesting colony and off-airport food sources. The hazard is greatest during June and July when laughing gulls are gathering food for unfledged chicks.

The Task Force is composed of personnel from the Port Authority (PA), ADC, NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Division of Fish and Wildlife. The Task Force meets periodically to formulate management plants to control the birdstrike hazard at JFK. During these meetings, ADC has presented the recommendation to move the nesting colony away from its present location. NPS personnel at GNRA have been reluctant to implement such management actions because the NSP's mission is to preserve wildlife within its boundaries. In 1989, an international panel of leading ornithologists, selected by the NPS, spent four days at JFK to survey the problem and to provide disinterested management recommendations. With regard to the laughing gull colony, the conclusion of this panel was that, "It is self-evident that the laughing gull colony in its present location presents an unacceptable hazard to aircraft operations at JFK." An experimental egg-oiling project was attempted by the NPS in 1990, but did not appreciably reduce the number of laughing gull-aircraft collisions. During the summer of 1991, the PA, ADC New Jersey state biologist, and the Denver Wildlife Research Center undertook an experimental program in which 2-5 biologists stationed at airport boundaries shot gulls as they attempted to cross active runways. During the project, May-August, the number of collisions between gulls and aircraft was reduced 68 percent. A total of 14,191 laughing gulls and 695 other gulls were shot. This project was the first technique that was successful in significantly reducing the birdstrike hazard at JKF.

During January, 1992, ADC and the PA met with the FWS and the NY DEC Division of Fish and Wildlife to discuss the laughing gull-aircraft strike hazard at JFK and to formulate a plan of action to resolve the problem. Both the State of New York and the FWS reported that they are in concurrence with the international panel's and ADC's recommendation that the relocation of the laughing gull nesting colony away from its present location is the preferred and logical long-term management option. All parties at the January meeting were in agreement that the airport and the nesting colony cannot coexist side by side. An interim shooting program, as conducted at JFK during 1991, was considered to be necessary to control the birdstrike hazard until the colony is relocated. ADC is initiating the required environmental reviews to comply with NEPA and New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act in order to conduct the interim shooting program in 1992. The State of New York will assist ADC in negotiations with the NPS to develop a management plan to relocate the nesting colony and maintain a New York breeding population of laughing gulls.

Continued column 2, page 5

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

May 3-6, 1992: 48th Northeast Fish & Wildlife Conference, Norfolk Waterside Marriott Hotel, Norfolk, VA. Contact: Charlie Sledd, 4010 W. Broad St., P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

May 3-6, 1992: Northeastern Association of Wildlife Damage Biologists, Norfolk, Virginia. Contact: James E. Forbes, USDA/APHIS/ADC, P.O. Box 97, Albany, NY 12201.

May 17-20, 1992: The 4th North American Symposium on Society and Resource Management will be held on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. The Symposium theme, *Integrated Resource Management*, includes many general themes such as: Managing Agricultural Production Systems and Environmental Quality; Aquatic Systems; Conservation and Sustainable Resource Development; Cultural Resource Management; Environmental Ethics; etc. For more information contact: Donald R. Field, Program Chair, School of Natural Resources, 146 Agriculture Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706.

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 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, (415) 866-5461; FAX (415) 866-5318.

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.

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

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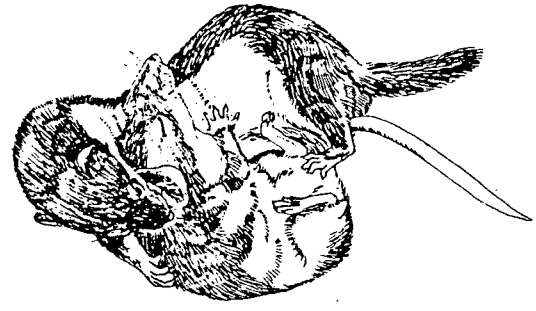
Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting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

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. 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.



Weasels are efficient killers, preying on mice as well as on pocket gophers, birds, and other prey.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

The Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS) is a non-profit, international organization that conducts scientific research and educational programs to promote the conservation of the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. The CDRS requires the following personnel for 1992:

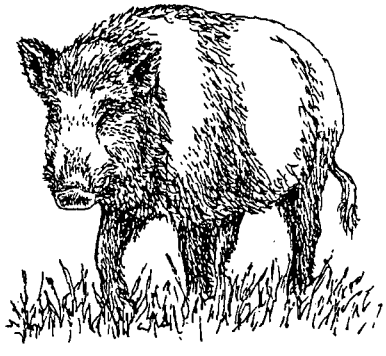
SCIENCE COORDINATOR: experience in coordination, supervision, and protection of natural areas.
NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISOR: experience in the management and protection of natural areas.
ECOLOGIST: experience in wildlife management, especially vertebrate pest control.
ORNITHOLOGIST: experience in bird censuses, basic research and protection of threatened species.
MARINE BIOLOGIST: experience in basic research and/or management of marine reserves.

Applicants should be fluent in Spanish and English. All positions carry an initial 2-year contract which can be renewed. Applicants should be available to start in June 1992.
Send letters of application and curriculum vitae, or requests for further information to: Director, CDRS, Casilla 17-01-3891, Quito, Ecuador.

—Animal Damage Control in the News—

WLFA ALERTS HUNTERS TO PROPOSED ARIZONA LAW

According to the January issue of *WLFA-gram*, what began as a ballot issue to outlaw trapping on public land in Arizona is now a full blown effort to stop virtually all hunting, fishing, and trapping. The newsletter issued by the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, stated that "In a strongly worded communique, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission blasted the ballot measure as, '...an animal rights initiative, thinly veiled as ...anti-trapping.' The Arizonans For Wildlife Conservation (AWC), a campaign committee created to defeat the initiative, has asked the WLFA to help develop the campaign to defeat what will become known as Issue 200, on the November 1992 statewide ballot." WLFA and AWC members have met with Arizona Gov. Fife Syminton, the Game and Fish Commission, and Arizona Game and Fish Director Duane Shroufe and discussed their concerns. WLFA also issued a press release to alert sportsmen and affected interests nationwide of the threat.



FUR INDUSTRY ON A COMEBACK?

In an article in the January 6 *Newsweek*, it appears that fur fashions may be making a comeback. When confronted by animal rights activists, the most common response is "...the same irritated brushoffs Hari Krishna devotees used to get when they toured airports begging for donations." "I used to be nervous about wearing my mink coast," said a New York Advertising executive. "But after a while, I decided it was a matter of principle. The activists have a right to their point of view, but they have no right to bully me." This apparent shift in public opinion follows on the heels of a new ad campaign by the Fur Information Council of America. The campaign posed the question ,"Aren't you tired of animal activists telling you what you can't wear and eat?" Perhaps the ads struck a nerve. According to a Gallup poll sponsored by the National Shooting Sports Foundation last year, 89 percent of respondents were against either the tactics or goals of the animal-rights movement. After peaking in 1989 to $1.9 billion, fur sales fell by an estimated 25 percent, and animal rights activists don't hesitate to take the credit. Recently fur sales seem to be on the rise again. Even in England where the animal rights movement is extremely powerful, fur sales last year doubled.

SPRING BEAR HUNT PHASED DOWN IN COLORADO

Late last year, the Colorado Wildlife Commission voted 5-3 to phase down Colorado's spring bear hunt over the next three years. According to an article in the November 22, 1991 issue of *Rocky Mountain News*, neither hunters nor animal welfare advocates were pleased with the decisions. Under the plan, bear licenses next year will be evenly split between spring and fall seasons with the number dropping to 30% for spring hunters in 1993, and 10% the following year. Critics of the spring hunt say it is unsporting to hunt bears that have just emerged from hibernation and to kill females that have just given birth to cubs. Hunters argued that the spring hunt does not threaten the overall bear population. Colorado has an estimated 9,000 to 12,000 black bears. Approximately 3,000 hunters apply for bear licenses every year.

BLACK VULTURES A "HOT" ITEM IN LOUISIANA

Black vultures roosting on 500kv transmission line towers in Ascension Parish, Louisiana, have cost the Louisiana Power and Light Company $150,000 since January. According to a report from USDA-APHIS-ADC in Nashville, Tennessee, forty incidents of arcing occurred when insulators became coated with droppings which allowed electricity to arc between the lines and towers. Louisiana ADC recommended "splash guards" as a permanent solution to the problem. Harassment of the birds was not a viable option because of the potential of moving the roosts to more remote towers in the Lake Maurepas Swamp.

TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE STRONGLY SUPPORTS ADC EFFORTS

In a paper published in January by the Texas Conservative Coalition of the Texas Legislature, Texas State Representative Robert Turner emphasized his strong support for the efforts of ADC. An excerpt of the paper stated: "It is estimated that the economic loss due to predation cost the agricultural industry approximately $42 million in 1989. Fairly conclusive, documented research conducted in 1990 shows a loss resulting from predation of approximately 21.7 million to the U.S. sheep industry. Coyotes are the leading cause, accounting for 63.7 percent of sheep losses. Stray dogs, at second place, account for 13.6 percent. Since agriculture is one of the United States' major industries and provides one of the few commodities capable of balancing our international trade deficit, it is obvious that losses due to predation must be eliminated. At a minimum, they must be better controlled," said Turner.

The editors of The Probe *thank contributors to this issue: Ron Thompson, Ken Garner, Franklin Anderson, James E. Forbes, John R. Maestrelli, and Wes Jones. Send your contributions to* The Probe, *4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

Critical Issues Facing the ADC Program

The following is an excerpt from Bobby R. Acord's Report to the Executive Committee of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Acord serves as Deputy Administrator of USDA-APHIS-ADC. According to Acord, ADC's critical issues are:

"...The lack of funding required to initiate and conduct much needed research on new, effective and socially acceptable control methods. Although ADC has identified and prioritized areas for research efforts, they cannot be accomplished entirely with Federal funding. A major initiative is needed to spur ADC research to a level commensurate with need.

"There is a critical need for data relative to wildlife population estimates and population trends for various wildlife species. In many situations, we are unable to compare the number of animals taken by our program against the population estimate for that species.

"There is also a need for data regarding cost and benefits of animal damage control work, including information relative to the indirect dollar loss as a result of wildlife behavior."

Species Solidarity Urged by Reader's Digest Writer

Excerpts from keynote speech at 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference by Robert James Bidinotto, The Reader's Digest

"...Let me begin by thanking you—on behalf of myself, my family, and consumers everywhere—for the vital job that you do in protecting our food, our homes, our economy and our precious resources from the unwanted destruction and predations of mammals and birds"

"...You are on the frontlines of the battle to protect human well-being against indifferent and sometimes destructive Nature. Now you are required to defend yourselves, and people everywhere, against a different sort of predator: one who, in his lust for power and his hatred of his own nature, preys upon the self-esteem, values and aspirations of his own kind. ...I speak of that insatiable predator, *Homo environmentalus*. ...subspecies of *Homo sapiens*..."

"...Battling *Homo environmentalus* is a chore from which many would recoil in distaste; but it is a battle which, like it or not, we must engage. For we are fighting for the entire human legacy—in the name of every person who ever dreamed a noble dream, and who dared to act on behalf of that vision."

"...We shall protect ourselves, and our civilization, against the assaults of these predators on the day when we finally confront their charge of 'speciesism' with buttons and bumper stickers that proudly declare our own right to exist as our nature demands, and unashamedly proclaim our own form of 'species solidarity'."

Jim Forbes Wins Membership Incentive Content

The culmination for the membership incentive contest was at a drawing at the 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference. The lucky winner for this drive for new members was Jim Forbes, Regional Director for Region 7. Although it was the "luck of the draw" that resulted in Jim's name being selected, his efforts in recruiting several new members made his chances better than any other of the candidates. Congratulations to Jim, and we thank you for your persistence in contacting potential new members; the Remington 11-87 SP has been shipped. The name of the new member that resulted in Jim's prize was Carl D. Johnsen. Carl is a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator in Croton Falls, New York, and is a NADCA Sponsor. Carl, you share in the award in that we have extended your membership for an additional year in the Sponsor class.

Maury Bedford Designs Winning Logo

Members of the Executive Committee present at the 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference had an intense brainstorming session in review of the 28 ideas submitted for a NADCA logo. It was a difficult task to settle on one design that appeared to be most representative of our organization. We combined the thoughts of many into one design that all present could agree on. We felt that the one submission that most closely paralleled the final result was that of Maury Bedford (Albany, New York). We awarded Maury the prize of a set of Lohman predator calls. Several details from the sketches from Jim Pitts (Choteau, Oklahoma) and Rosemary Heinen (Auxvasse, Missouri) were also incorporated. We therefore will award NADCA hats, with logos, to all three of the above.

As these hats do not exist at the moment, patience is a necessary virtue. We have supplied our crude sketch to a professional for refinement, and the result will be displayed in *The Probe* soon. Stay tuned!

Wes Jones

NADCA Business Meeting Held March 4 in Newport Beach

Thirty-six members attended the recent National Animal Damage Control Association business meeting. Held March 4 at Newport Beach, California, the meeting was scheduled in conjunction with the 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference. The meeting was convened by Vice Presidents Darrell Gretz (West) and Jim Miller (East).

At the meeting, NADCA secretary Mike Hoy encouraged members to send him information about issues which concern them. These concerns will be forwarded to the executive committee.

Chairman Jim Forbes of the Public Affairs Committee announced that the committee is currently developing position papers which would outline NADCA's perspective on special topics (i.e., trapping, hunting, etc.). Those people interested in working on the committee should contact Jim Forbes or Ken Garner.

Members voluntarily completed a survey regarding attitudes towards animals and animal rights, which is being conducted by Auburn University. To increase the sample size of NADCA members, Dr. Jim Armstrong (Ext. Wildlife Specialist at Auburn, and NADCA member) may be mailing this survey to additional members in the coming weeks.

10th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop Available

The 180-page *Proceedings* of the 10th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, held April 15-18, 1991 in Lincoln, NE, is now available. This publication contains some 40 papers presented at the workshop, dealing with such subjects as predators, rodents, birds, and programs and projects. Single copies are available at a cost of $15. Send check, money order, or purchase order to: GPWDCW Proceedings, 202 Natural Resources Hall, Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0819.

Editors Request Submissions

We need submissions of short articles for future issues of *The Probe*. Of particular interest are 1) issues which might be developed into front-page stories, perhaps on some policy or emerging need in the animal damage control field, or other items of wide interest to members, and 2) evaluations or personal opinions regarding animal damage control techniques, products, or services which you'd like to share with others. Send these to editor Schmidt or Timm at the addresses noted on page 2. Thanks—it's your newsletter, so help us make it useful to all our members.

Continued from page 1

Laughing Gulls/Aircraft Collisions at JFK

The nesting colony could be relocated by the physical destruction of eggs and nests. If repeated over a number of years, the resulting chronic nest failure should induce the gulls to relocate. Because this program would likely require between 3-5 years to be effective, and due to the expanding range of laughing gulls northward from New Jersey's growing population, the relocation effort must be accompanied by an interim shooting program. Other techniques to cause colony relocation such as habitat modification, direct reduction of the adult nesting population, and egg-oiling were also considered, but are not recommended by ADC. Habitat modification to remove nesting vegetation with the use of herbicides or fire is not acceptable for use in a National Park because it would result in the temporary destruction of habitat for other wildlife species. The installation of wire grids to deter gulls from nesting on the 700 acres of marsh would be impractical and possibly ineffective. Furthermore, gridding would also affect nontarget bird species. The reduction of the adult laughing gull population with the use of avicides is not considered an acceptable management option on NPS property. Egg-oiling would reduce reproductive output, but would probably not cause colony relocation.

The DEC would like to maintain a breeding population of laughing gulls in the state. Eventual colonization of other sites on Long Island might occur naturally as the regional population of laughing gulls increases its distribution. If a small nesting colony in Hempstead Bay, NY, first observed in 1991, becomes viable, the perpetuation of the Jamaica Bay colony would be of lesser concern to the DEC.

The Laughing Gull Task Force will meet during March, 1992 to discuss plans for the summer 1992 operational control program to negotiate with the NPS towards relocating the Jamaica Bay colony. Unless the NPS allows the colony to be relocated, current plans for 1992 consist of a nest colony survey, the shooting program, and relocation of the colony if the NPS allows the destruction of laughing gull nests in the Jamaica Bay colony.

Terrell P. Salmon
DANR-North Region
University of California
Davis, CA 95616-8575

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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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[ ] USDA - APHIS - ADC or SAT
[ ] USDA - Extension Service
[ ] Federal - not APHIS or Extension
[ ] Foreign
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