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Wildlife Damage Management, Internet Center for

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Is NADCA Finished? Is This the Last Issue of *THE PROBE*?

Lawrence Sullivan, Editor, *THE PROBE*

In December of 2005 the terms of office for all the NADCA officers and directors terminated. An election was planned, a call for nominations was printed in *THE PROBE* and announced in the NWCOA and WDAMAGE listserves. One nomination was received.

All the current officers and directors were contacted via email and asked if they would be willing to run again. Most said yes, many reluctantly, except the president and two directors. I personally asked two persons for permission to nominate them for president. No luck.

It makes no sense to have an election with no competition and not even a candidate for president. I emailed the "current" officers and directors asking for ideas and direction. No ideas, no direction and mostly no reply.

THE PROBE seems to be the only function of NADCA. And if it were not for Dexter Oliver and Stephen Vantassel, there wouldn't be much to put in *THE PROBE*.

THE PROBE seems to be the only function of NADCA. And if it were not for Dexter Oliver and Stephen Vantassel, there wouldn't be much to put in *THE PROBE*. Begging, pleading and cajolery results in precious few submitted articles. News articles from other sources must be excerpted or permission must be granted to reprint them. With the turn-around time required to get *THE PROBE* printed and mailed, most news articles have already been on the listserves and are old news by the time members receive the issues.

My personal situation is that I'm retired, no longer teaching and not actively involved in wildlife damage. My wife and I have moved to Arivaca, Arizona. We're trying to build an addition to a house. I told our former president, Art Smith, that unless we came up with a new editor earlier, I was willing to continue as editor until June 2006. Now I'm not sure.

There does not seem to be much activity or interest in NADCA. So maybe it's time to recognize that NADCA has served its purpose and no longer has a role to play. Or, maybe some time and effort should be made to define or redefine NADCA?

There does not seem to be much activity or interest in NADCA. So maybe it's time to recognize that NADCA has served its purpose and no longer has a role to play. Or, maybe some time and effort should be made to define or redefine NADCA? But that's not my decision to make. Maybe NADCA members in attendance at the Vertebrate Pest Conference in March can get together and come up with a plan or have a memorial service.

For now, I'm here in Arivaca looking for ideas, suggestions or direction and "talkin' to myself like a shepherd".

Larry Sullivan
sullivan@ag.arizona.edu



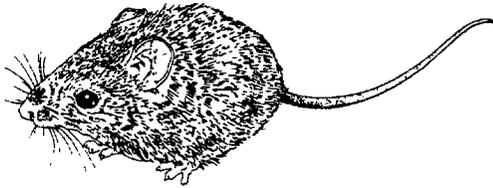
Burning Beast Bummer

FT. SUMNER, NEW MEXICO—A mouse got its revenge against a homeowner who tried to dispose of it in a pile of burning leaves. The blazing creature ran back to the man's house and set it on fire. Luciano Mares, 81, of Ft. Sumner said he caught the mouse in his house.

"I had some leaves burning outside, so I threw it in the fire," Mares said from a motel room Saturday. The now homeless man had an ongoing mouse problem and had set up numerous traps in his home. He was not injured, but his home and everything in it was destroyed.

Village Fire Chief Juan Chavez said the burning mouse ran to just beneath a window, and the flames spread up from there. "I've seen numerous house fires, but nothing as unique as this one," fire captain Jim Lyssy said.

Source - Robert Timm



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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.

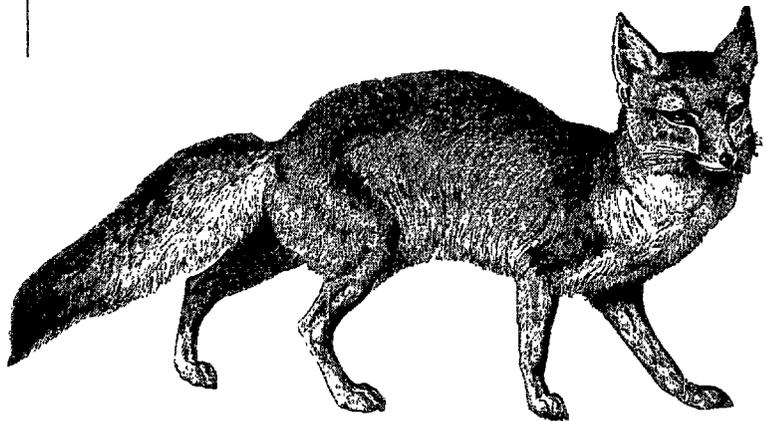
CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

March 6-9, 2006 - 22nd Vertebrate Pest Conference. Berkeley Marina DoubleTree Hotel, Berkeley, CA.
<http://www.vpconference.org> or contact Terry Salmon, UC Coop. Extension, San Diego Co., email: tpsalmon@ucdavis.edu; (858) 694-2864.

March 8, 2006 - "ADVANCES IN WILDLIFE FERTILITY CONTROL," will be held at the Berkeley Marina DoubleTree Hotel, Berkeley, California, as part of the 22nd Vertebrate Pest Conference.

THE PROBE Archives On-Line

Stephen Vantassel, Project Coordinator for the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, is in the process of scanning back issues of *The Probe*. As the issues are scanned, they will be posted on the digital commons at <http://icwdm.org>.



Send Your Articles!

THE PROBE wants your input! Send your articles to the editor Lawrence Sullivan at the address listed in the lower lefthand corner of this page. This is your newsletter—be a part of it!

Booklet Review

Williams Trevor and Andrew Wilson. Edited by John Bryant. Unearthing the Urban Fox. Tonbridge, Kent. UK 2000. pp. 1-48 softcover.

The Fox Project is a non-profit, British organization dedicated to protecting the interests of foxes. Like all animal rights organizations, the Fox Project disapproves of any lethal control or methods it considers inhumane. In short, they claim "to love foxes" and would never wish them harm.

Fortunately, organizers understand that fox and human interests occasionally conflict. In light of this concern, the authors compiled information to help English residents, specifically, urban and suburban, respond to problems with foxes. Typical problems caused by British foxes include, defecating in gardens, scraping and consumption of vegetables. Although foxes cause other problems, such as noise and predation, these seem to be much less common and less severe.

The booklet is very readable and can be finished in less than an hour. It avoids technical jargon and needless details. It also contains wonderful line drawings and is well laid out. The authors dutifully describe the fox's natural history and connect fox biology to their behavior and resultant damage. The text's descriptions of fox sign and damage are quite helpful. Tips on how to distinguish fox activity from that of domestic cats were very practical. It is clear that the authors have some real experience in handling foxes. They rightfully underscore the importance of tolerance and stress ways that humans can modify their own behavior and environment to reduce damage. For example, the authors note that the noise caused during the mating period should probably be tolerated as there is little one can do about it.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the book centers on the use of repellents. Repellents have achieved sacred status in the animal rights community and are often overhyped. However, this reviewer was pleased with the way the authors clearly noted that repellents don't work all the time. The authors clearly state that repellents won't stop foxes from eating. They also explained that repellents typically fail in late summer because the year's juveniles haven't been fully initiated on the importance of territorial scent markers. Whether their explanation is true or not, it is encouraging that the limits of repellents is openly

acknowledged. The authors should also be commended for plainly telling the reader that the text won't help in resolving predation issues.

The booklet has several areas, which should cause concern. First, it was disappointing to see the disparaging remarks about hunting and trapping. The animal rights protest industry is quite strong in England. But a large part of that is due to the class warfare which exists between the landowners (usually the wealthy) who hunt and trap and the urbanites (often poor) who don't. Additionally, the authors have naively accepted that old canard that cage traps are somehow not indiscriminate traps. Anyone with trapping experience knows that cage traps are no less target specific than footholds and snares. In fact it could be argued that cage traps are less target specific.

Second, the authors needed to provide greater details in three specific areas. First, they should have provided details on the average home range size of foxes in various environments (p.7), as it would permit property owners to have a ballpark idea on how many problem foxes are potentially in the area. Second, they should have included a diagram of a one-way door (p. 32). Detailed instructions would help less-handy homeowners have greater confidence to construct the device. Finally, the writers should have presented evidence that the recommended ultrasonic repellent actually works (p.35). For a view of the recommended ultrasonic device visit http://www.sales-services.co.uk/html/ultrasonic_animal_chaser.html

A bigger question involves the relative usefulness of this material for North American readers. With expanding coyote populations, foxes don't seem to be much of a damage problem. But in time that could change. For those who seek to learn non-trapping methods to control certain kinds of fox damage, this text may be a good starting point. Given the experience of these authors, perhaps canine researchers may wish to open lines of communication and share ideas.

To obtain a copy, send a check for £7.00 (sterling) to The Fox Project, The Southborough Centre, Draper Street, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 0PG, England. Their web

Continued on page 5, col. 2

The Jaguar Caller

Dexter K. Oliver

"The chesty roar of a jaguar in the night causes men to edge toward the blaze and draw serapes tighter. It silences the yapping dogs and starts the tethered horses milling. In announcing its mere presence in the blackness of the night, the jaguar puts the animate world on edge".

Aldo Starker Leopold, Wildlife of Mexico

The wild cats are fascinating, and in the Western Hemisphere the biggest and most interesting indigenous feline is the jaguar or tigre. It is an animal with a large head, stocky, powerful body, and relatively short, thick legs. The tail is usually only half the length of the head and body combined. The upper parts are covered with tawny hide that is decorated with black rosettes and spots. The underside is white with solid black spots.

The jaguar is unique among New World felines in its ability to produce a loud call similar to that of an African lion or Asiatic tiger. The construction of the hyoid bone in their throats allows for a guttural repertoire consisting of grunts, growls, and roars. Mountain lions are unable to achieve all of the same sounds, being more given to purrs, growls, and occasional screams.

Jaguars call to proclaim their territory or seek a mate. Before a combination of habitat destruction and uncontrolled exploitation in the spotted fur trade seriously reduced population numbers throughout a goodly portion of the jaguar's entire range, human hunters routinely capitalized on the jaguar's vocal trait. Locating the elusive, primarily nocturnal big cats by imitating their calls was a common practice. It often allowed the hunter an actual sighting of the animal, or at least a starting point to release hounds that could then easily trail it. Outdoorsmen of such historical stature as Sasha Siemel, Dale Lee, and Wiley Carroll all utilized their knowledge and skill in finding jaguars in this manner.

Predator calling has evolved from a hunter's ploy to a wildlife photographer's aid and a researcher's tool. As

anyone who has spent time in the field soon realizes, seeing these animals is usually a stroke of luck. For most carnivores, sounds that imitate their prey such as a wounded rabbit or distressed fawn are favored when trying to entice them into betraying their presence. Mouth-blown calls, both open and enclosed reed types, are commonly used to make these sounds. Electronic versions that replicate such calls are also used, although there is no personal skill involved with them and purists shun them.

Because wildlife biologists and other interested people, from Arizona to Argentina, are currently focusing on learning more about the jaguar, a resurgent fascination in any technique that might allow some close contact with the legendary beast is at hand. And the lost art of jaguar calling is once again becoming a popular topic.

Mimicking the grunting roars of a jaguar may be done in a variety of ways. It can be achieved by using one's own vocal cords or employing a type of echo chamber with a camp coffeepot. A cow horn used as a megaphone has had some followers. But the most popular and successful method has involved what is known south of our border as a *pujadera*. This particular instrument is fashioned from a local calabash, or hard-shelled gourd, some type of rawhide, and long strands of horsehair from the tail or mane.

By cutting off both ends of the gourd and scraping out the seeds, a sound chamber is created. One side should have a larger opening, and it is here that a piece of parchment, the raw hide of a deer or goat, is stretched like a drumhead. This is trickier than it might sound. I have found that the best way to do it is by soaking the skin in water to make it flexible, then using upholstery tacks to hold it in place. Care needs to be taken when pushing the points of the tacks through the shell to avoid cracking it.

While the skin is still pliable, a small hole should be punched, cut, or drilled in the center of it. A braid of plaited horsehair, about eighteen inches long and a quarter of an inch wide is inserted in the hole and drawn down into the chamber. Tie a knot at the end above the skin, so it

The editor of *THE PROBE* thanks contributors to this issue: Stephen Vantassel, Dexter K. Oliver, and Robert M. Timm.

Continued on page 5, col. 1

The Jaguar Caller

can't be pulled completely through, and you will have a pujadera as good as any made locally in tigre country.

But in order to actually "play" this unique instrument, two more items are necessary: a chunk of beeswax and some pine rosin, or dried sap. The actual sounds that the caller generates are the roars, grunts, and growls and are a result of the braided horsehair vibrating against the taut skin covering as one pulls on it through the smaller opening at the other end. By waxing and then applying rosin to the horsehair, as well as one's fingers, more friction is produced when the cord is stroked downward, using just the tips of thumb, index, and middle fingers. More friction renders more vibration, allowing for a louder and more realistic sound to come out of the gourd chamber.

Experimenting with different sized gourds has proven that the larger ones produce the best sounds and carry the farthest. No two callers will sound exactly alike, but they can all reproduce the jaguar's own vocalizations and, equally important, the correct cadence. The best sequence when first starting a call consists of two deep grunts, followed by a series of eight to ten quick grunts, ending with another deep grunt or growl. Should a jaguar respond vocally, the caller can further lure the cat with single roars, timed in direct response to the animal. Rrrrugh, rrrrugh, rugh, rugh, rugh, rugh, rrrugh is what the basic call should sound like. As with any predator calling, even an awful rendition may provide enough of a curiosity factor to attract the animal you are seeking.

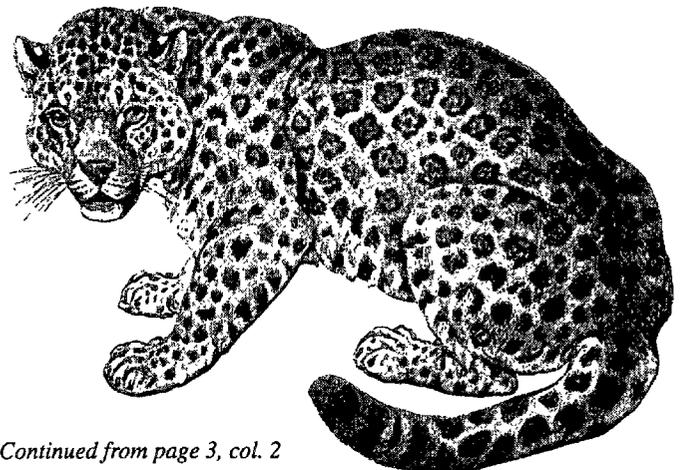
Jaguars usually call at night, so this is the best time to try to get one to respond, but they don't always report their presence vocally when coming in to a call. It is a common occurrence to find the fresh tracks of a tigre that came to within fifty yards of a caller before losing interest or being overcome with wariness. On the reverse side of that coin, some callers in thick jungle areas have had one, or more, of the big cats come so close that a little prudent tree climbing was necessary.

Nobody has ever verified the grunting roar of a jaguar north of Mexico, but a few people have been fooled by, of all things, one of its favorite prey species, domestic cattle.

A Hereford bull can do an excellent imitation of a love-sick jaguar, or one announcing its dominion of an area.

Nowadays a gourd jaguar caller is mostly seen as a relic from a bygone era; a bit of nostalgia that has little practical use, yet is fun and reminiscent of a time when mythical beasts were more prevalent in our lives. But if you happen to hear or play one on a moonless night, don't be surprised if you get goose bumps and feel the hair rise on the back of your neck. These are just atavistic responses to a primal sound, reminding us that we really aren't so far removed from the natural world as it sometimes seems.

Dexter K. Oliver is wildlife field technician and an outdoor writer with a long history of studying the wild cats. He has tracked jaguars in Tortuguero, Costa Rica and Campeche, Mexico.



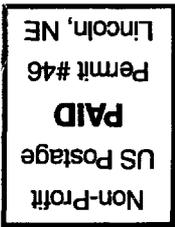
Continued from page 3, col. 2

Booklet Review

site is <http://www.foxproject.org.uk/>. The editor, John Bryant, also has his own website at <http://www.jbryant.co.uk>.

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