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May 2003

## The Probe, Issue 228 – May/June 2003

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"The Probe, Issue 228 – May/June 2003" (2003). *The Probe: Newsletter of the National Animal Damage Control Association*. 84.

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## The Urban Coyote

Dallas Virchow, Project Coordinator, Distance Education, Wildlife Damage Management, University of Nebraska

There's been quite a flurry of interest lately about urban coyote issues, particularly on list serves devoted to wildlife damage. As usual, there was a wide array of perspective expressed as how to best solve the issues. My interest was piqued because I am in the process of producing a video on coyote damage management as part of a series on common wildlife species. This video series will complement the next (2004) edition of the Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage. It's my intent to include techniques of urban coyote control.

The urban coyote story in the U.S. began in the Los Angeles area in the early 1980's and appeared quickly in other U.S. cities. But I know that coyotes in cities were around at earlier times. I recall assisting Bill Andelt (now of Colorado State Univ.) with monitoring a coyote well within the city limits of Lincoln, Nebraska, during the late 1970's. For those interested, I found the citation as: Mahan, B. R., and W. F. Andelt. 1979. On the town. *Animal Kingdom* 82(4):26-29

The issues surrounding the urban coyote have changed over recent decades. As the needs and inclinations of urbanites have changed, so have their attitudes toward wildlife in their midst. Once viewed as sources of income (value of pelts) or threats to livelihood (Just a few decades ago, many urbanites still raised poultry in backyards), the urban coyote is now viewed as a novelty, a wildlife-viewing experience, or evidence of a healthy ecosystem amidst an urban setting. Only secondarily does today's urbanite see the other issues of threats to human or pet safety, hybridization with domestic dogs, traffic accidents, and traffic congestion due to coyote sightseers. About the changing attitudes, someone has observed that a few years ago the only safe harbor for wildlife was when they got outside the city limits and now the safe harbor is when wildlife get inside the city limits.

The major issue of urban coyotes remains attacks on humans. A citation recently noted was: Baker, Rex O. and R. M. Timm. 1998. *Management of conflicts between urban coyotes and humans in Southern California*. Proceedings, 18th Vertebrate Pest Conference (R. O. Baker and A. C. Crabb, Eds.), Publ. Univ. Calif. Davis, pp. 299-312.

According to Bob Timm, excerpted from a recent e-mail "This paper details some 53 such attacks, resulting in 21 instances of human injury, during the period from August 1988 through Sep-

tember 1997. We have documentation that such incidents are continuing to increase in frequency, and we hope to summarize and publish an update within the next year, with the cooperation of personnel in California's cooperative USDA-Wildlife Services program."

There is a wide range of methods employed to mitigate urban coyote issues in U.S. cities, including direct control through suppressed weaponry, padded foothold traps, powered snares, and in rare cases, cage traps. Indirect control seems to always include public education with the view to restrict pet or child movements and to curtail intentional or unintentional feeding of coyotes.

Probably the best integrated plan for dealing with urban coyote issues is not in the U.S., but in Canada. A good video that describes this integrated approach of public education and direct control methods is *Coyotes: Urban Coyote Project* by Delta Cable Communications, Ltd., 5381-48th Ave., Delta, B.C., Canada V4K 1W7 (Phone 604 946-1144, e-mail: dctv@deltacable.com). The video chronicles the public education efforts that were an M.S. thesis of K. (Webber) Lampa. An offspring of the video was the Coexisting with Coyotes program sponsored by the Stanley Park Ecological Society (SPES) of Vancouver, B.C. According to Lampa, "SPES has a public phone line (604-681-WILD) to help people learn to live with coyotes and keep their pets safe; extensive information on techniques for dissuading coyotes from property and... is active in the community promoting awareness about and coexistence with coyotes." (See the following websites [www.stanleyparkecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca) or <http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/urbanwildlife/cocoyote.htm> for a direct link to the coyote pages.)

In talking with Rob Boelens, director of the coyote program at SPES, he noted that SPES is a link between the public and the ministry that is responsible for coyote management and that, in some cases, relies on shooting to deal with aggressive coyotes. Boelens noted that there had been a handful of incidents during in recent years of coyotes biting children that led to the unique program. In this program, concerned citizens are asked to report to the SPES website, any aggressive behavior and the location of individual coyotes. SPES forwards these on to the ministry and to its conservation officers who may choose to shoot the offending animal. SPES also alerts the administration of

*Continued on page 5, col. 1*

# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**August 18-21, 2003 - Bird Strike 2003, The Westin Harbor Castle, Toronto, ON, Canada.** For information e-mail Bruce MacKinnon at [mackinb@tc.gc.ca](mailto:mackinb@tc.gc.ca).

**September 6-10, 2003 - 10th Annual Conference of the Wildlife Society, Burlington, VT.** E-mail [tws@wildlife.org](mailto:tws@wildlife.org). On the web at [www.wildlife.org](http://www.wildlife.org)

**September 9-12, 2003 - 4th European Vertebrate Pest Management Conference, University of Parma, Parma Italy.** See website <http://www.biol.unipr.europest>

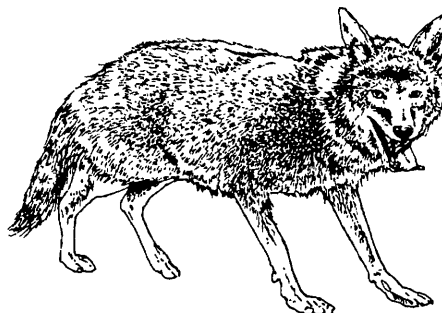
**October 14-16, 2003 - Invasive Species Symposium, Radisson Hotel, Sacramento, CA.** Sponsored by the Western Section of The Wildlife Society. See [www.tws-west.org](http://www.tws-west.org)

**December 1-5, 2003 - 3rd International Wildlife Management Congress, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.** For information see [www.conference.canterbury.ac.nz/wildlife3003](http://www.conference.canterbury.ac.nz/wildlife3003) or e-mail [wildlife@cont.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:wildlife@cont.canterbury.ac.nz)

**December 6-10, 2003 - 64th Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference, The Westin Crown Center, Kansas City, MO.** See conference website <http://www.midwest2003.com>.

**February 8-13, 2004 - 15th International Conference on Bear Research and Management, Bahia Resort Hotel, San Diego.** Preliminary topics include: Bear/Human Conflicts; Field/Lab/Statistical Techniques, Habitat Assessment/Relationships; Genetics/Physiology; Conservation Biology. For more information go to: <http://www.ursusjournal.com>.

**March 1-4, 2004 - 21st Vertebrate Pest Conference, Visalia Convention Center, Visalia, CA.** See conference website at: <http://www.vpconference.org>



## EVER WONDER?

*Since the distribution of some species of vampire bats extends to northern Mexico, do these bats ever enter the U.S.?*

The *Peterson Field Guide to Mammals of North America north of Mexico* indicates that a hairy-legged vampire bat (*Diphylla ecaudata*) was seen near Comstock, Val Verde Co., Texas. No citation is provided.

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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.

## Trapping BMPs for Coyotes in Eastern US

The first of many BMPs for trapping is now on-line. Below you will find a link that provides the new Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping coyotes in the eastern United States. BMPs are intended to help trappers and wildlife managers select the very best traps and to provide helpful information that can be incorporated into trapping education programs.

Trapping provides many benefits to citizens and is an important element in wildlife research and management. It was written and published by the Furbearer Resources Technical Work Group of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Inc (IAFWA). The mission of the Furbearer Resources Technical Work Group of the IAFWA is to maintain the regulated use of trapping as a safe, efficient, and acceptable means of managing and harvesting wildlife for the benefits it provides to the public, while improving the welfare of trapped animals.

Trapping BMPs are the product of several years of trap testing and research, conducted in 31 states across the country since 1997. The Work Group has planned to provide six more published within the next year, and a total of 12-15 by the end of 2005. To look at the newest BMP, click on: <http://www.furbearermgmt.org/03ecbmp.pdf>

Also, the new, updated web site for the Furbearer Resources Work Group of the IAFWA is located at: <http://www.furbearermgmt.org/>

Source: TWS-L@listserv.vt.edu

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# Human-Wildlife Conflicts in China

Alex F. Mettler, Berryman Institute, Utah State University

*Editor's note: This article is the first in a series of articles dealing with human-wildlife conflicts in various countries around the world. These papers were written by students at the Berryman Institute and provided by NADCA President and Berryman Institute Director, Dr. Mike Conover.*

China is the largest country in Asia with an area covering 9,560,900 km<sup>2</sup>. This broad country stretches from the Pacific Ocean in the east to the Karakorum Mountains in the west, and from the vast Gobi Desert in the north to the lush tropical forests of Hainan Island surrounded by the warm waters of the South China Sea in the south. With its vast expanse, China is host to a wide range of topography and ecosystems, ranging from high altitude desert plateaus, to low-elevation tropical forests. China has the highest population of people in the world at approximately 1.4 billion. This population is concentrated in the eastern half of the country. Many Chinese residents still live in rural areas and small villages, but the last few decades have seen a steady increase in urban immigration.

Along communist ideological lines, the wildlife belongs to the people, just like everything else (at least in theory-modern China has, of late, placed more emphasis on private ownership of many financial and business-related things). Although the wildlife belongs to the people, it is administered by the government. "The State shall protect the lawful rights and interests of units and individuals engaged in the development or utilization of wildlife resources according to law" (Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Wildlife, chapter 1, article 3). Management of terrestrial wildlife goes to the Wildlife Administration, which falls under the administration of the Department of Forestry, which is part of the State Council. The organization has the responsibility of enforcing laws that prohibit illegal hunting, catching, or destruction of wildlife by any person or group. Hunting of game species requires a standard hunting permit. The Wildlife Administration determines the appropriate harvest quotas per year or season. Permits are limited by species listed, harvest numbers, area of harvest, and time of harvest.

Method of harvest is dependent on site restrictions or lack thereof. This is similar to many hunting permits in the United States. One notable difference is in the relative ease in owning and using a firearm by a private citizen in the United States; in China, firearm possession and use is severely restricted in the private sector. Foreigners are allowed to hunt in China, but only on certain hunting grounds, and only by the approval of the Wildlife Administration.

Years of human development and activity in much of China have resulted in extirpation or extinction of several to many species. On the other hand, wildlife that have been able to coexist with humans and adapt to living among human artifices have done exceptionally well. Not surprisingly, some of these species are considered nuisance animals or pests. Of course, this is not unique to China. Rodents are a problem to many homes, farms, and businesses. Damage to rice fields and storage sites are common. Exotic and invasive plant and animal species have helped contribute to many environmental problems in China, including agricultural damage. Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*), Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), and nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) are a few examples of exotic vertebrate pests implicated in agricultural damage. Nutria and muskrats have proven to be a menace to irrigation projects and rice paddies, whereas Norway rats have had an impact on grain storage.

Most wildlife damage in the agricultural sector is restricted to crop damage. However, there are a few parts of China that still have wild native predators in the same area as domestic livestock. Livestock herders in Tibet experience depredation losses due to snow leopards (*Uncia uncia*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), and gray wolves (*Canis lupus*). In the Qomolangma Nature Preserve, 1% - 9.5% losses of sheep, goats, and sub-adult yaks were reported. In Xinjiang province (north of Tibet) in the Taxkorgan Nature Reserve, 7.6% losses of sheep and goats were reported. According to Chinese law, local governments are responsible to "prevent and control the harm caused by wildlife so as to guarantee the safety of human beings and livestock and ensure agricultural and forestry production" (Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Wildlife, chapter 1, article 29). This is a rather vague mandate, and appears to allow for local flexibility in solving wildlife damage problems. Even with this apparent flexibility, solutions to local wildlife problems are restricted by national conservation and environmental laws. For instance, although snow leopards may be threatening a Tibetan herder's flock of sheep, he cannot legally use lethal control to solve this problem; snow leopards are protected nationally and internationally.

Today, wildlife poses little direct danger to Chinese citizens. In fact, feral dogs are probably the only medium to large size predator that are even a possible threat to human safety. As mentioned above, most of China's large predators have been extirpated, and those that are not exist in very remote, sparsely populated areas (Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Tibet).

*Continued on page 5, col. 1*

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# What the "Heck" Is That?

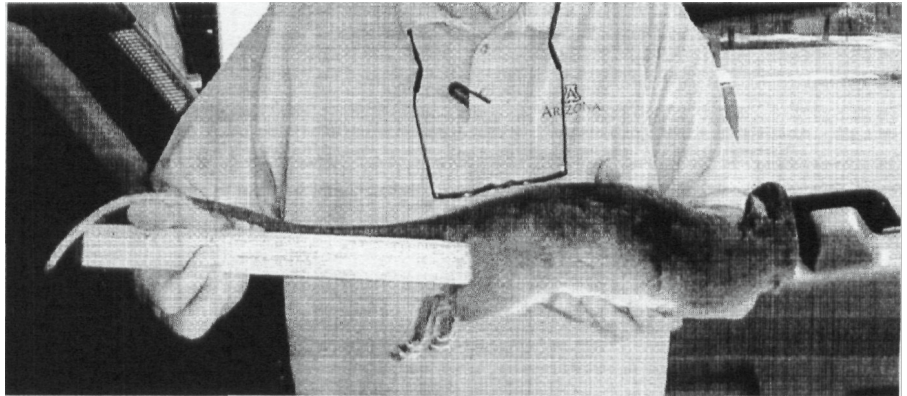
That's close to what Larry Sullivan said when he first saw this critter.

An Arizona DPS officer found this animal dead along an interstate highway in Arizona. The officer thought it looked like a rat, but bigger than any rat he'd ever seen. He took it to the nearby, Pinal County Extension Office to find out just what it was. The Extension Office had the DPS officer deliver the carcass to Larry Sullivan, Extension Wildlife Damage Management Specialist, for identification. Sullivan recognized it as a rat, but he had no idea what species. Because of the rat's size and condition, he concluded that the rat was probably a pet and certainly not a species indigenous to Arizona.

This happened just days before all the news broke about the outbreak of human Monkeypox infections in several Midwest states. Health officials investigating the outbreak have determined that the disease was spread from pet prairie dogs to people. Investigators said the prairie dogs were probably infected with the virus by a

Gambian giant rat, which is native to Africa, at a Chicago-area pet distributor.

Well, with all the news and information on Monkeypox and the giant rat, including photos and descriptions of the giant rat



all over the Internet, we have concluded that the rat in the photo is a Gambian giant rat/African giant pouched rat/African Hamsterrat (*Cricetomys gambianus*). Positive identification is pending.

## Wildlife Damage Management in the News

### Fatal and Non-Fatal Hantavirus in Same Family

A man formerly of Liberal, Kansas has died and his wife is recovering from a bout with a deadly disease, which medical officials say is contracted through exposure to [hantavirus-infected] rodents. The 39-year old man died on Thu 29 May 2003 at Morton County Hospital in Elkhart. His wife also had the virus infection; however, she has since recovered.

This death is the first hantavirus infection death since 2000, according to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), and it may very well be the first hantavirus diagnosis of 2 people in one family; however, health officials say there is no reason to worry about the disease being passed from one person to another. "Hantaviruses are contracted through exposure to rodent [vectors]," Sharon Watson of the KDHE said. "The situation here involves a couple who had been working in an area where there was a lot of dust and a rodent infestation — both outside and indoors. They had been in some areas where they were inhaling a lot of dust that had particles from the rodent droppings. That is why both people in the same family contracted the illness. It didn't have anything to do with them passing it from one person to another."

Source: Excerpted from ProMED-mail,  
<promed@promedmail.org>

### Multistate Outbreak of Monkeypox

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local health departments continue to investigate cases of monkeypox among people who had close contact with wild or exotic mammalian pets or people with monkeypox. As of 18 Jun 2003, a total of 87 cases of monkeypox have been reported to CDC from Wisconsin (38), Indiana (24), Illinois (19), Ohio (4), Kansas (1), and Missouri (1). The majority of patients were not seriously ill; some were admitted to facilitate proper isolation.

The majority of patients had direct or close contact with wild or exotic mammals such as prairie dogs (*Cynomys* sp.). In one instance, 28 children attending a day care facility in Indiana were potentially exposed to 2 prairie dogs that subsequently became ill and died; 12 reported handling or petting the prairie dogs, and 7 subsequently became ill with symptoms consistent with monkeypox infection.

Traceback investigations of animals are ongoing to identify how monkeypox virus was introduced into the US. Preliminary results have determined that an animal vendor in Wisconsin sold prairie dogs to the index patient in Wisconsin; this vendor had obtained prairie dogs from an animal vendor in Illinois, who had housed prairie dogs and Gambian giant rats (*Cricetomys* sp.) in close proximity.

Because Gambian giant rats often are imported from regions of Africa where monkeypox is endemic, traceback investigations of the Gambian giant rats were initiated.

Source: Excerpted from ProMED-mail,  
<promed@promedmail.org>

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The editor of **The PROBE** thanks contributors to this issue: Dallas Virchow and Alex F. Mettler.



Continued from page 1, col. 2

## Urban Coyotes

elementary schools in the area of the incident and offers them education on how to deal with aggressive coyotes. Other interested citizens can look on the SPES website to see if an offending animal occurs in their neighborhood or if one has recently been reported.

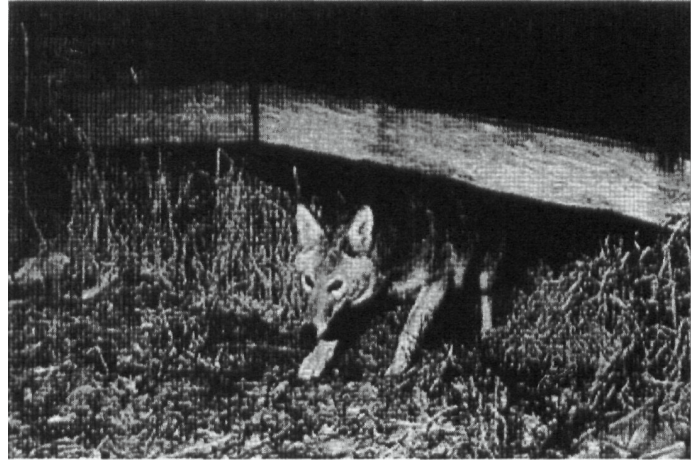
Lest you think that SPES is just another warm and fuzzy non-profit group, they offer some pretty good advice about collective use of scare tactics and remind citizens of the law against feeding coyotes (Section 33.1 of the BC Wildlife Act provides a minimum \$345.00 ticket and maximum \$50,000 fine and six month prison sentence for anyone who "with the intent of attracting dangerous wildlife..."). If this isn't disincentive enough, SPES also encourages some strong-arm tactics to deal with neighbors who feed coyotes. Concerned citizens that have coyote-feeding neighbors can go the SPES website and download a flier called "Guess whose coming to your yard for dinner?" with a nighttime photo of a coyote slinking under a fence (See photo at right).

The flier also offers some excellent suggestions for keeping coyotes away. The website suggests that the concerned citizen distribute these downloaded fliers to the troublesome neighbor. Other fliers are distributed in public areas or neighborhoods such as "Coyote feeding reported in your neighborhood" and "Coyote spotted on your street". My guess is that after these fliers go up in the nearby park and after the next door neighbor sticks the "Guess Who" flier in your door, you're sure to stop your feeding of coyotes!

Coyotes do get aggressive as they habituate to humans. Boelens reports that some small dogs have even been attacked by coyotes while on leash! Of course, any aggressive action toward a pet or a human is seen as a threat and the ministry removes the animal. Boelens notes that there has not been an at-

tack since the program at SPES began in February 2001 and he views this as a measure of success. But as important, he notes, is that "more people are prepared for aggressive actions" by coyotes and concerned citizens or one that witnesses an aggressive act by a coyote "has immediate access to information and...almost immediate action can be taken".

SPES is pro-active in educating youth, as well. Their volunteers have presented to over 25,000 elementary students in the Vancouver area. Boelens notes that he would be happy to



discuss the SPES program with anyone. He can be reached at [coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca)

Regardless of your perspective on urban coyote issues, I think the pro-active education efforts of SPES provides a valuable tool for the agency responsible for managing coyotes and a valuable resource for concerned publics. I believe it also has lessened the long-term deleterious effects of the coexistence of coyotes with humans in urban settings and it provides a system worth emulating in other cities.

Continued from page 3, col. 2

## Wildlife Conflict in China

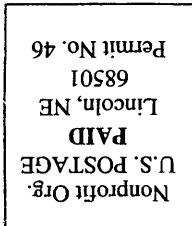
These remote regions, especially Tibet, also have the added danger of feral rabid dogs. Rabies have spread through feral and domestic dogs in Tibet largely due to local Buddhist beliefs against killing dogs regardless of their condition (personal observations). Nevertheless, most parts of China are a long way away from having to worry about having too many large, potentially dangerous wild animals roaming around; conservation is a larger concern right now than wildlife damage management.

### Proceedings from the Sixth Mountain Lion Workshop Now Available

The Proceedings contains 80 pages of research papers, reports, and updates on various topics regarding mountain lion monitoring programs, interactions with prey, human dimensions, genetics, ecology, and management. To purchase a copy, please send a check, money order, or purchase order for \$10 payable to Sul Ross State University for "Mountain Lion Proceedings" to the following address:

Marylee Flowers  
Department of Natural Resource Management  
Sul Ross State University  
P.O. Box C-16, Alpine, TX 79832

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## Membership Renewal and Application Form

### NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Mail to: Art E. Smith, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks, 523 E. Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ Home

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ Office

Additional Address Info: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please use 9-digit Zip Code

Dues: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Class: Student \$10.00 Active \$20.00 Sponsor \$40.00 Patron \$100 (Circle one)

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- ☐ Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

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- ☐ University