

TWS WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP newsletter

Winter 1999 - Volume 6(1)



FORWARD -- Scott Craven

Greetings from the snowy north woods of Wisconsin. My off-campus assignment will end in a few months. Thus I will soon be back in my Madison office with all my files, correspondence, etc. Hopefully, that will allow me to better serve the Working Group.

The first order of business is a big thank you to our recent slate of candidates for Working Group leadership. There were several very, very close races, including one that was decided by a coin toss with the consent of both candidates. The current officers are listed on the next column of this newsletter. All officers have been contacted and are awaiting opportunities to serve. Don't hesitate to contact any of us with ideas, needs, and concerns.

Plans have been made for the next Working Group meeting at the Wildlife Society Annual Conference in Austin. Details of time and location will appear in the Conference program. Note that the Working Group is sponsoring 2 sessions this year. Session summaries can be found on the next page.

The technical manual "Managing Canada Geese in Urban Environments" is now available. I'm very pleased with the manual's content, appearance, and the reception it has received. It represents a team effort and is a tangible product of the Working Group.

TWS President James Miller has asked me to Chair a committee to prepare a Position Statement on feral cats. The committee is working on the issue but if any Working Group members would like to offer comments or help in some other way, please contact me. I think the issue of feral cat predation falls within the interests of the Working Group.

That's all from here for now! Have a great spring.

In this issue:

- 1999 Working Group Officer List
- TWS 6th Annual Conf. Working Group Symposiums

- Working Group Sponsored Urban Goose Techniques Manual & Video Availability Announcement
- International Member's Contribution

NEXT EDITION DEADLINES

If there are any items you wish to have included in the next newsletter, the Spring 1999 issue, please get them to me no later than 30 April. Thanks.

Art Smith

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Thanks to the following individuals for contributing to this issue: Oscar Aalangdong, Scott Craven,

Sydni Gillette, Angela Mertig, and a belated thanks to Dave Williams for his contribution to the last issue.

TWS 6th Annual Conference Working Group Sponsored Sessions

At the upcoming annual TWS conference in Austin, TX, the Wildlife Damage Management Working Group will be sponsoring 2 paper sessions. Both cover timely and important topics and your attendance will be welcome.

“Bats and Humans: Education, Conservation, and Management”

Organizers:

Dennis Slate, USDA-APHIS-WS, Concord, NH
J. Kennedy

Bats represent a unique and diverse group of mammals that are a treasured natural resource. However, they are often misunderstood by a large segment of the public. Some species, most notably the big brown and little brown bats, are commonly found in houses and other dwellings that provide easy access to roost sites. Conflicts that arise when bats occupy dwellings can often be traced to poor carpentry or aging buildings. Various means of enclosure can usually be applied to resolve such problems.

Rabies in bats continues to have a major influence in shaping public health policy. The challenge to the wildlife professional is to promote bat conservation while helping resolve conflicts and providing input for sound public health policy.

The purpose of this symposium is to stimulate discussion and debate on bat conservation programs and initiatives, conflicts and public health policy. The first half of the symposium will provide overviews of bat conservation and the types of conflicts that occur between bats and people. Methods to address conflicts will be discussed. The second half of this symposium will focus specifically on the merits of contemporary rabies control strategies.

“Improving Public Perception and Understanding of Wildlife Damage Management”

Organizer:

Art Smith, Dept. of Wildlife Ecology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

Urban sprawl combined with the surprising ability of many animal species to thrive in human dominated landscapes, have increased the number and severity of human/wildlife conflicts throughout North America. Although most people enjoy and treasure experiences with wildlife, few understand what leads to an unpleasant or unexpected encounter with a wild animal in their own back yard. To alleviate or understand the conflict, wildlife managers are called in to consult or fix the problem.

One of the manager's first tasks is to attempt to educate the public about the animal and how the problem developed. Education reduces the citizen's immediate concern, creates an opportunity to discuss policy and legal details, and helps prevent future problems. Few wildlife managers receive formal training enabling them to develop educational programs, yet they are responsible for designing and implementing a multitude of educational needs of a very diverse public. The need for successful wildlife damage educational products for a diverse public combined with increasing numbers of conflicts and the need for cost effectiveness are now commonplace throughout the wildlife damage management field.

This symposium will provide wildlife biologists with a well rounded review of the status of wildlife damage education. The symposium will include background on wildlife damage management, utility of successful techniques, analysis and advice on past wildlife damage educational efforts, and a final assessment of the feasibility of educating citizens on wildlife damage issues.

The speakers represent multi-disciplinary backgrounds including: USDA Wildlife Services, Extension Service, animal welfare, university researchers, state natural resources, and product marketing.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 18TH VERTEBRATE PEST CONFERENCE held March 2-5, 1998 in Costa Mesa, CA are now available

For those who were unable to attend this outstanding and very interesting conference, you can now find out what you missed!

The cost for the paperback proceedings (433 pages) is: \$25.00 plus \$4.00 for shipping/handling (U.S.); \$7 surface or \$13 air mail for international orders. Postal or other money orders are acceptable, credit cards are not (checks must be drawn on U.S. bank in U.S. funds). Checks should be made payable to:

VERTEBRATE PEST CONFERENCE
c/o T.P. Salmon, Bus. Mgr.
DANR: North Region
University of California
One Shields Avenue
Davis, CA 95616-8575

ANNOUNCING THE AVAILABILITY OF A NEW PUBLICATION AND VIDEO ON MANAGING URBAN CANADA GEESE

In many areas of the United States and Canada, the Canada goose has adapted to suburban landscapes, foraging on mowed lawns and nesting near ponds and reservoirs. Geese may congregate at parks, golf courses and athletic fields, creating nuisance situations and potential health hazards

*A new 42-page guide, **Managing Canada Geese in Urban Environments**, (147IB243) provides information on the biology of the Canada goose, regulations covering Canada geese, management strategies and techniques. It lists equipment suppliers. A chart summarizes the management methods, including habitat modification, scaring devices, repellents, reproductive control and removal.*

This manual is intended to help wildlife professionals, turf grass managers, and homeowners select appropriate management strategies to alleviate problems caused by migratory and non-migratory geese. Authored by Art Smith and Scott Craven, Department of Wildlife Ecology, University of Wisconsin, and Paul Curtis, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University, the manual is the result of collaboration by Cornell Cooperative Extension, the University of Wisconsin, the Berryman Institute, Utah State University and The Wildlife Society, Wildlife Damage Management Working Group.

*The manual is complemented by the video, **Suburban Goose Management: Searching for Balance**, (147VSGM) which tells why geese are attracted to suburban neighborhoods and how they can be discouraged from nesting in communities. It covers goose biology and takes viewers into the heart of this controversial topic while offering a critical look at current management techniques from traditional to new methods. The video was produced by Paul Curtis and Gary Ingraham, Media and Technology Services, Cornell University.*

These educational resources are available from the Cornell University Media and Technology Services Resource Center, 7 BTP, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850, (607) 255-5830, fax (607) 255-9873. The publication and video are \$10.00 and \$19.95, respectively, which includes S&H. Quantity discounts are available. Costs are payable by purchase orders, Mastercard and Visa; Checks should be payable to Cornell University.

RENEWED YOUR 1999 TWS MEMBERSHIP YET?

Have you renewed your TWS (and WDMWG) membership yet? If not, this may be the last newsletter you will receive. To prevent this tragedy, please use the last page of this issue to renew your membership. Don't miss your opportunity to keep abreast with TWS and Working Group activities.

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Wildlife Damage Management Around the World - Part 3

The following article was contributed by a member of this Working Group who lives and works outside of North America. This is the third of at least a 5-part series. My thanks to those members who have already sent in their articles, those which appeared in the last issue, and some of which will be appearing in upcoming issues.

WILDLIFE DAMAGE IN GHANA

Oscar Aalangdong

Lecturer, Department of Renewable Natural Resources, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

Certificate, Wildlife Management (1976) and Diploma, Wildlife Management (1977), College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka, Tanzania
B.S. Natural Resources Management (Range and Wildlife), Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, 1986
M.S. Zoology (Wildlife Parasitology), University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, 1994

In Ghana, wildlife damage concerns mainly agricultural crops. Wildlife has always been known to cause damage to both food and cash crops. However, the frequency and intensity of damage increase from year to year. This is because many farms are cultivated further from human settlements and damage now involves large animals like elephants. Damage of farm crops are usually associated with rodents, monkeys, birds, bush pigs and rarely antelopes. Elephant crop damage is more frequent across the country.

In some part of Northern Ghana, wildlife once posed a problem to the health of humans and domestic animals. Most of West Gonja land was uninhabitable as a result of tsetse fly infestation in the zone. Around the 1950s, government therefore initiated a wildlife (host) elimination program in the zone to rid the area of tsetse fly and make it habitable and agriculturally productive. A Game Control Division (Tsetse Control Unit) was set up to shoot ungulates in the zone. This was the first time wild animals were considered as nuisance and killed en masse to protect human interest. After the reduction, a game reserve, Mole Game Reserve, now Mole National Park, was set up in the area to protect the remnant wildlife population.

From the 1960s onwards, a new wave of wildlife damage problem emerged. This was wildlife damage to agricultural crops. The most publicized was damage to cocoa, Ghana's main export crop, by elephants. Today elephant damage has extended to food crops across the country. To curb cocoa damage, a Control Unit was set up by the Wildlife Department and stationed at Goaso, an area where most damage occurred, to control

elephants. Initially, control measures involved shooting the elephants. Many elephants were killed in the 1970s and 1980s.

Species involved

Almost all wildlife are involved in crop damage in one way or the other and at different stages of growth of the crops. However species that are commonly associated with crop damage are:

1) Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*): causes damage to all farm crops; cocoa, plantain, banana, cocoyam, pine apple, pawpaw, cassava, yam, maize, mango, orange, and oil palm in the forest zone and maize, sorghum, millet, and yam in the savanna zone by trampling and/or eating the grains or tubers of these crops. Such damage is most common around conservation areas (Wildlife Reserves and Forest Reserves) where elephants exist. Occasionally, elephants stray in from neighboring Burkina Faso and Togo and destroy crops in and around Navrongo and Bawku District respectively, in the Upper East Region. Elephants have also strayed in from Cote d'Ivoire and destroyed crops in the Brong Ahafo Region.

2) Monkeys (baboons: *Papio* sp.; patas monkey: *Cercopithecus* sp.; green monkey *Cercopithecus* sp.): destroy crops such as maize, sorghum, and millet, by breaking the plants and eating the grains depending on the growth stage of the crop.

3) Rodents (grasscutter: *Thryonomys swinderianus*, squirrels: *Epixerus* spp., giant rat: *Cricetomys gambianus*): cause severe damage to seedlings of food crops (rice, maize, and sorghum in the North of Ghana) and cash crop (oil palm, coconut, and cocoa in the South of Ghana) by cutting the seedlings. They also eat the nuts of groundnuts, tubers of yams and cassava.

4) Ungulates: Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*) destroys maize, coco, yam, okra, etc. by eating the seedlings and leaves. Bush pigs (*Potamochoerus porcus*) also destroy maize, sorghum, etc. by breaking the seedlings and eating the grains. They also eat the tubers of yams and cassava and nuts of groundnuts.

5) Birds: parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) destroy mature maize by eating grains and fruits of economic trees. Weaver birds (*Ploceus* spp.) destroy maize and sorghum by eating the grains. *Qualea qualea* cause severe damage to rice by eating the grains. Francolins (*Francolinus* spp.) remove sowed seeds of groundnuts, maize, sorghum, millet during the sowing season. They also eat the grains of matured maize, sorghum,

millet and tubers of yam and cassava. They also remove the nuts of groundnuts.

The intensity and frequency of damage depends on the type of crop, type of animals involved, and the distance of farms from the village.

Control

Wildlife damage is controlled on ad hoc bases and depends on the crop and resourcefulness of the farmer. Most common measures taken to minimize wildlife crop damage include the following: 1) Scaring: farmers go to fields early mornings and late evenings to scare away animals by shouting or beating drums and empty cans. Scarecrows are also mounted in farms to scare off animals. 2) Screening: seedlings of cash crops (cocoa, oil palm, coconut) are screened with chicken wire to prevent damage by rodents. Stick fences are sometimes made around farms. 3) Trapping: Usually practiced in small farms, the farmers trap at the periphery of farms in addition to other methods of control. 4) Shooting: Problem animals are scared off by shooting into the air. Permitted shooting of wildlife, especially elephants, by the Wildlife Department has been stopped. However, farmers will shoot animals that visit their farms. In most cases farmers do not obtain permits to hunt or destroy wildlife and these shootings are illegal. 5) Poisoning: farmers poison the animals, particularly francolins, by mixing seeds for planting with DDT or spraying the crops with insecticides.

Most of the methods farmers adopt to prevent crop damage are not only illegal but dangerous to human health. However farmers have not been advised on appropriate methods to control wildlife damage on their crops.

Species status

There are no estimates of wildlife numbers in Ghana both in and outside conservation areas. However, it is believed (based on sighting frequency) that the number of species and species numbers in Ghana have decreased considerably as a result of habitat encroachment and poaching. Elephants are rarely seen in those areas where they caused damage to crops a few years ago, and can now only be found in national parks. Few wildlife exist outside conservation areas. Most wild animals species now fall under the threatened species category of the IUCN red data list.

Future

Wildlife damage to crops is a perennial problem in Ghana, particularly since more farms are being cultivated farther away from villages and sometimes closer to conservation areas. Encroachment of wildlife habitat have eliminated wildlife corridors and reduced their home ranges.

The future of wildlife is bleak unless the rate of wildlife habitat encroachment for agricultural purposes is reduced. Control of wildlife using illegal methods must cease. There is also the need for research to identify and quantify wildlife crop damage. New and effective methods to control wildlife damage must be developed to enable farmers increase agricultural productivity. Wildlife conservation in Ghana depends greatly on how well human-wildlife conflicts are resolved.

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS AVAILABLE, Michigan State University

HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

A research assistantship is available for a student who wishes to pursue a graduate degree in the Human Dimensions of Wildlife Management. The selected student will participate in a 3-year project to study the human dimensions of fur trapping issues in the state of Michigan. The goal of the project is to develop new instruments to measure environmental and animal use attitudes. Benefits include a 12-month stipend, tuition waiver and health insurance. The student will be responsible for aiding in the design and implementation of focus groups and personal interviews of stakeholders in the fur trapping issue (e.g., fur trappers, environmentalists, wildlife managers, animal rights activists). She/he will also aid in the analysis of focus group/interview results to develop a standardized measure of environmental and animal use attitudes. The student will also oversee the implementation of mail surveys to test the standardized measure that is developed. A Ph.D. level is preferred, however, we will consider filling the position with a strong M.S. application. Preference will be given to applicants with experience or training in social science methods, data management and some aspect of wildlife management. Evidence of communication skills and the ability to interact well with groups and individuals with varying opinions is required of the successful applicant. Start date is negotiable (but Fall of 1999 is preferable).

HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF LANDSCAPE CHANGE

A graduate student research assistantship is available at either the Master's or Ph.D. level in the human dimensions of landscape change. Together with two other students (whose work focuses on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems), the selected student will participate in an interdisciplinary project to understand and predict land use change in two Michigan watersheds. Benefits include a 12-month stipend, tuition waiver and health insurance. Initial funding is available for 2 _ years with a strong potential for additional support. The selected student is expected to apply for a degree program in either the MSU Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife or the Dept. of Sociology (other options may be discussed).

The student is expected to show some initiative in carving out their own particular facet of the human dimensions of land use and ecological change. Specific responsibilities will therefore partly depend upon student interest and degree level. However, the selected student should strive to develop a project that contributes to the overarching project goal of developing a model to understand and predict land use change and its ecological effects.

Plans are underway to acquire funding for a large-scale mail survey of southern Michigan landowners. Should such funding be acquired during the selected student's tenure, the student will be responsible for aiding in the design of the survey and the sampling scheme. They will also be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the survey and aiding in the data analysis.

Experience with (and coursework in) social science methods, experience with managing data, and knowledge of geographical information systems are desirable. Excellent work habits, good communication skills and an interest in working on an interdisciplinary project team are a must. Start date is negotiable (the position is available immediately).

Interested students should send a letter of interest, transcripts, GRE scores (unofficial ones are fine initially), Vita/resume, a statement of professional goals and the names of three references to: Dr. Angela G. Mertig, Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife/Dept. of Sociology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, (517) 355-6644 or (517) 353-3201. e-mail: Mertig@pilot.msu.edu Applications will be accepted until a suitable candidate is found.

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Annual basic membership dues are \$53.00 of which 15% pays for the bimonthly newsletter, *The Wildlifer*, which is received by all members. Dues for full-time students are \$27.00. TWS accepts U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank only or by credit card.

WITH YOUR PAID MEMBERSHIP you may subscribe to the *Wildlife Society Bulletin* for an additional \$22.00. The *Journal of Wildlife Management with Wildlife Monographs* for an additional \$25.00, or ALL publications for an additional \$47.00. Members may also join a section, chapter, and/or working groups.

WORKING GROUP DUES (\$5.00 each)

01 - Wildlife Planning & Administration

02 - Wildlife Economics

03 - Biological Diversity

04 - Biometrics

05 - College and University Wildlife Education

07 - Geographic Information Systems & Remote Sensing

08 - Restoration

09 - Native People's Wildlife Management

11 - Sustainable Use of Ecosystem Resources

12 - Wildlife Damage Management

13 - Wildlife Toxicology (\$7.00)

14 - Urban Wildlife

16 - International Wildlife

17 - Public Conservation, Education & Extension

18 - Local Governance