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The NADCA Probe, Issue 235

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The Probe NADCA
ISSUE 235
September/October 2004

Some Extension Perspectives on Wildlife Damage Management

Lynn Braband, NYS Community IPM Program at Cornell University, NADCA Northeast Region

The following starts as a personal history of involvement with extension-based wildlife damage management and then broadens. My tenure (in my sixth year) in extension is recent. Also, my program, although part of Cornell's extension system, is non-departmental and focuses on integrated pest management. My responsibilities are broader than wildlife damage management but include it especially in non-agricultural situations. Possibly my thoughts will stimulate comments from extension veterans in more "main stream" roles. Someone may also wish to address the history of extension involvement in wildlife damage management including its role within the land grant university system.

Like many other biologists, my first exposure to wildlife damage was one lecture in an undergraduate course by the departmental extension specialist. If I remember correctly, he largely shared experiences. The first wildlife damage "experience" that I recall is when, as a teacher at a small liberal arts college, I was asked to remove a pigeon from inside the cafeteria. Apparently they figured that was a job for the resident ecologist. I still recall the looks on the faces of the cafeteria workers as they cowered from the wild beastie.

In the mid-1980's, I became seriously involved with wildlife damage management. I was back in the job market and noticed, in a job newsletter from my alma mater, an ad from Critter Control, which was seeking to expand nationally. I first dismissed the ad, thinking that is not what wildlife biologists do. Later, I had second thoughts, looked into the possibilities, and began a 12-year involvement with Critter Control.

When I initiated my Critter Control "career" and became acquainted with the broader wildlife damage management community, I found that my initial attitude (that is not what wildlife biologists do) was commonly encountered by wildlife damage biologists. After all, wildlife biologists are supposed to promote wildlife, not harass the animals. I also found that much extension literature on wildlife damage, especially in non-agricultural situations, was lacking both in coverage and practical "how-to's". I came to appreciate (what is now) USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services for their service-oriented philosophy. While with Critter Control, I especially enjoyed opportunities to have an extension-like function in the teaching of Master Gardeners, homeowners, lawn care companies, and prospective wildlife control operators about nuisance wildlife control.

During my short tenure in extension, I have adopted the philosophy that we need to balance being leaders with being followers. By "followers", I mean that we cannot focus on narrow topics of personal interest or ideologically derived positions. We need to ascertain the needs and desires of our constituencies and seek to meet those needs.

In 1999, I joined the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program as an extension educator. Although wildlife damage management is not at the core of my responsibilities, I have been encouraged to maintain this area of specialty. The opportunities to do so have ranged from phone calls from the public, to teaching workshops, to preparing wildlife damage outreach literature.

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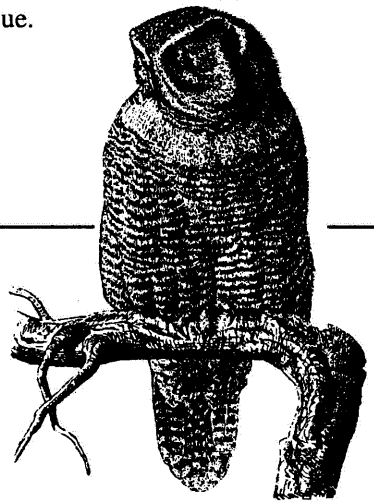
Continued on page 5, col. 1

Last Free Issue!

All the attendees at the 21st Vertebrate pest Conference and the 10th Wildlife Damage Management Conference who were NOT members of NADCA have been receiving free, trial issues of *The Probe* as an enticement to join. Well, the party is over. If you have been receiving these complimentary issues this is the last one. It's now time to become a member of this important advocate organization for wildlife damage management professionals and to continue to receive *The Probe*.

See the membership application on the last page of this issue.



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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome and encouraged. The deadline for submitting materials is the 15th of the month prior to publication. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of NADCA.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

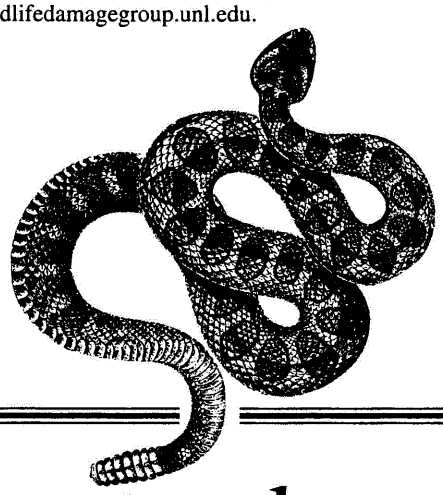
November 14-17, 2004 - Defenders of Wildlife, Carnivores 2004: Expanding Partnerships in Carnivore Conservation, Santa Fe, NM. Go to www.carnivoreconference.org.

December 12-15, 2004 - 65th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference, Westin Hotel, Indianapolis, IN. Information at www.in.gov/dnr/midwest2004

January 24-26, 2005 — 11th Annual Wildlife Control Technology Seminar, Circus Circus Hotel, Las Vegas. Co-sponsored by WCT Magazine and the National Wildlife Control Operators Assoc. Information at http://nwcoa.com/

March 15-16, 2005 - The Northeast Regional Community and Urban IPM Conference Radisson Hotel- Manchester, New Hampshire. Conference sessions will cover a wide range of topics, including wildlife damage management. For more information, visit the conference web site (http://nepmc.org/conference2005_index.cfm) or contact Liz Thomas (315-787-2626 egt3@cornell.edu). Opportunities remain fororganizations and businesses to exhibit at the conference, to jointhe financial sponsors, or to volunteer in conference organization.

May 17-19, 2005 - 11th Wildlife Damage Management Conference, Holiday Inn West Bay, Traverse City, Michigan. Organized by the Wildlife Damage Management Working Group of The Wildlife Society. For additional information, contact Kathleen Fagerstone at Kathleen.A.Fagerstone@aphis.usda.gov or visit the web site, http://wildlifedamagegroup.unl.edu.



Ever Wonder?

What is the cost of treating a rattlesnake bite?

Treating rattlesnake bites is extremely expensive, with a single vial of antivenin costing $2,500 to $3,000. The average patient uses about 20 vials.

Source - Excerpted, Arizona Daily Star, September 15, 2004

Introduction to Precharged Pneumatics

Todd L. Sullivan, Wildlife Biologist, USDA/APHIS/WS and NADCA, Southeast Region Director

Pellet rifles are a useful tool to the nuisance wildlife control operator or wildlife damage biologist. They are effective around inhabited buildings and structures or other area where safety and gunfire noise is a concern such as aircraft hangers, industrial parks, hospitals, and homes. Generally, pellet rifles are not classified as firearms since they do not utilize an explosive propellant and therefore, may be used where traditional firearms are restricted such as within city limits. However, some cities and towns do restrict their use and local ordinances should be checked prior to their using pellet guns within city limits.

Pellet rifles are not toys. In fact, most used for wildlife management are more powerful and sophisticated than the BB guns of our youth. The same care and safety considerations should be given to pellet rifles as you would give any firearm. It is important to make the distinction between pellet rifles and BB guns. BB guns shoot a round projectile that is usually copper coated lead, while a pellet is solid lead and aerodynamically shaped. The solid lead-body of a pellet makes them less likely to ricochet off hard surfaces.

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There are two basic types of pellet rifles, pneumatic and spring piston. Spring piston rifles operate by cocking a mainspring that is released when the trigger is operated. This powerful spring pushes a piston that compresses a column of air that propels the pellet through the barrel. Pneumatic rifles propel the pellet with compressed air, or CO2 gas, from an internal-valved reservoir. Pneumatic rifles include those that use disposable CO2 cartridges as a reservoir; those that use a mechanical charging lever to compress air into an internal reservoir; and pre-charged pneumatics (PCPs). A PCP rifle requires the internal reservoir to be filled and pressurized from an external source such as a scuba tank before it is readied for firing. These reservoirs are usually housed in the butt end of the stock or under the barrel. Some PCP rifles have a removable reservoir that is often attached at the forearm of the stock.

Pre-charged pneumatic air rifles are not some new novelty to hit the pellet gun market, but in fact have been around since the 1600's. In the 1780's, the Austrian army used .51 caliber breech-loading PCP's that were capable of firing 60 shots before needing to be refilled with air. Lewis and Clarke even toted along an air rifle on their Voyage of Discovery. Although PCPs have been used for years in England for pest control, hunting, and marksmanship, they are beginning to gain popularity in the United States.

I recently traded in my Beeman R9 spring rifle for a PCP made by AirArms and have been astonished at the increased efficiency and accuracy over traditional pellet rifles. Once a PCP is pressurized all the shooter has to do is load the pellets and fire without having to concentrate on pumping the gun or cocking the mainspring. However, in my opinion the greatest benefit to a PCP is that all the shooter has to do is load and fire repeatedly between charges. And unlike spring guns, there is little to no disturbance from vibration which personally I believe helps my accuracy.

Pre-charged pneumatic rifles have onboard reservoirs for holding the compressed air. There are two ways compressed air can be introduced into the guns reservoir: 1) traditional scuba tanks, and 2) a hand pump. **NOTE: PCP's require the use of extremely high pressure compressed air and specifically designed storage tanks. Do not attempt to use CO2 tanks on PCPs.**

Obviously, each method had advantages and disadvantages. Scuba tanks can be more bulky to carry around in their larger sizes — although small "pony tanks" are available — but they do make refilling a snap. Also, scuba tanks can be more expensive to purchase and need to be refilled at a dive shop or with a special compressor. Hand pumps are very compact and light weight but require much more effort and sweat to charge a gun. The number of shots you can get from a fill of compressed air depends on several variables. One of most important of these is the capacity of the gun's reservoir. Typical PCP's with fixed reservoirs usually get from 20-50 shots per fill.

Continued on page 7, col. 2

Book Review

Larry Sullivan, NADCA Secretary and Editor of ***The Probe***

"Animal Crackers" *by Dexter K. Oliver*

"Arlo pulled the tactical baton partway out of his side pocket and showed it to Reston. "I have a pacifier and I have my lawyer's number set to speed dial on my telephone, but I'd rather not use either." This is Arlo Aaron Allbright responding to a client's comment that the dark brown, growling, snapping, Chow dog in the fenced yard would probably not harm him. Arlo and his partner Sam(antha) are the owners of AAA Wildlife Services, in Tucson, Arizona, and the main characters in *Animal Crackers.*

The novel, *Animal Crackers,* is based on the day-to-day adventures of a pair of private wildlife control operators. Author, Dexter Oliver, is a long-time trapper and a sometimes nuisance wildlife control operator. Oliver has put together a fast moving, very funny - and technically accurate - portrayal of the private nuisance wildlife control business.

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The adventures of Arlo and Sam are based on real clients, real situations and real critters. Anyone who has done much wildlife control work — especially in urban/suburban environments — will recognize many of these adventures.

The characters are very well developed and humorously illustrate the many misconceptions and lack of knowledge about wildlife on the part of the general public - and some less than professional wildlife control operators as well. Arlo and Sam are constantly on the go responding to one cell phone call after another as they deal seriously and humorously with both dangerous and silly problems, wacky clients and their fellow wildlife control operators.As might be expected by anyone who knows Dexter Oliver, the book has its share of irreverence.

As might also be expected, some of this irreverence is directed at animal rights activists, TNR proponents, law en-

Continued on page 7 col. 1

Deer-Vehicle Crash Information & Research Center

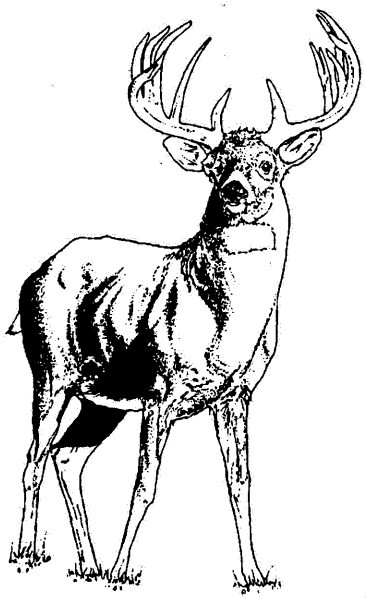
A pooled fund proposal has been advertised for the creation of a Deer-Vehicle Crash Information and Research Center (DVCIR Center). The proposal summary and complete document can be found at the Transportation Pooled Fund Web Site:
http://www.pooledfund.orgprojectdetails.asp?id=906&status=1.

The overall objective of the project is to create a focal point center that strategically considers/disseminates unbiased deer-vehicle crash (DVC) impact information and funds properly designed countermeasure research evaluations. This proposal is in response to:

1) Decades of attempts and the expense of many, many dollars to address a widespread and highly variable safety problem in a generally piecemeal fashion by a number of jurisdictions, and

2) Numerous suggestions that the current DVC Information Clearinghouse work (www.deercrash.com) be expanded beyond the upper Midwest region and into funding projects that properly address the large gaps that exist in the state-of-the-knowledge related to the safety impacts of potential DVC countermeasures.

A strategic plan is needed to begin to economically and effectively reduce the DVC safety problem. The projects completed by the DVCIR Center will be determined by representatives of the participating agencies (and, of course, depend on the funding available).



For further information contact Keith Knapp, Director - Deer Vehicle Crash Information Clearinghouse, University of Wisconsin - Madison. E-mail knapp@epd.engr.wisc.edu

Source - Keith Knapp via Art Smith

The editor of ***The Probe*** *thanks contributors to this issue: Lynn Braband, MichAel Conover, Art Smith, and Todd Sullivan.*

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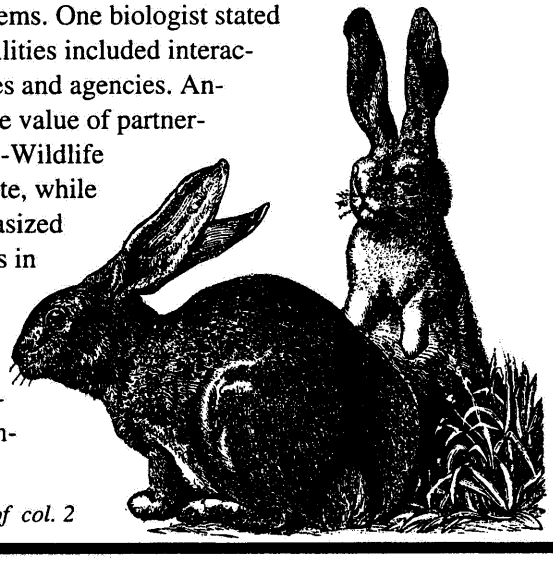
Some Extension Perspectives on Wildlife Damage Management

positions. We need to ascertain the needs and desires of our constituencies and seek to meet those needs. However, if that is all we are doing, we are simply being (as Rich Chipman of APHIS-Wildlife Services has stated) "hired guns". We also need to be leaders in the development of new and better approaches to wildlife damage, sometimes pushing our constituencies in directions they may not initially desire to go.

In preparation for this article, I surveyed by phone a non-random sampling (n=10) of extension biologists throughout the country. The biologists had been in extension from 3 to 30 years (median of 23 years). Ten per cent to 100% (median of 50%) of their professional time involved wildlife damage management.

When asked what their basic responsibilities as wildlife damage extension specialists were, most (8) emphasized the development and delivery of wildlife damage management information through publications, web sites, and presentations. Other frequently mentioned responsibilities included wildlife damage research (5), interacting with county-based extension educators (3), and responding to specific requests from the public (3).

Three of the biologists described their roles in the development of comprehensive, integrated approaches to wildlife damage problems. One biologist stated that his responsibilities included interaction with industries and agencies. Another described the value of partnerships with APHIS-Wildlife Services in his state, while yet another emphasized his responsibilities in evaluating the effectiveness of his programs.



I asked the biologists how extension has changed

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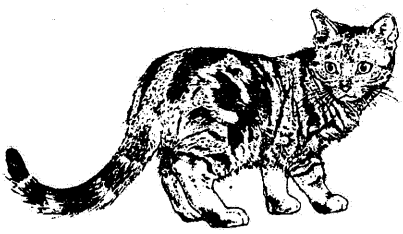
Wildlife Damage in the News– Faulty Felines

An army of 700 urban cats imported to a rat-infested town in northern Mexico has done little to get rid of the more than 1.5 million rodents that are ruining crops, invading homes and terrifying residents. The mayor of Atascaderos, in Chihuahua state, is now offering 5 pesos, about 40 cents, for every rat beaten to death.

"I don't think (the cats) worked very well because we know a cat sees one rat, eats it, then doesn't kill again until at least two days later," said regional mayor Jesus Velazquez Rodriguez. He said that some members of the "cat army" were actually attacked and killed by rats shortly after their arrival.

After the magnitude of the infestation became apparent last year, farmers set traps and poison, but that killed various cats and other rodent predators, which only worsened the problem. Residents now fight house-to-house battles to get rid of the rodents, according to a report in the daily *Reforma*.



Source - Universal Press Syndicate October 25, 2004

Continued from col. 1

Extension Perspectives

during their tenures. Several mentioned that demands were higher with fewer resources, especially personnel at the county level. Wildlife damage issues have become more complex and include more urban/suburban situations. Some biologists see their roles changing from information experts to facilitators that assist communities in solving damage problems. Other changes mentioned were the increase in electronic communications and publications, importance of interstate collaborations, development of improved control options, and a focus on evaluating the impacts of programming. One biologist stated that there is less involvement in extension wildlife damage at the federal level, while another mentioned the increase in non-extension "players" in the field.

Wild Jaguars Photographed in Southern Arizona: Endangered Species Lives South of Tucscon

PHOENIX — When you think of Arizona wildlife, you probably think of javelina, coyotes, and snakes, but recently two jaguars were caught on film in the wild borderlands of southern Arizona.

"This is a great step in the continuing efforts of a multi-agency jaguar conservation team in Arizona," says Bill Van Pelt, head of the Arizona Game and Fish Department nongame mammal program. "Until now, we had no full body photos of jaguars in the wilds of our state. Now, the public will get to see these photos through the media and the <http://www.azgfd.com/artman/publish/article_195.shtml>Game and Fish Web site."

Jaguars have never been common in Arizona and New Mexico, but they have been spotted here more than 50 times since the mid-1800s. By the 1900s, they nearly disappeared from the United States because of development, trophy hunting, and shooting to protect livestock. In 1997, the jaguar was named an endangered species in our country. That's also when a Jaguar Conservation Team of landowners, ranchers, citizen groups, scientists, and state and federal agencies was formed to develop a conservation plan, which appears to be working.

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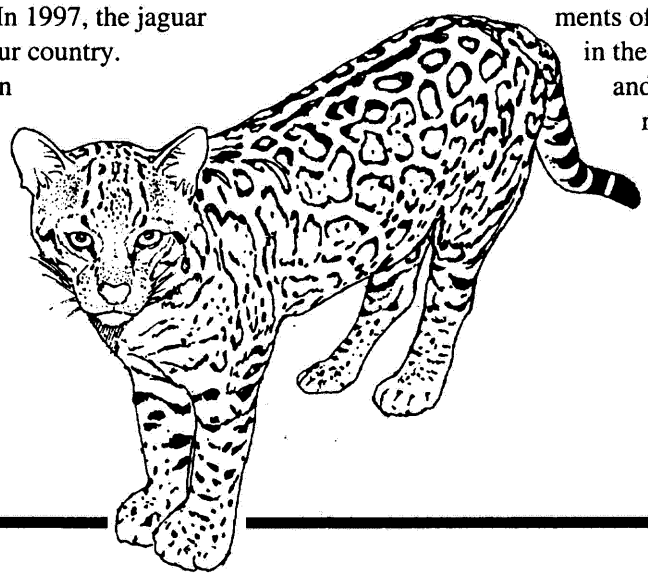
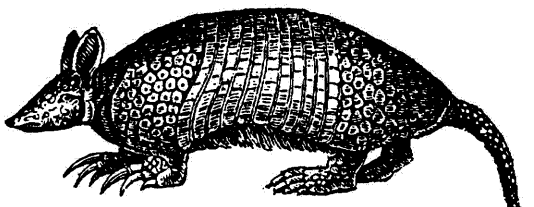
"A bare-bones monitoring program shows the continued presence of these magnificent native cats in Arizona," says Terry Johnson, the department's nongame branch chief, who chairs the conservation team.



"We thank other agencies and our private partners for their hard work. The new jaguar photos were taken with equipment maintained by a private citizen, Jack Childs, and a Humboldt State University graduate student, Emil McCain."

State and federal agencies are currently coordinating a Jaguar Borderlands Recovery Strategy that recognizes the success of the jaguar in the United States is dependent on conservation efforts in Mexico.



"Jaguars' prey includes more than 85 species, including javelina, armadillos, turtles, and fish."

The four new jaguar photos were taken using remote motion-sensing cameras south of Tucson. At least two different jaguars are in the new pictures.

"We had a few photos from the years 2001 and 2003, where you could only see part of a jaguar, so the new pictures mark a milestone," says Van Pelt.

Each jaguar has a unique pattern of markings. Using these markings, scientists have confirmed that one jaguar in the new photos was also in the 2001 photos from the same area. Jaguars are far-ranging animals with recorded movements of up to 500 miles. They can live in the wild for more than 11 years and breed year-round. Litters range from one to four cubs. Jaguars' prey includes more than 85 species, including javelina, armadillos, turtles, and fish.

Source - Arizona Game and Fish Department

Continued from page 4, col. 1

Book Review

forcement officers, and wacky clients who, for example, want house mice translocated. But there are a few jabs at our colleagues as well.

In my view, an important selling point is that the book accurately describes many tools and techniques commonly used by wildlife control operators. This novel is also a humorous training manual. Seriously, if I were hiring an inexperienced helper, his/her first assignment would be to read this book.

I highly recommend this book. It is a good read that will surely bring on some smiles and at least a few memories of similar characters and situations. Limited edition, soft-bound, 286 pages, numbered and signed copies are available for $16 plus $4 S&H from: **Dexter K. Oliver, P.O. Box 716, Duncan, AZ 85534**

Face-to-Face With Wildlife/Human Conflicts

Several weeks ago, **Probe** editorial assistant Pam Tinnin had her own first-hand experience with wildlife/human conflicts. Recently Tinnin and her husband Zack returned to live on the 108-acre family ranch about 1,700 feet up a mountain road in northern Sonoma County, California.

Early one morning, a dead ewe was discovered in a pasture adjacent to their backyard. Another carcass was located below the first, and a third was found hidden in a crevasse farther down the steep, rocky hillside.

The federal trapper was called in, plus an official from California Fish & Game. After investigating, the Fish & Game agent agreed that it was a probably a mountain lion kill and issued a predation permit. For the next week, the trapper and Pam's husband Zack searched for the cougar, but were unsuccessful.

A week after the first kill, another ewe was found in the corner of the nearest pasture, about 60 feet from Pam's back door. The trapper baited a large live-trap cage with half the sheep carcass. "We were warned not to go outside at night, which makes it difficult coming home from a meeting and with three gates on our road," said Pam.

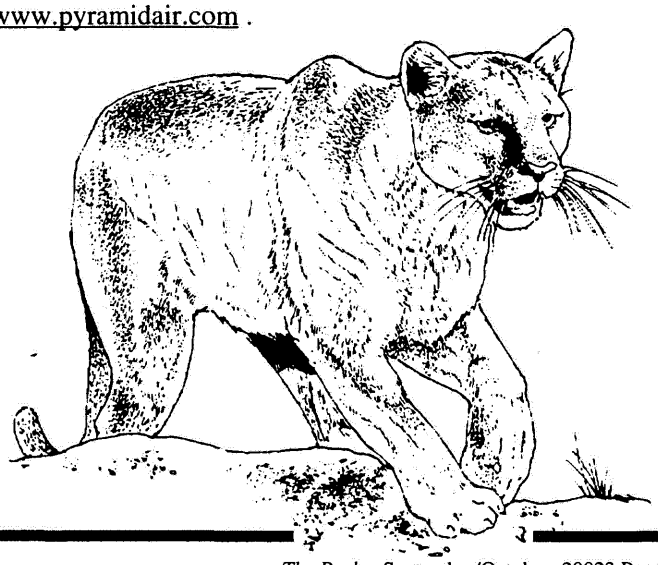
The morning after the discovery of the last kill, the Tinnins awoke to find a small mountain lion in the cage, later found to be a female weighing 67 lbs, possibly last year's cub. The federal trapper was called. Because relocation efforts have proven unsuccessful, the lion was destroyed.

Continued from page 3, col. 2

Pneumatics Intro

Like other types of pellet rifles, PCP's readily come in a variety of pellet size options (.177, .20, and .22). While no one pellet size is "the best", different combinations of pellet size, pellet weight, and pellet velocity combine to create unique characteristics. By altering one or more of these variables, the gun can effectively shoot a variety of animals. The .177 caliber pellet is very popular for shooting pigeons and starlings in airplane hangers. It has been my experience that the breast can absorb a lot of impact and unless the pellet breaks a wing or is placed in the head or neck, pigeons can fly off some distance before they die. On the other end of the spectrum is the .22 caliber pellet. This is an ideal choice if your target is squirrels, crows or even feral cats. With a heavy pellet they can really pack a punch due to their greater mass. Of course, pellet pass-throughs may be a concern when using a .22 caliber pellet on pigeons and other smaller targets at close range. However, using a lighter pellet with a hollow-point design can greatly reduce this problem and can make the .22 caliber very versatile.

Pre-charged pneumatics can be louder than traditional air rifles because they are using a larger volume of air to push the pellet. In order to reduce audible noise, consider rifles with long barrels used at moderate velocities (900 f.p.s.) or have the rifle fitted with a sound suppressor. (Check local and state laws regarding the use of sound suppressors) Pellet rifles definitely have a growing use in the wildlife damage and pest control industry. They are easy to shoot, easy to maintain, and readily available. You should definitely take a look at adding a PCP to your tool box. For additional information check out the following resources: www.airgunillustrated.com, www.airgunsofarizona.com, www.airgunexpress.com, www.pyramidair.com .



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