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In The News, Spring 2007

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In The News

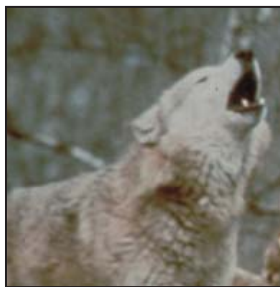
Wolf attacks on humans in Canada

High Country News reported that on November 8, 2006, the body of 22-year-old Joel Carnegie was found at Points North Landing in the northern boreal forest of Saskatchewan, Canada. Investigators believe Carnegie was attacked by a group of 2 to 4 wolves when he was walking alone near a mining exploration company camp. The attack is the first documented case of a fatal wolf attack in North America since 1900, but a nonfatal wolf attack occurred a year earlier in the same area. In that incident, wolves attacked and injured a jogger. Wildlife biologists linked the attacks to the presence of garbage in the area and to the wolves' decreasing fear of humans.

Another wolf attack occurred on Vargas Island, British Columbia, in 2000. A 25-year-old man, Scott Langevin, was attacked by a lone wolf while he was sleeping at a campsite near other campers. Langevin yelled and kicked from inside his sleeping bag as the wolf attempted to drag him into the woods. Langevin suffered bites to the upper body and lost a considerable amount of blood through a severe wound to the back of the head. After killing the wolf, conservation officers determined it to be healthy. Reportedly, campers regularly fed wolves on the island in the past, and the wolves had become habituated to humans.

Howling wolves cause U.S. Forest Service to evacuate employees by helicopter

According to the *Idaho Mountain Express*, 2 U.S. Forest Service employees who were conducting an inventory of timber in the Sawtooth National Forest in Idaho became alarmed when they heard wolves howling all around them. The frightened employees called their supervisor on the radio and asked to be evacuated. Their supervisor complied, and a helicopter was sent to retrieve them.



Steve Nadeau, wolf program supervisor for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, was shocked that howling wolves would cause the U.S. Forest Service to send a helicopter to evacuate employees. Nadeau was quoted as saying, "Holy-moly. Sounds to me like someone's reading too many Grimm's fairy

tales." He admitted, however, that "if they felt threatened, I guess the Forest Service acted appropriately."

Cost estimates of bird flu pandemic rise

USA Today reported that a study conducted by the World Bank concluded that a bird flu pandemic among humans could cost the global economy \$2 trillion. In the current epidemic,



several people across the world have died from avian flu, but all contracted it from birds. For a pandemic to occur, the virus must develop the ability to spread from 1 person to another. So far that has not happened. But, as migratory birds carry the virus across the globe, the chances of that happening increase. If it does, the losses will not just be economic, but human fatalities would skyrocket.

During World War I, a flu epidemic spread across the world and killed more people than were killed in combat during the entire war. The flu killed an estimated 50 million people. Ever since then, doctors have wondered what made this flu so deadly. Recent research highlighted in Public Television's *The American Experience* and *NOVA* provided the answer to the century-old question. Experimental tests revealed that the reason for the epidemic's deadly toll was that this flu was, in fact, a bird flu, and therefore humans had built up little immunity to it.

American bison become newest urban wildlife pest

According to *Yahoo! News*, bison have invaded the town of Fort Providence in the Northwest Territories, Canada. Darren Campbell told reporters that the bison are drawn to town by the manicured lawns, open spaces, and lack of wolves. The bison have become real pests, but unlike other urban wildlife species, bison can weigh 2,500 pounds. The town's citizens complain that bison rub the

siding off houses, knock down fences, and kick dogs and vehicles. The town's 2,400 bison now outnumber its 800 citizens.

New contraceptive bait approved for Canada geese

OvoControl™, a nonlethal contraceptive bait for managing the overabundance of resident Canada geese, received regulatory approval from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in November 2005. Approval resulted from a joint effort of scientists at the USDA Wildlife Services' National Wildlife Research Center and Innolytics, LLC, which produces the chemical. The active ingredient of this contraceptive is nicarbazin. The chemical has historically been used to protect broiler chickens from diseases. OvoControl™ reduces Canada geese hatching success without threatening geese, humans, or other species. The sterility caused by OvoControl is easily reversible. When Canada geese stop taking it, only a few



days are required before geese start producing fertile eggs. Wildlife management agencies or other government entities may purchase OvoControl™ from Innolytics to manage resident Canada goose populations.

Three fatal alligator attacks in Florida in a single week

So many people are bitten by alligators these days that such attacks rarely draw the attention of the national media. However, the deaths of 3 adults, in 3 separate attacks during a single week, is newsworthy. According to the *Associated Press*, a 23-year-old woman was attacked at Lake George near Gainesville. Another attack involved a 40-year-old woman who was killed by an alligator in a canal

20 miles north of Saint Petersburg. A third victim was a 28-year-old woman from Florida Atlantic University. She was attacked while she jogged along a canal near Fort Lauderdale.

These fatalities are unusual both in that they occurred in such a short period of time and because the victims were adults. In the past, most fatalities of alligator attacks have been children who were swimming or wading in the water at the time of the attack.

Feral hogs contaminate spinach, causing food poisoning nationwide

During 2006, over 200 people across the United States became ill after eating fresh spinach harvested from 4 farms in California. The illness was particularly severe; half the victims required hospitalization, and 3 people died. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) confirmed that the spinach was contaminated with *E. coli* 0157:H7.

An FDA spokesperson appearing on the *MSNBC Television Network* confirmed on December 12, 2006, that the source of the *E. coli* was feral hogs that were observed feeding and defecating in the fields. The feces were tested by the FDA, and the same strain of *E. coli* was found in the hogs. Dr. Robert Brackett, Director of the FDA's Center for Food Safety, reported the conclusion earlier to Congress. The *E. coli* outbreak caused millions of dollars in losses for farmers and



distributors of spinach and other fresh produce because people stopped buying fresh produce due to their worry over the food's safety. ❖

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