

February 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

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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 February, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **8.3** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$124** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$22** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **208** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$6,771** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$34,335** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During February, coyotes accounted for **\$26,052** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **744** 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 February, **66** samples were processed.

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

Resource Protection

State Office

During February, 2013, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **13** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: bobcats (**1**), skunks (**9**), rabbits (**1**), ground squirrels (**1**) and raccoons (**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



During the first week of February, a cattle rancher in northern Elko County contacted Wildlife Services, concerning the loss of five calves, valued at \$3,000. The rancher reported seeing as many as twenty coyotes in and around his cattle. The rancher also has a history of very high losses to coyotes. During two different flights, the Elko plane removed sixty coyotes from the pastures that the rancher was calving in. Very high numbers of coyotes can result in major losses to producers. The rancher was very happy with the results and expressed his appreciation to the East District Supervisor.



On February 4th, a sheep producer in eastern Eureka County contacted the East District Office, concerning a problem with a mountain lion. The rancher reported that one of his sheep herders had called and said that a lion had killed three yearling ewe sheep and that the lion was lying under a cedar tree, near one of the kills. District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett and Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler responded to the remote location. Upon arrival, the sheep herder was spotted on a ridge near the band of sheep. DS Bennett and MLS Buhler walked over to talk to the herder. The herder pointed to a small cedar tree about 100 yards away. The lion was **still** lying under the tree near one of the depredated sheep. One well placed shot dispatched the lion. MLS Buhler determined that the lion was a two year old female. The lion was skinned and turned into the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Office in Ely, later that day. No further losses have been reported. The sheep owner was very pleased with the quick response provided by Wildlife Services. It is very uncommon for a lion to act this way and MLS Buhler reported that only twice in his 35 year career has he seen a lion behave in this manner.



On February 8th, the Elko plane responded to a large cattle ranch, in northern Elko County. The rancher reported that coyotes had killed at least five calves, valued at more than \$2,500. During the morning's flight, more than 30 coyotes were removed including one group of at least nine coyotes in the pasture where the damage occurred. No further losses have been reported and the rancher was very pleased with the results.

On February 8th, a homeowner near Ely, Nevada stopped by the East District Office and reported that coyotes had been coming into his yard and killing his poultry. The reporting party said that over the last several months he had lost more than 75 chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, and guinea fowl, valued at almost \$800. The home owner said he had tried putting his poultry up at night but the coyotes began killing them in the day time. Since the incidents occurred at the outskirts of town, it was decided to use the Ely plane to solve the problem. On the morning of February 11th, with the assistance of Wildlife Specialist (WS) Matt Spires, the plane removed one adult coyote. WS Spires observed the coyote leave a yard, next door to the home owner's property, that was experiencing the damage. No further losses have been reported. Technical assistance was provided in the form of non lethal recommendations to help

prevent future problems. The homeowner was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services.

On February 11th, a sheep producer called the East District office, reporting that coyotes had killed three of his sheep. The value of the three ewes, was placed at \$750. On February 12th, the Ely plane responded to the location, in Nye County. During the morning's flight, ten coyotes were removed. No further losses have been reported from the two bands of sheep.

On February 12th, the Elko plane responded to a request for assistance regarding a coyote problem. The cattle rancher, in central Elko County, reported that coyotes had killed one of his newborn calves and he was seeing many coyotes in his calving pastures, harassing cows while they were birthing. During the morning's aerial operation, 42 coyotes were removed, bringing an end to the problem. With coyote densities this high, it would be almost impossible to stay in business without assistance. The rancher was very happy with the help he received from the Elko aerial crew and Wildlife Services.



On February 13th, the Elko plane responded to a call for assistance from a cattle rancher, in northern Eureka County. The rancher reported that coyotes had killed one of his calves, valued at more than \$500. During the morning's aerial operation, 24 coyotes were removed. Many times, coyotes from surrounding areas transition to calving pastures, causing losses to occur. Without the assistance of Wildlife Services, losses would be much higher.

On February 19th, the Elko plane responded to a call concerning the loss of one calf in southern Elko County. During the morning's flight, six coyotes were removed in the pasture that the calf was depredated including two coyotes that were feeding on the carcass. No further losses have been reported and the rancher was very pleased with the help provided by Wildlife Services.

On February 26th, the Ely plane responded to a sheep complaint, in Lincoln County. WS Billy Taylor had confirmed the loss of one ewe sheep, valued at \$250, to coyote predation. When the plane arrived, WS Taylor was able to locate a pair of coyotes near the kill. WS Taylor was able to guide the plane to the coyotes. Both coyotes were removed, bringing an end to the damage. WS Taylor also removed three additional coyotes, utilizing traps and snares. No further losses have been reported.

West District

On February 5th, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several winter sheep areas, in Lander County. Livestock losses have been minimal with WS George Hansen's trapping efforts, but during the past week, several groups of coyotes moved in and around the sheep bands. During the flight, 11 coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On February 7th, the Nevada State Department of Agriculture in Reno, reported that a sick, blind and foaming at the mouth raccoon was wandering aimlessly at their facility in Reno. DS Jack Spencer responded to the call and captured the sick raccoon, euthanized it and turned it over to the disease lab for rabies testing. The sick raccoon did not test positive for rabies.



During the week of February 5th thru February 8th, WS Hansen investigated a livestock situation where six sheep, valued at \$1,200, had been killed by a large male lion. WS Hansen placed trail snares in the immediate vicinity of the dead sheep. On February 8th, WS Hansen captured the depredating 150 pound tom, in a trail snare. No additional livestock losses have been reported, since the removal of the lion. The livestock producer was extremely pleased with WS Hansen's prompt results.

On February 8th, WS Doug Koepke was busy checking trail snares he had placed out around calving areas, in several western Nevada Counties. During the long day of equipment inspection, WS Koepke removed 11 coyotes. Several of WS Koepke's cooperators recently expressed their appreciation to his supervisor about the quality of protection efforts they receive from WS Koepke.

During the month of February, WS Nick Smith was assisting a rancher in Lyon County with beaver problems. The beavers had built dams across a river that would impede the flow of water in the upcoming irrigation season starting March 1st. Normally, WS does not conduct beaver removal; however, occasionally NDOW requests assistance from WS to help agricultural producers. During the month, WS Smith employed the use of trail snares and conibears, removing 18 problem beavers from around the damage site. On February 27th, WS Smith assisted an NDOW explosives technician who blew several of the, then, unoccupied beaver dams to restore flow. To date, no further beaver problems have been reported in the immediate vicinity. The producer was pleased with the results.



During the week of February 11th, through February 14th, DS Spencer conducted a feral pig project on private property, in northern Humboldt County. The benefits of the feral pig project are the submission of blood and tissue samples from pigs for disease testing, and reduction of crop damage. WS Peter had been pre-baiting several sites with specialty hay, where feral pig sign was previously observed. On February 11th, DS Spencer and WS John Peter inspected the bait sites and removed five feral hogs by employing trailing hounds and sight shooting. On February 12th, DS Spencer called in a large boar, which was promptly removed. On February 13th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around a location that was thought to harbor the last remaining pigs. Immediately upon inspection, the aerial crew located a group of feral swine and a large group of coyotes fleeing from a recently deceased cow carcass. In a short period of time, six feral pigs and 14 coyotes were removed. The deceased cow had the calf half way out of the birthing canal before it died, but it was not known if it died of natural causes, or if it was killed. The State USDA Veterinary Medical Officer was also present to observe disease collection efforts. WS Peter provided crucial pre-baiting and scouting efforts to pin point the exact location of the feral pigs.



During February, NDOW contacted WS on various urban coyote complaints, in northern Nevada. On one such call, NDOW requested assistance with a coyote that killed a dog, in a Carson City park. WS Smith inspected the situation and the coyote had already left the area, so not much could be done aside from technical assistance. The event made it through the local news media in Carson City, much like it did in Reno when pet loss to coyotes spiked, in the previous months. Urban coyote problems will, no doubt, continually increase in Northern Nevada as with most urbanized areas.

During the month of February, WS Koepke was pulled in every direction, by his many cattle producers requesting assistance, to stop ravens from pecking eyes out in newborn calves. During the

month, WS Koepke confirmed the loss of three calves, valued at \$2,356, and reports of several other calves injured. WS Koepke placed out treated DRC-1339 egg baits on numerous cattle ranches, in several counties, to resolve their raven problems. The cattle producers were pleased with WS Koepke's protection efforts. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On February 26th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several calving areas, in Humboldt County. Livestock losses have been minimal; however, one rancher reported a calf was killed, valued at \$700, the night prior. WS Peter sent the aerial crew directly to the location of the dead calf, which had seven coyotes eating it. The offending coyotes were promptly removed. During the flight, 29 coyotes were removed. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On February 27th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation, around several calving areas, in Humboldt County. Two calves, valued at \$1,400, had been previously killed by coyotes. The aerial crew was inspecting newborn calves from the air when they observed four coyotes chasing a newborn calf. The aerial crew immediately removed the coyotes. During the flight, 14 coyotes were removed. Protection efforts will be ongoing.



In the past month, DS Spencer received numerous coyote complaints, in the Reno/Sparks area. One homeowner reported that two dogs, valued at \$1,000, were killed by coyotes. In addition, an NDOW Warden reported that a homeowner had a coyote in her front yard, eating on a house cat; and a concerned Sparks' parent reported that a coyote was seen in a school playground. On Saturday February 16th, DS Spencer made a calling stand near a school that resulted in the removal of one large coyote. To date, no additional coyote sightings have been seen near the school; however, other less life threatening coyote calls will likely continue in the Reno-Sparks area.

On February 28th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a long aerial operation around sheep and cattle ranches, in Lyon County. Livestock cooperators requested aerial work, because of calving and lambing activities currently underway. During the aerial operation, one coyote was removed. In addition to the aerial work, WS Smith has leghold traps, trail snares and M-44's set to protect the livestock, which is likely why the aerial crew didn't encounter many coyotes. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During the month of February, WS Miller was busy setting and resetting equipment around areas of wintering mule deer, on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project. WS Miller removed several coyotes in the mule deer wintering areas. WS Miller has reported that the mild temperatures in the past month has melted the majority of the snow and 50 degree temperatures have actually dispersed deer out across the unit. WS Miller will continue to protect mule deer and bighorn sheep.

During the month of February, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers continued work on the Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) for a Naval Air Station (NAS), in Northern NV. At this point, WB Bowers is analyzing the survey data for trends while writing the WHA. A goal of the WHA, is to provide actionable information to the NAS, e.g. recommendations regarding species management, habitat alterations, and agricultural management practices, for improved safety of the aviators. WB Bowers

will also continue surveys on and around the airfield in order to monitor for changes in wildlife presence and activity.

During the month of February, WB Bowers continued working with the propane cannons on the airfield in order to deter horned larks from using the area. When strategically placed, the propane cannons seem to keep the horned larks from the highest risk areas. Also, WB Bowers has witnessed common ravens altering their flight paths around the airfield as a result of the propane cannons going off. Common ravens are fairly intelligent (for birds) and recognize the loud booms as a potential threat. Coyote activity seemed to decrease on the airfield for a while as well. WB Bowers continued to actively harass horned larks with the vehicle and will continue to do so as long as needed. Hopefully with the warming weather, the majority of the horned larks will move on as they did last year, during the survey portion of the WHA. WB Bowers also attended a safety briefing to provide an update on wildlife activities.

Throughout the month of February, WB Luke Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, removing: 14 pigeons, three striped skunks, five yellow bellied marmots, one muskrat and one feral/free ranging domestic cat which was transferred over to the custody of the Washoe County Animal Control for the safety of the flying public, and the animal. WB Barto also utilized non-lethal harassment techniques to disperse: 41 ducks and 17 Canada geese.

WB Barto also continued with routine runway-surveys that assess aviation safety threat abundance and frequency on/around the airfield. It is important to continue structured surveillance of wildlife activities, in order to recognize possible threats and be proactive in preventing strikes. In February, WB Barto began quarterly night surveys with the use of a flir camera, to assess nocturnal wildlife activity on the airfield. Nocturnal birds, such as owls and nighthawks and mammals, such as coyotes, skunks and raccoons are most active at night and can pose a risk to aviation safety in the late night thru early morning hours.

The week of February 18th, WB Barto was notified of several large flocks of gulls crossing the runways at the above mentioned airport. For the past three years, WB Barto has managed damage threats to aviation from two different colonies of California gulls, which continually fly across runways between nesting and feeding areas. Following further investigation, WB Barto found 300-400 gulls staging at one of the nesting locations, as in previous years. Gulls are expected to continue to cross the runways in the coming months at low altitudes to access feeding locations, which will likely be utilized throughout the nesting season. Additionally, any young gulls hatched and fledged, in close proximity to the airport, are not strong fliers and unaware of the threat of aircraft. Juveniles are the most common age group to be involved in strikes to aircraft. Removal of the initial attraction (nesting locations, one of which is in the process of being altered) would require the gulls to nest at alternative locations, and thus not cross runways. Of interest, gulls are among the most common and damaging species to be involved in wildlife/aircraft collisions nationwide.



WB Barto also met with human resources, from the prior mentioned airport, to discuss teaching an introductory “Managing for Wildlife Hazards on the Airfield” class. The class will be available to airport personnel and will aid in identifying wildlife species, the threats they pose to aircraft, the management techniques used to protect aviation safety and knowing when/how to report wildlife strikes.

New and Developing Methods

Several raptor species have been noted occupying a local International airport and are wise to the Bal-chatri trapping method. In response to this, WB Barto constructed a modified-two component, Swedish Goshawk trap to assist in capturing the potentially hazardous birds and translocating them to a safer, suitable habitat.



Valuing and Investing in Employees

Nothing to Report

Information and Communication

On February 1st, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and DS Bennett attended the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commission Meeting in Las Vegas.

On February 14th, DS Bennett attended the N-4 Grazing Board Meeting in Ely.

Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report.

Future Meetings and Events

Wildlife Damage Management Committee Meeting, in Sparks. March 14th-16th, SD Jensen and DSs Spencer and Bennett to attend.

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

USDA APHIS

Wildlife Services



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