

January 2013

# The Trapline

United States Department of  
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health  
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



*Cooperating with:*

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Resource Protection



## Mission Statement

The Nevada Wildlife Services Program 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 agricultural, 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 January, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **7.7** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$91** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$13** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **221** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$32,935** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$18,062** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During January, coyotes accounted for **\$11,227** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **640** 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 January, **10** samples were processed.

*The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of January, 2013.*

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During January 2013, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **4** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: skunks (**3**) and squirrels (**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.



On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Ely plane responded to a coyote complaint in northern White Pine County. Over the holidays, a sheep producer reported the loss of at least ten adult sheep valued at \$2,500. With the assistance of Wildlife Specialist (WS) Matt Spires as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove seven coyotes near the location of the losses. No further losses have been reported and WS Spires will continue to monitor the area for predation.

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, a large cattle rancher in Lander County called concerning a problem with coyotes. The rancher reported that they were just starting to calve out and they were seeing several coyotes in the pastures where their cattle were calving. On the morning of January 7<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane responded to the depredation, removing 18 coyotes in a matter of hours. The rancher was very pleased with the results.

On January 7<sup>th</sup>, Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley presented at a large mining company, in Elko County. The talk was concerning the importance of not feeding wildlife, primarily coyotes. The mine administration was having problems with some of its employees feeding coyotes and thought a presentation was in order. The meeting was well received by the roughly thirty employees and supervisors. It is very common for Pilots and Crew Members to do other duties when not flying. The mine was very happy with the presentation.



On January 17<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane responded to a sheep ranch near Baker, Nevada that had recently lost three ewes to coyote predation. The value of the sheep was placed at \$750. During the morning's operation, the Ely crew was able to locate and remove eight coyotes, including one that was feeding on a fresh kill. No further losses have been reported.



During the week of January 28<sup>th</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett and Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl, traveled to southern Nye County and treated a large dairy that was experiencing European starling damage. The dairy had suffered more than \$20,000 in loss of feed and contamination to the cattle feed. After a pre-treatment inspection, DRC-1339 was used to resolve the problem. The post-treatment inspection revealed that the project had worked exceptionally well, with only a few depredating birds remaining. During the post-treatment inspection, DS Bennett and SB Sengl picked up the deceased birds and buried them, with the assistance of a front loader. The dairy owner was very pleased with the results.

During the week of January 22<sup>nd</sup>, WS Mac Crome and WS Na-

than Fowler traveled to Cedar City, Utah and attended crew member training for the helicopter. Both employees did very well and are now certified crew members for both helicopter and fixed wing aircraft.

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, DS Bennett received a call from a Nevada Department of Wildlife Game Warden, in southern Nevada. The Warden said that there was a public safety threat involving coyotes in the Pahrump, Nevada area. On January 25<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett traveled to the location and met with the Warden and the reporting party. The citizen explained that a large group of coyotes had been coming into her yard and had killed more than 40 chickens and were becoming very bold and aggressive, actually approaching a person standing in the door way of their home. The lady reported that the coyote would not leave and got within a few feet of her, despite her banging on the window. DS Bennett and the Warden began



looking around the neighborhood. One adult coyote was called and shot a short distance from the home. Five other coyotes were observed, but could not be safely removed due to the close proximity to other homes. Eight traps were placed in a vacant field, near the home. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, SB Sengl arrived to assist. A short time later, the group of coyotes was located by a second Warden. The Warden and the WS employees worked together to push the coyotes into a safe removal situation, which resulted in the removal of two large male coyotes which resolved the problem. Several residents were provided technical assistance to help prevent future problems. Several home owners that were known to be feeding the coyotes were contacted and informed of the threat that they were creating for their neighbors. No further problems have been reported from the area, and the equipment was removed.

Just recently, the Ely pilot traveled to Cedar City, Utah and completed all of the training necessary to recertify the crew members in Nevada. Crew members will still be required to go back to Utah for recertification but only every other year, instead of every year. This will save both time and money.

During the week of January 28<sup>th</sup>, WS Fowler confirmed the loss of three ewes, valued at \$750. One ewe was killed by coyotes on one band of sheep and two others were killed on another nearby band. On the morning of January 31<sup>st</sup>, The Elko plane responded to the incidents. Seven coyotes were removed from the two bands of sheep, including one coyote that was being chased by a guard dog, in the middle of one of the bands. No further losses have been reported and WS Fowler is continuing to monitor the area.



During the month of January, Mountain Lion Specialists Jim Buhler and Casey Shields worked on Mount Moriah, by removing lions that were depredating Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. During the month, two large adult male lions were removed with the use of tracking hounds. Both lions were in very close proximity to wintering sheep. Both lions were skinned and transferred to the Ely NDOW Office.



## West District

During the month of January, WS Ben Miller was busy placing equipment around mule deer wintering areas and south facing slopes where California bighorn sheep reside during the winter on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). WS Miller is out every day, so it was no surprise when he found where a lion entered the protection area. WS Miller analyzed the lion's stride and tracks in the dirt, which indicated to WS Miller that a mature male lion had moved into the protection area, only days prior. WS Miller continued checking and resetting equipment during the next few days, then on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, WS Miller discovered that he captured an estimated 120 pound male lion in a trail snare. The lion had traveled in a somewhat straight path to an area that has both mule deer and bighorn sheep. WS Miller removed an additional ten coyotes with ground equipment. WS Miller is a true professional at protecting mule deer and bighorn sheep from offending lions and coyotes. WS Miller will continue to protect ungulate species on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project in Washoe County.

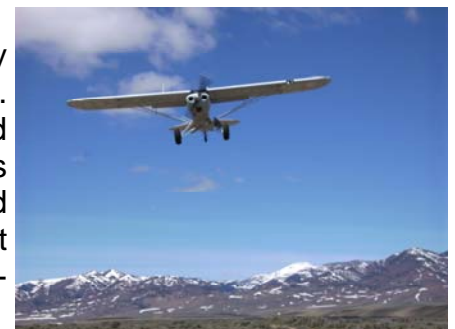


On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several sheep bands, in Pershing County. A sheep producer reported that one ewe (valued at \$100) had been killed by coyotes. During the flight, seven coyotes were removed. WS Koepke located several of the coyotes for the aerial crew. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, WS, NDOW and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, conducted the annual mid-winter waterfowl survey in the Truckee Meadows. During the survey, nearly 10,000 birds from various waterfowl species were counted by biologists. DS Spencer has participated in 16 mid-winter waterfowl surveys since the inception of the collaboration.

During the second week of January, WS John Peter was busy placing M-44s around several calving and winter sheep areas to protect them from coyote predation. On January 7<sup>th</sup>, WS Peter checked his M-44 line and removed 14 coyotes, an additional eight were removed later in the week. Several livestock producers commented on how effective WS Peter is when it comes to removing offending coyotes. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock.

On January 7<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several sheep bands, in Nye County. A sheep producer reported that three ewe's (valued at \$300) had been killed by coyotes. During the flight, one older male coyote was removed, which stopped the depredations. Both field experience and research support that territorial older male coyotes are usually most responsible for livestock killing. WS George Hansen provided valuable ground crew services, during the flight.



On Saturday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard volunteered for weekend service to drop off one plane for maintenance and pick up the other plane that was ready. Pilot Gossard knew that livestock producers were requesting aerial assistance and that any delay could result in livestock loss.

On January 14<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer, Wildlife Biologists (WB) Luke Barto and Zack Bowers, and WS Nick Smith completed an invasive European starling removal project, in Lyon County. A dairy producer

reported that he was losing several hundred pounds of livestock feed to starlings and the potential loss of milk production. A total of 5,000 European starlings were removed with the avicide DRC-1339. Of interest, Introduced in New York in the 1890s, as part of a plan to introduce to the U.S. all birds mentioned in the works of Shakespeare, European starlings have spread across the continental United States, northward to Alaska and the southern half of Canada, and southward into northern Mexico. They are native to Eurasia, but have also been introduced in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere.

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several calving areas and sheep bands, in Washoe County that were experiencing light livestock losses. During the flight, 13 coyotes were removed. WS Koepke contacted the livestock producers beforehand to see where the livestock were located, so when the plane showed up, work could be completed at the exact location where livestock were present. WS Koepke provided valuable ground crew services, locating over half of the coyotes removed by the aerial crew. The livestock producers were very pleased with the protection efforts and to date, no further livestock losses have occurred.

On January 17<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several calving areas and sheep bands, in Humboldt County, that were experiencing occasional livestock losses. During the flight, 30 coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided valuable ground crew services by locating many of the coyotes removed by the aerial crew. The livestock producers were very pleased with the protection efforts.

On Saturday January 19<sup>th</sup>, WS Koepke checked equipment around several calving areas in Churchill County. The result of the check was the removal of ten coyotes, taken with trail snares. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several calving and sheep bands, in Humboldt County, experiencing occasional livestock losses. During the flight, 23 coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided valuable ground crew services by locating many of the coyotes removed by the aerial crew. The livestock producers were very pleased with the protection efforts and to date, no further livestock losses have occurred.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around a calving area that reported the loss of five newborn calves (valued at \$2,000), in Humboldt County. During the flight, 15 coyotes were removed amongst the small vulnerable calves. WS Peter provided valuable ground crew services during the flight. The livestock producer contacted WS Peter and was pleased with the protection efforts as his livestock losses have ceased for the time being.

On January 29<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer and WB Bowers conducted a feedlot protection project on five large dairies, in Churchill County. The dairymen reported that birds were consuming feed and one dairy reported that each of his 5,000 dairy cows was producing 1 to 2 pounds of less milk, per cow, per day because the birds were stealing the food from the cows. Prior to treatment, DS Spencer and WB Bowers estimated that the dairies had 40,000 depredating starlings and black birds present. After the DRC-1339 treatment it was estimated 39,100 birds were removed and a follow up inspection by WB Bowers'



revealed fewer than 200 starlings remained or that 99.48% of the offending birds were removed. The dairymen were very pleased, two of which have decided to work with the Dairyman's Association and push for legislation to help fund a position specifically to address the bird problems in Churchill County.

During the month of January, WB Bowers continued work on the Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) for a Naval Air Station (NAS) in Northern NV. The WHA involved conducting structured surveys on the airfield and the surrounding area, as well as general observations. This data was collected for a 12 month period in order to determine seasonal and spatial trends of wildlife usage on the airfield and surrounding area. With the data collection portion complete, WB Bowers is/will analyze the data and write the WHA which will include recommendations regarding species management, habitat alterations, and agricultural management practices. WB Bowers will also continue surveys on and around the airfield in order to monitor for changes in wildlife presence and activity.

WB Bowers completed the Migratory Bird Damage Project Report for the renewal of the federal depredation permit for the above mentioned NAS. This included a report of all non-lethal methods utilized to deter and harass birds posing a potential threat to aviation safety on the airfield. WB Bowers spent many hours, during the month of January, working with propane cannons to discourage horned larks from using the airfield as a loafing area. The first two weeks of January brought sub-zero temperatures to the area which prohibited the cannons from functioning properly. A warm up the second half of the month enabled the cannons to function properly. It was found that the cannons will only limit horned larks from using a fairly small area directly around the cannons. However, when strategically placed they seem to keep the horned larks from the highest risk areas. WB Bowers also attended a safety briefing to give a description of the propane cannons and their purpose to airfield personnel. WB Bowers will continue to try to come up with a more efficient method of deterring the horned larks from the airfield.

Also during the month of January, a coyote was stuck on the airfield. This will be the first recorded incident of a coyote being struck by aircraft on this particular airfield. It's likely that this has happened before, but went unreported due to the lack of understanding of the importance of these issues at the airfield. It is fairly common for WS presence to increase awareness of the importance of reporting wildlife strikes on airfields which generally results in an increase in strike reporting. It is likely that continued awareness will lead to a continued increase in strike reporting until it eventually levels off.



Throughout the month of January, Qualified Airport Wildlife Biologist (WB) Luke Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, removing: nine pigeons, one European starling, five yellow bellied marmots and one muskrat. WB Barto utilized non-lethal harassment techniques to disperse: 128 ducks, 505 Canada geese, one great egret, one great blue heron and two black crowned night herons that were near the runways. WB Barto also transferred two feral/free ranging cats from the aforementioned airport to the Washoe County Animal Control for the safety of the animal as well as aviation.



WB Barto also continued with routine wildlife runway surveys which document wildlife abundance, frequency and general usage. The information is used to assess potential threats to aviation so that measures can be used to minimize the reasons that the wildlife are utilizing the airport.

During the month of January, WS Smith was busy protecting calves and sheep, in Lyon and Douglas Counties. WS Smith has equipment placed in various calving and winter sheep locations. WS Smith has a challenging job as many of the ranches requesting assistance cannot be flown, ever adaptive; WS Smith continues to solve livestock loss problems. Several ranchers have contacted DS Spencer with nothing but high praise for the valuable protection efforts provided by WS Smith. WS Smith will continue to protect his many livestock producers in Lyon and Douglas Counties from predation losses.



During the month of January, two domestic dogs (valued at \$1,000) in Sparks, were killed by coyotes. DS Spencer provided non-lethal technical assistance to help alleviate future pet losses, however, DS Spencer also realizes that public shooting and trapping are not allowed in urban sprawl areas, so pet losses will continue because urban dwelling coyotes are afforded protection from sport harvest. Since this past summer, nearly 60 pet dogs in the Sparks area have been killed, with some eaten by urban coyotes.



### **Developing Methods**

Nothing to report.

### **Valuing and Investing in People**

Nothing to report.

### **Information and Communication**

Nothing to report.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)**

Nothing to report.

### **Future Meetings and Events**

N-4 Grazing Board Meeting in Ely. February 14<sup>th</sup>. State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and DS Bennett to attend.

Nevada Board of Wildlife Commission Meeting in Las Vegas. February 1<sup>st</sup>, SD Jensen and DS Bennett to attend.

Nevada Board of Agriculture Meeting in Sparks. March 26<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen to attend.

USDA APHIS

# Wildlife Services



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