

April 2012

The Trapline

United States Department of
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



Cooperating with:

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Resource Protection



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Mission Statement

The Nevada Wildlife Services Program (WS) is a collaborative program involving the Nevada Department of Agriculture's Division of Resource Protection (State) and the USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services Program (federal), whose mission is to protect agriculture, natural resources, property, and the human health and safety of the citizens of Nevada from the threat of injury, damage, or resource loss due to wildlife.

Introduction

During April, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **6** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$56** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$40** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **147** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$16,750** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$3,600** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During April, coyotes accounted for **\$10,200** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **251** coyotes were taken with a variety of management methods to resolve these and other ongoing complaints. WS routinely collects blood samples or oral swabs from species taken or handled during normal control activities for monitoring the presence of plague, avian influenza, and other diseases. In April, **48** samples were processed.

The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of April, 2012.

Resource Protection

State Office

During April, 2012, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **12** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons **(1)**, ground squirrels **(10)**, and marmots **(1)**. Information regarding baits to use, trap placement tactics, handling of trapped animals and safety precautions to take when working with the wildlife species were provided for all equipment loaned.

East District

On April 5th, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler removed an adult female lion near the Great Basin National Park. The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) project is designed to protect Rocky Mountain big-horn sheep in the area. MLS Buhler used six well trained tracking hounds to pursue and catch the 90 pound female lion on a cliff face. When MLS Buhler shot the lion, it became wedged on a ledge about 60 feet down from the top. MLS Buhler was not able to retrieve the lion that day for safety reasons. The following day, MLS Buhler and District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett traveled to the remote location and retrieved it with the use of light repelling and safety ropes. The lion was then skinned and turned into the Ely NDOW Office the same day. MLS Buhler will continue his protection efforts in this area.



On April 23rd, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Mac Crome became the newest member of the East District as he started work in Elko County. WS Crome will be very busy protecting livestock in Elko and Eureka Counties. WS Crome has been working for the California Wildlife Services Program for the past several years as a Wildlife Specialist. Let's all extend a warm welcome to WS Crome as he starts work for the Nevada Wildlife Services Program.



On April 24th, WS Derril Fry received a call concerning the loss of one lamb, valued at \$200. In response to the depredation, the Elko aerial crew responded to the location on April 25th, removing two coyotes within a short distance of the kill. WS Fry removed an additional coyote with ground equipment, bringing the damage to an end. Technical assistance was also provided in the form of non lethal approaches. The rancher was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services.

WS Nathan Fowler spent most of April protecting several bands of sheep in north western Elko County. Several of the bands of sheep began lambing during the month. WS Fowler removed several coyotes during the month.

WS Fry was very busy working in southern Elko County, during April, as several bands of sheep began lambing. No losses have been reported during the month, in large part due to WS Fry's protection efforts. Historical losses in this area have been very high in the past. On several occasions, WS Fry provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations. Several of these important techniques are in place including guard dogs, herding and night penning to help reduce losses.



On April 26th, WS Matt Spires received a report of predation on a band of sheep north of Ely, Nevada. WS Spires traveled to the location and confirmed that coyotes had killed two adult ewe sheep, valued at \$500. The loss was made even worse due to the fact that both depredated ewes were pregnant and expected to lamb any day. WS Spires began protection efforts that same day. WS Spires also provided technical assistance

in the form of non lethal recommendations. Many of these recommendations were already in place including guard dogs, night penning and herding. Despite these practices, coyotes will sometimes still depredate, requiring direct control efforts.

WS Virgil Fullerton moved his field camp to north western White Pine County in preparation for the upcoming lambing season. Most lambs are born during the month of April, making it a very busy time for most Specialists. WS Fullerton will work this area until the lambs are big enough to find for themselves.



WS Scott Little had two lambs, valued at \$400, killed by coyotes during April. WS Little removed two adult coyotes near the kill sites, bringing the damage to an end. WS Little then provided technical assistance in the form of non lethal recommendations to the sheep producer. Most all of these recommendations have been developed by the Wildlife Service's Research Facility in an effort to help prevent predation issues.

WS Hunter Bodenchuk and WS Billy Taylor were very busy during April, protecting sage-grouse in eastern Nevada. Ravens and badgers are the primary targets of their control efforts. Many studies indicate that raven densities have a direct impact on sage-grouse nest survival. Badgers have also been recorded depredating sage-grouse nests.



WS Dayne Barnes spent April removing coyotes to protect mule deer and bighorn sheep in southern Lincoln County. Much of WS Barnes activities involve the use of trail cameras to help identify potential predators near the bighorn sheep, in his area. WS Barnes spends many hours riding into remote locations on his mule and checking trail cameras for mountain lion activity near the sheep.

West District

On April 6th, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lamb bands in Washoe County. These two cooperators experience spring lamb losses by coyotes, even with the presence of two private aerial hunting crews, a WS aerial crew and a full time trapper. The West District aerial crew flew a location that had been previously flown a couple days prior, but still managed to remove eight coyotes and located three coyote dens for later removal. WS Doug Koepke provided ground support and will continue to place equipment around the lambing areas, as new coyotes continually move into the lambing range.

April 6th, DS Jack Spencer inspected the Virginia Mountain Bighorn Sheep project. DS Spencer had found where a large male lion was passing through an area where bighorn sheep were living. DS Spencer had been seeing three bighorn rams repeatedly on a rock outcropping, but as he headed up the hill, all he saw was two rams and a bunch of ravens in a large crevasse of the rock pile. DS Spencer went to the top of the rock outcropping and found blood, bighorn sheep hair and drag marks where a large lion had killed the bighorn sheep (valued at \$5,000), but then the carcass fell off the ledge. DS Spencer could not see the bighorn sheep carcass, but did see the large lion tracks heading north. DS Spencer had several trail snares in the area, however, the lion was heading in the opposite direction, but then it turned around and walked right into a trail snare. The removed lion was a large male in the 155-165 pound range.



On Saturday, April 7th, Pilot Gossard traveled to Idaho to pick up the airplane that recently required

maintenance. WS Gossard didn't mind working the weekend to have the plane ready for the next week's livestock flying.

On April 10th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lambing areas in Washoe County. During the flight, a total of three coyotes were removed and two coyote dens were also located for later removal. WS Koepke provided valuable ground support. WS Koepke removed one additional coyote by utilizing leghold traps later that day. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in the many counties he continually works.

On April 12th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several lambing areas in Lander County. During the flight, a total of four coyotes were removed by the aerial crew. The aerial crew also located one coyote den and reported it to WS George Hansen to remove. WS Hansen provided excellent ground crew efforts by locating several of the coyotes for the plane. WS Hansen will continue to protect the many lambing areas in Lander County.

On April 12th, a Washoe County resident called the State Office and reported that a large predatory animal killed two goats, rabbits and chickens in a large penned fence, next to their home. These were the kids 4H club animals, so it was a little disheartening for Nevada's young citizens. DS Spencer was in the area so he inspected the situation. DS Spencer confirmed where a very large black bear ripped through the fencing and was responsible for the killings. DS Spencer measured the black bear's front track and it was over seven inches, so the black bear was an extra-large specimen. As NDOW is the managing agency for black bears, the call was turned over to them.



On April 17th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lambing areas, in Lander County. During the flight, a total of four coyotes were removed. The aerial crew also located one coyote den for later removal. WS Hansen provided ground support during the aerial operations.

On April 19th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lambing areas, in Washoe County. The lambing area is near California, so WS George Affonso (CA) helped ground crew with WS Koepke. During the flight, one coyote and one den were removed. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

The Yerington State trapping position has finally been filled and the new employee is Nick Smith. Nick has an extensive back ground in removing predatory wildlife with the use of ground equipment and his hounds. Nick's father is also a longtime government trapper. The West District is now back to four trappers, previously, DS Spencer had been covering the vacant position, removing nearly 50 coyotes and four lions during the past few months to help protect livestock in Lyon County. DS Spencer is pleased to have the Yerington position filled with such a fine prospect.



On April 23rd, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around a lambing area in Humboldt County. Prior to the plane's arrival, WS Peter saw a coyote out in the far distance packing out a lamb (valued at \$150). WS Peter waited till the plane got close and sent the plane in the direction where he had last seen the coyote headed. The aerial crew worked around for awhile, and eventually spotted the offending coyote and it was promptly removed. WS Peter released his coyote dogs around the vicinity of the dead coyote and a short time later WS Peter's hounds found

the coyote's den with the remains of 15 different lambs (valued at \$2,250) scattered around it. WS Peter later lured in another adult coyote and removed it by method of shooting. These offending coyotes were traveling several miles to kill vulnerable lambs and then packing them all the way back to the den. WS Peter is well known throughout the west as having exceptional coyote dogs. Protection efforts will continue both from the ground and air for these lambing bands.



On April 23rd, the Sheriff of Humboldt County requested assistance from WS Peter, regarding several large feral dogs that were chasing, maiming and killing livestock in Humboldt County. WS Peter was busy on another livestock complaint; however, before nightfall, WS Peter placed several leghold traps in the immediate vicinity of the attack site. On April 25th, WS Peter removed two very large feral dogs with the leghold traps that he had set. WS Peter has been plagued with feral dog calls this past year and has had to remove nearly 20 of the stock killing dogs. The Humboldt County Sheriff's office was pleased with the assistance from WS Peter.

On April 26th, WS Ben Miller inspected a "trail snare corral call box lion set" on the Washoe County Massacre Rim Bighorn Sheep Project (hunt unit 011). WS Miller and WS Peter had placed trail snares out several weeks ago and upon inspection, WS Miller found where a large female lion was captured in the trail snare. The female lion was snared 20 feet away from the call box. This was the second lion captured in trail snares near the translocated bighorn sheep population with both lions having an exceptional amount of fat on their bodies. WS Miller will continue to protect these bighorn sheep for a short time longer.

During the month of April, WS's Miller, Hansen and Peter placed out DRC-1339 treated egg baits around known sage-grouse leks and nesting areas in Washoe, Humboldt and Lander Counties to target sage-grouse nest depredating ravens. The common raven is a well documented nest predator of sage-grouse nests/chicks and since adult grouse are basically incubators for the next generation of sage grouse chicks, chick survival is an important component needed for the future of the bird. Sage grouse protection efforts will continue for the next month.

During the month of April, WS Koepke has spent every weekend in the field protecting seven lambing areas. During the month, WS Koepke removed 14 coyote dens on the lambing range. WS Koepke also removed half a dozen coyotes in the past week with the M-44 device. WS Koepke will continue to protect lambing areas and will hopefully take up a new weekend hobby, such as fishing, once the critical lambing season is over.

On April 27th, WS Peter assisted WS Hansen in ground crewing during aerial operations in Lander County. Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay flew around several lambing areas, which resulted in the removal of four coyotes and the spotting of one coyote den for WS Peter to remove. Protection efforts will be ongoing.



On Sunday April 28th, Pilot Gossard traveled to Idaho to retrieve the airplane, so it would be ready for a Monday morning flight. Pilot Gossard has graciously worked several weekends in April to make sure that there is very little down time with the aircraft and livestock protection efforts are maximized as much as possible.

Throughout the month of March, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Luke Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, removing: one red tail hawk, one Canada goose, four pigeons, one striped skunk and one European starling. Lethal removal is part of an integrated approach to wildlife damage management and reinforces harassment techniques if/when wildlife becomes unresponsive. WB Barto also used pyrotechnics to disperse 21 Canada geese, four Mallard ducks and three red tailed hawks away from the above mentioned airport. WB Barto also removed a red tailed hawk nest, a killdeer nest and a Canada goose nest from the aforementioned airport. Nesting adults continually return to the nest, either to incubate eggs or feed chicks and are therefore a continual threat to aircraft. Additionally, when fledgling chicks leave the nest and learn to fly in mid to late summer, they are not experienced or knowledgeable about aircraft and flight patterns and create unneeded hazards. This is typically when more bird strikes occur throughout the year, nationwide.

WB Barto also received several calls regarding woodpeckers causing damage to residential housing. WB Barto discovered a Northern flicker, while conducting a site inspection, that was pecking at an already existing hole in the stucco siding of the resident's house. Northern flickers have been known to peck the siding on houses this time of year to create a cavity for nesting purposes. The flicker was promptly removed and the residents were very pleased.

During the month of April, WB Zack Bowers continued conducting a Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) at a military installation in Northern NV. The WHA involves conducting structured surveys on the airfield and the surrounding area, as well as general observations. This data is collected for a 12 month period in order to determine seasonal and spatial trends of wildlife usage on the airfield and surrounding area. Once this is complete, recommendations can be made regarding species management, habitat alterations, and agricultural management practices. While conducting the assessment WB Bowers also participates in direct control of wildlife when necessary to minimize direct threats to aviation safety. During the reporting period, WB Bowers noticed sign of coyotes on and around the airfield. As a result, one coyote was removed from the area to reduce the threat of a coyote versus aircraft incident.

Also during the month of April, a helicopter flying at night struck a bird. WB Bowers was given a copy of the strike report to be entered into the safety system database. A feather was also collected which will be sent to the Smithsonian Institute for possible identification. Identification would be very beneficial in this case as the ability to conduct night surveys are limited in scope and can't capture wildlife activity in an area as well as day time surveys can.

On April 16th, Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl began protection efforts on NDOW Mason Valley project 23. The intent of the project is to protect wild pheasants, turkeys and their nests from being raided by nest predators, mainly common ravens, coyotes, raccoons and skunks. During the reporting period, SB Sengl utilized ground equipment to remove: five coyotes, two skunks and one raccoon from the State wildlife management area. SB Sengl will continue protection efforts through the end of May.



New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.

Valuing and Investing in Employees

Nothing to Report.

Information and Communication

On April 26th, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and DS Spencer attended the annual N-3 grazing board meeting in Yerington, NV. During the meeting, SD Jensen provided an overview of the work completed and funds spent for the grazing board. A 70+ year veteran sheep producer stated, that in his 71 years as a sheep producer, this was the first year where he didn't experience a single lamb loss. As mentioned previously, the West District aerial crew and DS Spencer stepped up considerably to make this happen.

Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report.

Future Meetings and Events

May 1st, Nevada Board of Agriculture to meet in Reno. SD Jensen to attend.

May 16th, FSA Administrator will visit Fallon. USDA agencies will be presenting programs and services to various Tribal Chairs and Council members as well as local producers. SD Jensen to attend.



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Wildlife Services



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