

August 2013

The Trapline

United States Department of
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



Cooperating with:

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Animal Industries



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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 Animal Industries (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 August, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **4.1** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$41.1** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$8.3** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **167** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$3,393** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$7,549** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During August, coyotes accounted for **\$3,698** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **119** 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 August, **44** samples were processed.

The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of August, 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 August, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Scott MacDonald confirmed the loss of six lambs to coyote predation. The value of the lambs was placed at \$600. The damage occurred in a rural part of Eureka County. WS MacDonald utilized traps to remove nine coyotes near the kill sites. No further losses were reported on the two bands of sheep experiencing the predation. WS MacDonald removed a total of 28 coyotes during the month of August while protecting six bands of sheep in his assigned work area. WS MacDonald also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.



During the first week of August, WS Derril Fry confirmed several hundred dollars in damage to hay fields, by badgers. The damage occurred in Elko County, near Jiggs Nevada. WS Fry used leg hold traps to remove one adult badger, bringing an end to the damage. WS Fry also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future damage.



On August 10th, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler received a call from a sheep producer in Elko County concerning a problem with a mountain lion. On Sunday, August 11th, MLS Buhler loaded up his gear and traveled to the remote location, north of Wells, Nevada. With the assistance of Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley, MLS Buhler confirmed the loss of two adult ewes and three lambs to lion predation. The value of the sheep was placed at \$875. The following morning MLS Buhler and CM Rowley found the lion's track. Six well trained dry land tracking hounds were put on the track. Several hours later the dogs treed the offending lion. One well-placed shot ended the damage. The owner of the sheep just happened to be in the area and witnessed the capture from across a canyon. The sheep producer was very happy for both employees' willingness to respond on short notice and on a Sunday. No further losses have been reported and technical assistance was provided. MLS Buhler and CM Rowley skinned the 160 pound male lion, which was in excellent condition, and transferred the hide to the Ely Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Office.



During the first week of August WS Matt Spires confirmed the loss of one lamb to bobcat predation. WS Spires also suspected that several other lambs killed during July were also killed by the bobcat. The damage occurred in northern White Pine County and value of the lamb was placed at \$100. WS Spires set traps near the kill site and captured one large male bobcat on August 12th. The bobcat was skinned and transferred over to NDOW the same week. No further losses have been reported and WS Spires will continue to monitor the many bands of sheep in his work area.





During the month of August, WS Mac Crome was busy protecting several bands of sheep in his assigned work area. WS Crome did an excellent job, with no reported losses for the month. WS Crome did remove seven coyotes, during the month, in close proximity to several bands of sheep.

During August, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of five lambs, valued at \$625. WS Little used his well-trained coyote decoy dogs to help locate and lure in two adult coyotes. WS Little was able to shoot both coyotes bringing an end to their damage. WS Little also utilized traps to remove an additional coyote. No further losses have been reported. The sheep producer is very pleased with all of WS Little's hard work.

During the month of August WS Derril Fry confirmed the loss of four lambs valued at \$500 to coyote predation. The damage occurred south of Elko, Nevada. WS Fry was able to remove eight coyotes utilizing traps, snares, and calling. WS Fry also requested the assistance of the airplane. Since the Elko pilot is on sick leave, the Ely pilot has been filling in. The plane was able to remove several coyotes near the kill sites. The combined efforts of the Ely plane and WS Fry brought an end to the damage. WS Fry also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations in an effort to help prevent future predation issues.



Since flying has been slow during the hot summer months both the Elko Crew Member and the Ely Crew Member have been doing field work. The Ely Crew Member has been protecting two bands of sheep just north east of Ely, Nevada in White Pine County. One lamb was confirmed killed by coyotes and the Ely Crew Member was able to trap two coyotes near the kill site. No further losses have been reported. CM Wayne Rowley confirmed the loss of one adult ewe and one lamb to coyote predation near Elko, Nevada. CM Rowley was able to call and shoot the offending coyote, bringing an end to the damage. It is very common for both East District pilots and crew members to help with field work, during slow flying times. Their willingness to help out is greatly appreciated by the East District Supervisor.



Heavy rains finally arrived in eastern Nevada the last few days of August. Much of the areas have seen little or no rain all summer and as a result, flash flooding has been observed in many locations. Most sheep producers are in the process of getting their lambs ready to ship to the markets for sale in the coming weeks. Hopefully the producers will not be affected by the flooding.



West District

On August 3rd, a small sheep producer in Lyon County reported that some type of predator had killed 17 sheep (\$3,400) at her residence and only ate a small portion of one of the depredated sheep. WS Nick Smith inspected the situation later that day and confirmed that one, possibly two lions had caused the livestock damage. WS Smith had planned on setting equipment out with a follow up of trailing hounds the following morning, however, the damage site became a media circus with report-



ers from local TV stations reporting the events of the day. Also night spot lighters and local sport hunters were out in force around the property trying to take the lion(s). WS Smith pulled away from the situation and the following night, returned with a thermal imaging camera to see if he could locate the offending lion(s) however none returned. WS Smith has had numerous lion complaints this past summer and during the past few years the lion complaints have risen in Lyon County. WS Smith will continue to protect livestock in this area.

On August 12th, a large local airport reported a large “pack” of raccoons near the airport’s runways posing a potential threat to aviation safety. One of the airport Operations’ managers snapped a picture of several of the raccoons climbing over an eight foot fence lined with barbed wire. District Supervisor (DS) Jack Spencer inspected the situation and placed cage traps in the immediate area, resulting in the removal of 10 raccoons in three days. No further raccoon problems have been reported and the airport managers were pleased with the quick response and protection efforts. DS Spencer also contacted The Truckee River Flood Control Project about property near the airport that was over irrigated and attracting several hundred geese. With DS Spencer’s recommendation, the property managers made corrective actions and the potentially hazardous geese left the area. Habitat manipulation works well to resolve wildlife complaints at airports. DS Spencer will continue to assist the airport.



During the month of August, WS John Peter was busy riding mule back around several bands of sheep, in Lander County. WS Peter has leghold traps and trail snares placed around the sheep and each morning, before sunrise, he calls around the sheep. During the month, WS Peter removed several coyotes in response to occasional reported livestock. Losses seem to have slowed considerably since WS Peter began providing protection efforts.

On August 20th, WS Doug Koepke conducted a raven removal project in Pershing County. Several ranchers reported that ravens were causing damage to cattle and consuming feed. WS Koepke placed treated egg baits that resulted in the removal of the depredating ravens. The ranchers were pleased with the protection efforts and to date, no further livestock losses have been reported.

During the month of August, WS Koepke was busy working on coyote complaints in Churchill County. Most of the coyote complaints had been with small sheep and poultry producers. WS Koepke removed several coyotes and all livestock losses ceased for the time being. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock for his many producers in his work area.

On Sunday, August 18th, a livestock cooperater from Lyon County reported that two ewes (valued at \$400) had been killed by a large predator. WS Smith inspected the carcasses and determined that a black bear had killed the ewes. Although the weather was hot, WS Smith’s expert hounds trailed the 200 pound black bear for nearly an hour before it was treed and removed. To date no further

livestock losses have been reported.

On August 29th, a livestock producer from Lyon County reported that a predator had killed a large ram sheep (valued at \$1,500). WS Smith inspected the situation later that morning and confirmed that a large male lion had caused the damage. WS Smith released his hounds and for over an hour, they trailed the lion which WS Smith removed. The old male lion was estimated to weigh over 160 pounds. The livestock producer was very pleased with WS Smith livestock protection efforts and his great work ethic.



During the month of August, WS George Hansen was busy trapping on several sheep producers, in Lander County. WS Hansen has recently experienced minimal lamb losses, mainly in part because of his continued livestock protection efforts. WS Hansen will continue to protect sheep bands, in Lander County.

During two weeks in August, Pilot Wes Gossard received Instructor Pilot training. Pilot Gossard conducted the classroom and flying training in Arizona and in the near future, Pilot Gossard will complete his final Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) check ride.

During the month of August, WS Ben Miller was busy working on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). During the month, WS Miller found where a lion had moved into the protection area. Not long afterwards, WS Miller removed a large female lion (identified with a yellow ear tag) with the use of a trail snare. WS Miller also removed several coyotes and will continue to protect mule deer, antelope and bighorn sheep in the protection area. WS Miller also reports good numbers of mule deer bucks and bighorn sheep for lucky hunters this fall.

During the month of August, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers continued to deter great blue herons, mallards, coyotes and other wildlife from using/crossing the airfield. 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 thirty three mallards, one great-blue heron, and one great egret 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 seven coyotes after observing a continued increase in coyote activity on the airfield. Coyotes present on the airfield have the potential to cause damaging strikes to aircraft and aircrew. Coyotes quickly habituate to non-lethal methods and it becomes necessary to use lethal control.



Also during the month of August, WB Bowers observed an increase in turkey vulture activity around the airfield. WB Bowers maintains a wildlife observations/activity log in addition to conducting structured surveys in order to note changes in wildlife abundance and or behavior. As a result, WB Bowers can go back through records, since the time that work was initiated at the airfield, in order to help determine the reason for presence/absence or changes in behavior of species of concern. WB

Bowers will continue to monitor the situation.

New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

Valuing and Investing in Employees

On August 1st, Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl rode along with MLS Buhler who was investigating a potential lion complaint. Although the country was covered with mules and hounds, no sign of a lion was found. SB Sengl was thankful for the opportunity none the less and learned a lot.

Information and Communication

On August 2nd and 3rd, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the NDOW Commission Meeting in Fallon, NV.

On August 6th, SD Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Agriculture meeting in Elko, NV.

On August 22nd, SB Sengl provided a required Initial Airport Wildlife Hazard Management Training course for airport personnel in Elko County. The day long training requires a review of wildlife strikes from a national perspective, as well as locally. In addition, the airport's wildlife hazard assessment and wildlife hazard management plan are reviewed, FAA guidance is updated, as well as other key elements outlined in Advisor Circular 150/5200-36A, appendix D. Although a lot of material is covered over a full day, the airport was greatly appreciative.

On August 23rd and 24th, DS Bennett, SB Sengl, WS's Little and Billy Taylor attended the Nevada Trappers Association Rendezvous in Elko, NV. Presentations were provided by all WS' employees covering the program, trapping and disease awareness. See pictures on next page.



On August 26th, WS Paul (Randy) Evans began working in the East District. WS Evans has been with the Wildlife Services program, in West Virginia, for the past fifteen years. WS Evans has a great deal of experience handling wildlife issues, primarily coyote depredation problems. We would like to welcome WS Evans to the Nevada Wildlife Services program.

Throughout the month of August, WB Luke Barto continued protecting military aviation on his temporary duty assignment in Afghanistan. He continues to analyze data and work on the wildlife hazard assessment, guiding habitat manipulation practices, and conducting direct control to reinforce all non-lethal approaches. Of interest, the number of wildlife strikes have been dropping year to year, reflecting the success and importance of the work that WB Barto and his predecessors have been doing. The safety zones were mowed at the end of the reporting period in preparation for peak bird migration throughout September. Additionally, nearly 70 bird species have been submitted to the Smithson-



ian Institute to further aid in the identification of bird strike remnants. The importance of this is that it is difficult to manage for an unknown species.

Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report

Future Meetings and Events

September 4th, Sage-grouse meeting in Reno, SD Jensen to attend.

September 20-21, NDOW Board of Wildlife Commissioners meeting in Las Vegas, SD Jensen to attend.



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