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EXTENSION EDUCATION
WITHIN THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE*

by

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In order to nail down the fact that my **ADC** credentials are valid, you should be aware that when I was State Supervisor for the Division of Wildlife Services in New York, I received a letter from an individual in France requesting information on rodent control. The address on the envelope was simply: Chief Rat, New York, USA. There were more than 20 million other people in New York State at the time!

What I want to accomplish today is to discuss: a little about the organization of Extension Education within the Fish and Wildlife Service; our progress and plans; something about extension and animal damage control; some philosophical observations and comments, and lastly, a look toward the future.

The partnership between USDA and USDI in fish and wildlife extension has been completed with the appointment of **Jim** Miller. I understand that the first documented effort to achieve this relationship began about forty-four years ago. Jim is a personal friend and the partnership between the Fish and Wildlife Service and Mr. Petoskey's shop seems to me to be ideal. Some day someone will admit there was an awful lot of luck involved, because the bureaucratic process is incapable of such serendipity.

* A talk given December 5, 1979 before the Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop in Manhattan, Kansas by Dan Stiles.

In the broadest sense, what extension education within the Fish and Wildlife Service is attempting to do is to make the educational material and scientific capabilities of the Fish and Wildlife Service readily available through **SEA/EXT** and Sea Grant to the land grant and sea grant colleges and universities, the county agents, Marine Advisory Agents and the public. We are trying to stimulate coordination and cooperation between resource agencies and individuals who have an interest and responsibility for enlightening the public about natural resource matters.

The flow of fish and wildlife educational information from the Service to Extension and Sea Grant has already begun. I suspect that the State Cooperative Extension fish and wildlife specialists are as informed -- probably better informed -- than most Fish and Wildlife Service employees. In addition to special mailings, we have been routinely distributing Service news releases, bulletins and other appropriate publications to Sea Grant and Extension.

We have named extension education contacts in each of the Regional and Area offices. To date, thirty seven extension education cooperative agreements have been signed with twenty-eight States. A number of others are pending. We have nine agreements with Sea Grant. Generally these agreements aim to insure that there be cooperation and coordination of efforts in disseminating useful and practical information about fish and wildlife resources. Some ask, why are agreements necessary? In some cases they are not needed; however, in others they serve as formal, tangible evidence that the leadership of cooperative extension and the Service have met and that they want to work together. Ideally the relationship is a synergistic

one; that is, by joining forces we **should** be able to accomplish more than we could working independently.

We have sixteen extension education projects underway at the present time. They are projects developed in cooperation with land and sea grant colleges and universities and include Oregon, North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, Florida, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, South Dakota, and Colorado. Fish and Wildlife Service funds involved total \$197,000. The projects range from supporting the production of a half-hour film on the Columbia River estuary in cooperation with Oregon State University to developing and publishing in cooperation with the University of Georgia a booklet entitled "Snakes of the Southeast." We have stimulated interest in the potential of extension education and some of the results of these cooperative projects are becoming available. All thus far are truly outstanding and the enthusiasm is building.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has recently taken a series of specific actions that are designed to improve our educational efforts, including extension education, for the maximum benefit of the Service, our cooperators, the public and the resources. Currently we plan to establish an Office of Education and Interpretation under the direct supervision of the Deputy Director. Those of you with experience in the bureaucracy appreciate the significance of this action. This new office will consolidate all educational functions of the Service, provide guidance and policy recommendations and maintain a general overview in these areas. These functions include extension **education**, environmental education and interpretation. Through this **proposed** reorganization we **will** for the

first time be able to look at all educational activities in one functional unit, rather than in several places throughout the Service. Our professional resources and expertise will be increased and more definitive lines of communication opened up not only within the FWS but also with those we serve. We intend to use this new office to significantly enhance our extension education capabilities.

In addition, we plan to develop standards and evaluation processes as well as procedures for providing guidance, coordination and assistance to Program Managers and to Regional and Area offices in the conduct and execution of extension activities. These efforts will proceed in addition to routine business and the establishment of better communications between the Service, our Cooperators, and the State cooperative fish and wildlife extension specialists.

Mr. Conley Moffett has been appointed Acting Chief for the Education and Interpretative functions of the Service. He has assumed all the responsibilities formerly held by Jack Berryman, plus additional environmental education and interpretative responsibilities. I am the Wildlife Specialist for extension education; Erland Juntunen is the Fishery Specialist. **Mrs.** Allen is on maternity leave. A girl. Seven pounds 6 ounces.

Plans for 1980 call for regional workshops at four locations across the Nation, to include Fish and Wildlife Service regional and area office extension education contacts; Fish and Wildlife Service cooperative research unit leaders, State fish and wildlife extension contacts, State Cooperative extension fish and wildlife

specialists, representatives of the Washington Office of the Science and Education Administration and Washington Office Fish and Wildlife Service personnel as appropriate. The overall purpose of these workshops would be to find ways to work more efficiently and effectively toward mutual goals. **We** need to better acquainted, identify opportunities and resolve road-blocks. Our goal is to build and strengthen the cooperative partnership between the Service and **SEA/EXT** and the participating agencies and institutions involved with fish and wildlife extension education.

It seems to me that in space age terminology we have an open window that we must shoot through now. There are no apparent barriers that I can see. Those of us involved with extension education in the Fish and Wildlife Service are most enthused. The Deputy Director to whom we report directly is supportive, to say the very least, as are the Director and the Secretary, who, by the way, has just established Departmental policy stating in effect, that all bureaus will advance and exemplify the principles and practices of conservation and sound management of our natural, cultural, and recreational resources through Environmental Education.

The national conservation agencies see this new partnership as a unique opportunity. For example, **Jack Berryman** whom you all know is Executive Vice President of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the International is actively supporting and encouraging our efforts.

Now, something about animal damage control. I think it is abundantly clear that there is too much inaccurate, misleading information regarding ADC and far too little balanced, factual information. I firmly believe all of us in the profession have a responsibility to try to correct the misinformation and make the facts about ADC available to the public. In my judgment, someone needs to develop a series of publications and films, perhaps, for the general public on the theme that management of animal damage is but one facet of wildlife management. Clearly, virtually everyone understands the need to control rodents, and those of us who utilize air transportation occasionally are appreciative of bird management programs designed to minimize bird-aircraft strikes. It seems to me that these are the kinds of hard examples that would provide the foundation upon which to build such a factual "back to reality" type of publication. Does anyone here believe that the public -- that portion of the public that has an interest -- is adequately informed about fish and wildlife and related natural resource management to really make intelligent decisions? It is not surprising that most people are totally unable to distinguish between the position of the environmental extremist and sound scientific management practices. For years we have been concerned about the tone and substance of the natural resources information reaching the youngsters in schools. We still need to remedy this situation. I think we must give very high priority to the business of providing young people with objective, factual, interesting information about natural resource management so that as adults they can make intelligent, informed choices. In Extension, the key seemingly would be through the 4-H program. We have begun to

support and contribute to the natural resources portion of the 4-H program. We intend to do much more, because, based on the content and tone of correspondence received in the Fish and Wildlife Service, young people are still being subjected in school and from the news media to a steady diet of information overemphasizing the evils of pesticides and pointing out that the harvest of timber is contrary to good resource management.

We still hear from young people concerned about the slaughter of buffalo and the disappearance of the passenger pigeon. They obviously believe these examples are current Indications of wildlife management practices.

Animal damage control is controversial; and, it is naive to assume that every reasonable person, given factual and unbiased information would share our own view point about the rationale for ADC. We have to recognize that some people have very deep emotional feelings that hard evidence to the contrary **will** not change. We have to acknowledge, I think, the fact that many dedicated critics of animal damage control are well **aware** of the facts and that they are not superficial thinkers. **The** need, it seems to me, is to direct our attention to the enlightenment of the broad range of reasonable people out there throughout the country and encourage their involvement in the natural resources decision making process. Too often, I think, the scales are tipped in favor of an extremist position because the voices of a vociferous few are louder than the silent majority. We need to encourage and develop a more balanced public input into the natural resources decision making process

Dr. Steven **Kellert** of Yale University **is** conducting a very significant study of the attitude of the American public toward wildlife. As an example, I understand that he has found an overwhelming proportion of the American citizens who are neither for or against hunting, have no objection to **hunting** as long as the quarry is eaten. I think this bit of information is very useful. There is something refreshingly sensible about this finding. Incidentally, Dr. Kellert also found that the public was unable to differentiate between the endangered Florida manatee and an insect with a similar sounding name.

Some have found it fashionable in recent years to espouse a hands-off, non-management philosophy regarding national resources. The problem is that so many Americans now live in urban oriented situations. We are seeing second and third generations of people -- people who have never lived in a rural atmosphere. The relationship between lamb chops and that most appealing looking, high - spirited lamb is not clear in the minds of most urban - oriented people. They are told so often that forest fires and timber cutting -- interference by man -- are disastrous to wildlife, that on the basis of this information being repeated over and over again, it becomes accepted as truth. Surely it is better for the "ecology" to buy a plastic Christmas tree and save a living, brave little struggling tree in the forest from an untimely end. Most Americans who are interested in wildlife have no appreciation whatsoever of the fact that the greatest diversity and quantity of wildlife exists in those areas where various habitat types are effectively interspersed. The processes of succession will **slowly** but surely change most habitats moving them toward a **climax** condition.

Habitat manipulation that retards **this** process produces more diverse and productive habitat than would result **without** management. This kind of fundamental information needs to be made available to concerned people. It appears clear that the problems for professional natural resource managers are going to intensify as yet another urban oriented generation -- still further from the land -- begin to assume leadership positions. These people know about Lassie, Bambi, gentle Ben, and have listened to countless hours of more subtle anti-management philosophy. There is much catching up to be done through extension.

Clearly, the environmental pendulum has reversed itself and the honeymoon years are over. It seems to me that there is an uneasy silence and the enthusiasm seems to have worn down. I think we are through a period of time when amateur ecologists welcomed every opportunity to discuss any environmental issue on television talk shows and they all assumed the comfortable role of dealing with generalities and abstractions. They never really talked about real life situations. For a time it **seemed** like a contagious national phobia -- a need to express anguish publicly about the fate of our nation's wildlife. All this talk confused people. No wonder sound management practices are suspect. More catching up to do, and the challenge now during the energy crunch is to keep the pendulum from swinging too far the other way.

One of the very few facts I recall learning in chemistry was that no matter how much you would like things to work out in a convenient manner, no amount of wishful thinking could make it so. Certain combinations of chemicals under the same conditions invariably and inevitably produced the same end product. So it is with wildlife management. Much as the

amateur ecologist would like to **portray** mother nature as being a thoughtful and forgiving guardian of **wildlife** resources, nothing could be further from the truth. **Survival** in the wild is a constant, unmerciful struggle. It's often brutal business by human standards. Wildlife professionals know this well. In fact, I think a person's attitude about animal damage control reflects his judgement and reasonableness on many environmental issues. **ADC** is a standard to measure a person's acceptance of the basic realities of life.

It seems to me that the challenge in the future for extension education will be to get basic, factual information about wildlife management out through the extension communication network to the people. Never before has been such a need for intensive management. And of course by management I mean to include the need for managing animal populations downward as well as upward. Very small parcels of land have become essential for the preservation of a number of species threatened with extinction -- and they often require intensive management -- burning young Jack Pine stands for Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat, controlling foxes and raptors to protect nesting Aleutian Canada Geese, etc, etc. The general public must also understand that in spite of the eloquent, impassioned speakers who discuss the insensitivities of man toward his environment and who with **righteous** indignation condemn man and his selfish pursuit of technological Progress, we cannot lose sight of the fact that nearly all of **us** prefer apples without worms and wool clothing. The point **is** that there are no **real** villains, no public environmental **culprits** of the first order. We

are all demanding and utilizing the energy obtained from strip mining and off shore drilling. **We** all benefit from and support modern transportation networks and vacation homes in the mountains. Man and industry are synonymous; **it is** comfortable to blame man, that obscure, faceless entity for all our environmental ills, but we are all occupying space that was once wildlife habitat • It is the collective, steady contribution of all of us that is responsible. This kind of fundamental information needs to be made available to concerned people.

I think these thoughts need to be brought to the attention of the folks living out of touch with the land. They have become the ones who greatly influence resource management policy decisions. They must understand that an appeal to **mankinds** altruism to achieve environmental goals is not going to be successful. Soap won't sell If it leaves the ring around the collar. No matter how much some might wish it to be otherwise, predators don't kill only the old and sick, the balance of nature is not utopia, the evolutionary road is paved with the bones of marvelously adapted species -- too specialized to change -- and man's conflicts with wildlife are not going to go away. In fact, these conflicts are certain to continue and probably increase. The enormous, and in my judgment critical, task ahead is to provide the masses of reasonable people no longer associated with land with basic information that they are not now receiving. Young people particularly are eager and receptive for information on natural **resources**, but we have **bee** so deeply

involved in crises of the moment that we have missed several generations with the kind of factual **information** on natural resources that is badly needed. We have got to hammer on the basics. We have to gear for the long term, **This**, I think, is one of the most pressing conservation Issues we need to be addressing as a high priority Issue through the extension communication network.

The administration of the Natural Renewable Resources **Extension** Act of 1978 is in good hands, There is good reason for optimism about the future. The partnership between USDA and USDI in fish and wildlife extension has been completed after 44 years'of effort. But, we have much catching up to do.