

June 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



[www.agri.nv.gov](http://www.agri.nv.gov)

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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 June, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **4.8** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$52.7** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$10.3** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **829** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$28,968** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$82,718** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During June, coyotes accounted for **\$51,852** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **145** 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 June, **26** samples were processed.

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

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During June, 2013, the State Office trap loaning program was suspended because of personnel deployed to Afghanistan. The State Office hopes to resume the trap loaning program in November-December. Technical assistance to assist Nevadans with alleviation of damage will still be provided, as well as response to reasonable imminent threats to human health and safety.

## East District



During the first week of June, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Nathan Fowler received a call concerning the loss of three lambs, to wolf predation. WS Fowler responded to the location and confirmed that coyotes had killed all three lambs. The value of the lambs was placed at \$300. WS Fowler, accompanied by the sheep owner, called a stand near the kill site. One adult coyote was called into very close range and removed with one well placed shot. The sheep owner was very pleased and excited, as he had never witnessed a coyote coming to a predator call. No wolf sign was found in the area, only coyote and dog tracks. In the recent past, Wildlife Services has responded to several calls concerning

possible wolf predation, which turned out to be coyote predation.

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett conducted a day long field inspection with WS Derril Fry, in southern Elko County. During the inspection, several bands of sheep were visited and contact was made with cooperators. WS Fry's sheep experienced record high lambing production this spring and WS Fry's cooperators were very pleased with all of WS Fry's hard work.



On June 4<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett conducted a day long field inspection with Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler, in southern Elko County. MLS Buhler was busy checking and confirming a lion predation issue on a band of sheep in the Diamond Mountain Range. MLS Buhler is doing a great job removing depredated lions in the East District.



On June 4<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott Little received a call concerning a problem with jackrabbits. The alfalfa farmer reported that he was experiencing severe damage from jackrabbits eating his alfalfa. The estimated loss was more than \$5,000. On the evening of June 6<sup>th</sup>, WS Little, WS Matt Spires and Crew Member (CM) Jerred Taylor responded to the ranch, in Nye County. With the use of shooting and spot lighting, more than 100 jackrabbits were removed. The rancher was very pleased with the help provided by the three Wildlife Services' employees.

On June 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, the East District utilized our agency helicopter, to respond to coyote depredations to sheep in high altitude areas of Elko County. The result of the effort were the removal of several coyotes from in and around the sheep. This is the first time our agency-owned OH-6 helicopter has been used in the field. The OH-6 helicopter was acquired with a federal to federal transfer from the Border Patrol, at no cost to WS. This turbine helicopter can fly at higher altitudes and in rougher terrain that sometimes cannot be worked with a fixed wing aircraft.



On June 14<sup>th</sup>, CM Wayne Rowley received a call from a detention center for troubled youth near Elko, Nevada. The caller said there was a badger running around on the property and they were in fear that one of the detained boys might get bitten. CM Rowley responded immediately to the location. Upon arrival, CM Rowley spotted the badger. CM Rowley was able to use a control pole to capture the badger and then placed it in a cage trap. The badger was then transported off the property. The detention facility was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services and CM Rowley. CM Rowley also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future problems.



### West District



On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, a livestock producer from Humboldt County reported that two lions had killed 11 goats, one cat and a neighbor's dog, during the past few weeks. The small ranch had utilized sport hunters with hounds to remove the depredating lion, but were unsuccessful. WS John Peter inspected the situation and placed equipment in the area, but eventually found where the two lions had left the immediate area, so after two days, he pulled the equipment. If the lions return and cause damage, WS Peter will respond.

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, a livestock producer from Washoe County reported coyote problems near his many lamb bands. Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around the sheep bands, resulting in the removal of three coyotes. The coyotes were in close proximity of the lamb bands and to date, no further livestock losses have been reported. Protection efforts will be ongoing until the lamb bands travel into neighboring California allotments. WS Doug Koepke provided valuable ground crew services.



On June 7<sup>th</sup>, WS Ben Miller continued protection efforts on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). Previously, WS Miller found where a female lion had moved into the protection area and was traveling near locations where it was advantageous for trail snare sets. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, WS Miller inspected trail snares and discovered that he captured a large female lion. WS Miller has noticed more lion movement in the protection area lately, along with scorching temperatures. With the hot temperatures, lions really amp up on their prey consumption, primarily because their kills rot and desiccate quickly. WS Miller will continue his protection efforts.



On June 10<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lamb bands, in Lander County. One livestock producer reported the loss of two lambs (valued at \$200). During the flight, the aircrew removed three coyotes. Lamb bands in Lander County are very wide spread, making it difficult for WS George Hansen do the work that used to be covered by two trappers. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During the first two weeks of June, DS Jack Spencer, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Luke Barto, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Biologists and volunteers rounded up flightless Canada geese in urban areas of Washoe and Douglas Counties. The annual Canada goose round up was initiated in

1986 and this year had the lowest number of geese observed since the inception of the Canada goose round ups. This is great news for aviation safety, as fewer birds are likely to be struck by aircraft. A total of 326 flightless Canada geese were captured in corral traps, banded, transferred over to NDOW, which will translocate the geese to wildlife management areas, in eastern Nevada. The local media covered the round-ups and made positive comments about protecting airports. A big “thanks” go out to NDOW and all the volunteers who helped make the annual project a success.



On June 11<sup>th</sup>, WS Nick Smith inspected ground equipment that had been placed around lamb bands that had some earlier coyote problems, in Lyon County. Upon inspection, WS Smith removed two coyotes with M-44's. Even with temperatures approaching the 100 degree mark, M-44's are still a valuable tool for removing depredating coyotes. The livestock producer was very pleased with WS Smith's protection efforts, who will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, the West District used the WS helicopter to respond to coyote depredations to sheep in Lander County, removing coyotes from in and around the sheep. The effort provided much needed relief for the livestock producer, the West District aircrew, and WS Hansen, who provided ground crew efforts.



On June 17<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lamb bands, in Lander County. A livestock producer reported that two lambs (valued at \$200) had been killed by coyotes. During the flight, six coyotes were removed. WS Hansen provided valuable ground support, during aerial operations. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer pulled all equipment placed on the NDOW Virginia Mountains bighorn sheep project (hunt unit 022) as the goals of the California bighorn sheep project had been met, the project officially ended.

On June 26<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several lamb bands, in Lander County. A livestock producer reported coyotes in and around his sheep bands. During the flight, two coyotes were removed. WS Hansen provided valuable ground support, during aerial operations. Protection efforts will be ongoing.



During the last week of June, WS Peter was traveling to Lander County and riding into remote backcountry on his mules, to cover several lamb bands. WS Peter will continue to provide protection throughout the summer into the fall months. With the large fires last year, livestock have had to move into different areas and as always, trappers follow the herd.

During the last two weeks of June, WS Koepke was responding to numerous livestock complaints, in Churchill County. There are many sheep and cattle producers in the county and many have irrigated fields which are great for feed, however, they also have high numbers of coyotes that often threaten their livelihood. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock throughout his large work area.





During mid-June, DS Spencer began protecting a local airport from the threat of wildlife strikes. WB Barto is currently deployed to Afghanistan for four months, as such, the airport coverage falls to DS Spencer. DS Spencer, also a Qualified Airport Biologist, will be visiting the airport several times a week, monitoring and protecting aviation safety from wildlife threats.

During the month of June, WB Zack Bowers continued to deter great blue herons, mallards, and coyotes from using/crossing the airfield of a military installation. In an effort to keep these species from crossing the airfield, WB Bowers has utilized harassment with propane cannons, vehicle, voice and physically chasing them off. Utilizing these methods, WB Bowers harassed three mallards, one great blue heron, two great egrets and one double-crested cormorant from the airfield. WB Bowers has the ability to utilize pyrotechnics on the airfield as well. However, due to the dry conditions WB Bowers has refrained from using them. In addition to non-lethal methods, WB Bowers lethally removed three coyotes, after witnessing an increase in coyote activity, on the airfield. Coyotes present on the airfield have the potential to cause damaging strikes to aircraft. Coyotes also quickly habituate to non-lethal methods and it becomes necessary to reinforce with lethal methods.



### New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

### Valuing and Investing in Employees

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, WS Virgil Fullerton retired from the Nevada Wildlife Services program. WS Fullerton worked for more than 28 years protecting livestock, in Eastern Nevada. A retirement party was held in Ely, Nevada on the evening of June 27<sup>th</sup> with more than thirty people attending. WS Fullerton's experience, hard work and dedication will be missed. We would like to wish Virgil Fullerton all of the best in the coming years.



### Information and Communication



On June 27<sup>th</sup>, the East District held its annual district meeting in Ely, Nevada. District meetings serve as an opportunity to provide employees with training including firearms and pesticide use, which are fundamental to the job. State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl attended the meeting and provided much of the training. A phenomenal BBQ lunch was prepared by an unidentified Ely pilot, MLS Buhler, and others.





On Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, WS Billy Taylor, WS Little and DS Bennett provided six demonstrations at the annual Cub Scout jamboree, held in McGill, Nevada. More than one hundred scouts and adults attended the all-day event. Information was provided concerning the Wildlife Services program, predators and tracking. The event went very well with all the young scouts very interested in the topics. Several pelts, skulls and track casts were provided by Wildlife Services for the scouts to look at and handle.

## Emerging Trends/Issues

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, WB Barto deployed to an airbase in Afghanistan as part of a USDA project to protect military aircraft from bird and other wildlife hazards. Bird strikes and other wildlife can cause extensive damage to aircraft and endanger the lives of our service members. Examples of the local threats to aviation safety include



jackals, jungle cats, bee eaters, laughing doves, Cape hares and even feral dogs. During June, in addition to responding



Jackal

to these potential threats, WB Barto also conducted runway surveys, habitat manipulation and analysis of the wildlife hazards. From what the State Office has heard back, WB Barto hit the ground running and hasn't let up. As with the "troops", our thoughts and prayers follow WB Barto and we look forward to his safe return.

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, SB Sengl conducted a site visit at a Senior Citizen park, in Sparks, NV. Numerous elderly folks reported being attacked by hawks. The primary hawk responsible for the attacks was actually a female Coopers Hawk (accipiter), defending a 60 yard territory around her nest, gliding down and chest bumping folks in the head and neck. Coopers Hawks aggressively defend their chicks from any threat until the chicks have left the nest and are capable of living independently. After witnessing the attacks and the inability of the elderly folks to avoid the dive bombing, SB Sengl conversed with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) who had also conducted a site visit earlier. As the Cooper's hawks would not cease their activity until after the chicks were flying independently, on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, SB Sengl climbed up the tree and safely gathered up all five chicks. The chicks were transferred to the Wild Animal Infirmary so that they could be checked by a veterinarian and raised until they could be released back into the wild. SB Sengl then removed the nest to ensure that if the birds re-nested, it would be elsewhere. The chicks were judged to be in good condition and at this time, are already beginning to fly in their safety netted enclosure. As expected, removal of the chicks and nest ceased the aggressive action towards people. Many thanks to the folks at the Wild Animal Infirmary and NDOW for their assistance. Picture courtesy of the Wild Animal Infirmary.





During the month of June, suburban residents in Washoe County reported the loss of five pets (valued at \$2,500) to coyotes. During the summer, coyotes that seem to cause the most damage are adult coyotes, feeding a family of growing pups. As trapping and shooting coyotes in urban areas is illegal, resolving coyote issues can be extremely challenging. Non-lethal technical advice was administered to homeowners to help better protect pets from coyote predation.

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

Nothing to Report

### **Future Meetings and Events**

August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. NDOW Commission Meeting in Fallon. SD Jensen to attend.



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# Wildlife Services



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