

UC Agriculture & Natural Resources

Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference

Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58z0t7wt>

Journal

Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference, 19(19)

ISSN

0507-6773

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Publication Date

2000

DOI

10.5070/V419110155

A VISION FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT: My vision that vertebrate pest control is applied ecology has come a long way since my first field baiting for rats in 1939. Three events are especially important. First, the Vertebrate Pest Conferences were established to provide published information and exchange of views about animal control. Second, on December 19, 1985, the Denver Wildlife Research Center, in the Department of Interior, was transferred to the Department of Agriculture and became the National Wildlife Research Center. Third was when the Wildlife Management Institute finally allowed The Wildlife Society to hold separate annual meetings. This led to the Society recognizing the ecological importance of animal damage control in human-modified environments where the outcome must be managed—not left to nature.

KEY WORDS: animal control, ecology of animal damage, Wildlife Management Institute, The Wildlife Society, National Wildlife Research Center

Proc. 19th Vertebr. Pest Conf. (T.P. Salmon & A.C. Crabb, Eds.) Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. 2000.

I am honored at being invited to review my vision of wildlife management, and I hope I can provide encouragement to all of you to vigorously pursue yours. You would not be here if you did not have a strong vision about animal damage control. We have come a long way. It is very rewarding for me to see such a roomful of people today who are interested in improving the vision of this field of wildlife management. The public needs a more enlightened outlook on man's relationship with wildlife in human-modified conditions.

I did my first field testing with rat baits in 1939. At that time there were few researchers concerned with animal damage management except for a handful of pioneers at the Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC), which had just been transferred from the Biological Survey of USDA to become the Fish and Wildlife Service in USDI.

I have witnessed a great metamorphosis in the vertebrate pest control aspects of wildlife management during my life. I will be 83 in April, so you know I have seen a huge growth of our field. It used to be a disorganized secretive field of science without any distinct niche of its own. Today, with the ingenuity of all of you wildlife damage workers, folks from universities, and especially the National Wildlife Research Center, the momentum of this vision of wildlife management is flourishing as we start the new millennium. Unfortunately, however, much of academia and many organizations still do not seem to understand the ecology of our vision.

Today you do not really have to stick your neck out like once was necessary, but it may still help if you are willing to raise a bit of hell—as long as you tell the truth. Set your vision on a star and go for it, but maintain an open mind and do what you can to help make the public understand the ecology of animal management. Keep up this wonderful momentum you now have concerning this field of wildlife management. At last, everyone now recognizes that animals have many values other than their economic worth and that all management operations must

be environmentally safe and respond to current social attitudes.

At the heart of my vision has always been a firm belief that animal pest control is really a field of applied ecology. This idea got its first broad introduction to wildlife biologists at the 1962 meeting of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference (NAWNRC) in a talk I gave called "Means of Improving the Status of Vertebrate Pest Control." I concluded my remarks by asking the audience of more than 1,000 to "look in the mirror when they got back to their room and ask the person they see if he is not part of the problem."

For all of you with a vision about wildlife management, the road will not always be easy, but you can surmount these obstacles if you put your mind to it. Do not be discouraged by extreme animal rights rhetoric and attacks. I have never found a leader of these organizations that has answered my question: "How do you want animals to die?" Do not give up on your own wildlife management vision when a preferred way of solving an animal problem is no longer socially acceptable.

After all, what may be a pest to one person may have value to someone else. Be flexible. Consider changes in methodology as opportunities. Look at the advances in solving conflicts that have been made by the USDA National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) in Fort Collins, Colorado. That group was only liberated from Interior and put in USDA a mere 15 years ago.

Even as late as the 1960s, vertebrate pest control was still a disorganized and largely neglected field of science in need of a sounder scientific basis. It had no discrete niche of its own within any organization or institution except the Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Especially in the early years, the DWRC published little, no young people were being trained, and visitors were discouraged. At that time, DWRC was pretty inaccessible to the public or other researchers. Instead of cooperating with outsiders, they were competitive. Once, after the Bureau

of Land Management (BLM) had funded Rex Marsh and myself, they tried to force BLM to make the university refund the money so they could have it.

When President Roosevelt ordered the former Biological Survey of USDA to become the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of Interior, he said that animal control should remain in the Department of Agriculture. But, Secretary Ickes of Interior outmaneuvered Secretary Wallace of Agriculture and put all of the former Biological Survey in the Department of Interior—even though this move of animal control was unpopular with most people in the Interior. The Laboratory was not transferred back to USDA until December 19, 1985.

Before this transfer and during the 1080-predator days of the 1970s, Nat Reed, the Assistant Secretary of Interior did his best to destroy me. He baited me to come to Washington and attend a meeting of people he could control. He refused to let USDA be represented. He baited me by writing that President Nixon would like me to come to Washington and advise the administration about predator control. The DWRC staff were forced to provide him with a list of all my publications and my many overseas assignments with FAO, WHO, and various governments.

The Assistant Secretary was secretly taping this meeting. His plan was to make me so mad that I would say something damaging that he could use out of context. It was tough. He said such things as that "tomorrow the scientific community will be shown how you had faked much of your research" and that "the State Department has said that they will never again give you a passport to go overseas since you have been proven to be an undesirable citizen." In addition, he said, "you will never be allowed to teach again, even in a high school." These accusations went on for 20 to 25 minutes, until he ran out of script. Then to save himself, he said, "The President will be pleased that you have been willing to come to Washington to advise on predator control since you probably know more about predator control in the west than anyone else." I won by never responding to his slander, but I was a wreck afterwards.

I am the only person who repeatedly stated publicly that the former DWRC should be transferred from Interior to Agriculture. I openly proclaimed this for 13 years, including at several legislative hearings in Washington, D.C. I had no support from any biologist. The indispensable "inside" lobbying for the transfer was done by James O. Lee, Jr. in APHIS of USDA. To honor him, we had him as our keynote speaker at the 12th Conference in 1986.

By a streak of good luck, I wrote a personal letter at the right moment to all California congressmen explaining the need for the transfer. Conservation organizations had earlier stripped it from the Farm Bill. Since there was not time for any of the environmental groups to lobby the California delegation, all of the California delegates went along with the transfer which was attached to a continuing funding resolution bill. The other states saw no reason to object because all the delegates from California seemed to have accepted it.

It all happened so fast, there was not time for opposition from any environmental organization, including

the International Association of Wildlife Agencies, Wildlife Management Institute, Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, etc., all of which would have opposed the transfer. Previously, only agricultural organizations had been in favor of such a transfer. Even many of the DWRC staff opposed it. Now it is time to crow. Look how successful the National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins has been. The message here is that when you think something is right, go for it—especially if you have academic freedom.

At one time, we had more than 300 names and addresses of individuals who agreed that we needed both a society and a journal of vertebrate pest control. One individual offered \$10,000 to help start it, but I abandoned this move because The Wildlife Society promised me they would start publishing more animal damage control articles in the Journal of Wildlife Management if we did not form a new society. As I should have realized, that support lasted only until new officers took over. However, since the retirement of the original top people in the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), The Wildlife Society has been allowed to hold separate annual meetings and has become quite supportive of our vision.

The Wildlife Management Institute, which established The Wildlife Society, fought me every time I tried to make it possible for the Society to hold a separate annual meeting—even though the Society would continue to also participate in the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. When The Wildlife Society held its meeting at one of the conferences, I made a motion that the members of the Society be given a chance to vote on whether the Society should hold separate annual meetings. Practically everyone was in favor except Pinky Guttermouth of the WMI. To illustrate the power the Institute had over TWS, they prevented the approved motion from being mailed to members of TWS. I pleaded with him that it was time to let his fledglings, TWS, fly.

The origin of the Vertebrate Pest Conferences was because when I tried to write a book on animal control in 1960, I was told by the director at the DWRC that I could not use in my book any of the information in their reports or the publications by the former Biological Survey that were now under their control. This was ridiculous. But, I had not yet obtained tenure and was already controversial at Davis. DWRC also interfered with my efforts to establish National Science Foundation funding for the growing ecological field of animal problems.

In order to get research on animal control published so it could be quoted in the literature, we formed the California Vertebrate Pest Council and organized the Vertebrate Pest Conferences. We invited speakers to cover those subjects we felt were most pressing. Even today, the Council invites speakers on needed subjects.

In 1947 new Ph.Ds, and I was one, could get a job anywhere because all universities were expanding to accommodate the returning vets on the GI Bill. My career goal has always been to research for better ways wildlife and people can coexist. I also wanted to teach this subject, but I did not want to be an administrator. I could see then that the greatest animal problems were with agriculture, rangelands, and forestry.

I chose University of California at Davis (UCD) because of its standing in agricultural research, even though several professors and a former director of UCD warned me that I would encounter severe resistance from the department chairman, as he would become jealous once I started publishing. Later, the Chancellor told me to "be patient, the chairman is not expected to live very long." To everyone's surprise, and my misfortune, his wife, a medical doctor, kept him alive for many years, but it was too late for me to transfer my animal damage program elsewhere. It takes time to build up the resources I had acquired at UCD.

It has been fun reminiscing over my struggle to fulfill my vision of wildlife management. Often I may have struggled harder than I should have. One faculty member told me go slowly with my dream, because academically I was my own worst enemy. The trouble was that I felt that my vision could not be compromised. I had to stick my neck out and face those skirmishes or my vision did not have a chance. As for the struggles in the academic world, I could write a book.

The president of the university once rescued me from: 1) my jealous chairman; 2) the anti-agriculture hostilities of the zoology department faculty; and 3) the director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at UC Berkeley who chaired a crucifying ad hoc committee about me. However, I had to survive the academic politics if my vision was to become a reality. I have written hundreds of political letters in support of my vision. Because of some anti-agricultural politics in Davis, the state with the greatest diversity in agriculture, California, lost what became the Jack Berryman Institute in Utah. We also lost an expansion of the National Wildlife Research Center in California.

Because of the unfriendly attitudes of a few officials at UCD, all but one of seven of my colleagues in wildlife management either moved off campus or took early retirement. I did not blame them. The only person who stuck it out through thick and thin is Rex Marsh. He, and later with help from Terry Salmon, Desley Whisson, Paul Gorenzel, and Dick VanVuren, took over the leadership at Davis in researching for new and acceptable tools for managing wildlife after I retired.

In spite of the political handicaps at UCD, I still managed to be the principal founder of the Department of Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology, the Department's Experimental Ecosystem and Vertebrate

Ecology Laboratory, the Institute of Ecology, and the Western Section of The Wildlife Society, so it was not all that bad. My thousands of students were wonderful.

Wildlife management is no longer just the production of more fish and game and protecting endangered species, it now includes the control of household and economic pest animals of agriculture. It is the science of taking proper care of wildlife, including pests, and their habitats on a sustained basis for the benefit of the entire biota. Management of troublesome wildlife is done either because an animal or population is a pest to someone, to protect another species, or for economic or public health reasons.

To regulate the density of populations, every species must have some type of mortality to take care of the inevitable surplus of young that are produced. With natural mortality, all organisms eventually serve as food to others—nature's eat-and-be-eaten scheme. However, sometimes people must provide the main mortality factor in human-modified environments.

I can remember when most academic wildlife biologists preached that attempts to control animal pests were merely "treating the symptoms while ignoring the disease." They espoused that animal problems occurring in agriculture, forests, and on rangelands were all caused because the land was being abused, as if our food and materials came from stores. They did not understand—or want to—the whole ecology of problem species. After all, the three main life functions of an animal are: first, to survive; second, to reproduce; and third, to serve as food to another. Old animals are rare in nature, only common when domesticated or in zoos.

Even today, much more research is still needed on the "ecology of human-modified environments." This is a neglected field. After all, do not pests have a lot in common with weeds in a garden? You cannot leave the outcome of either to the whims of nature. When we alter habitats, we must be prepared to manage the affected wildlife resources. And such management, of course, must be accomplished with maximum safety to man and other forms of life.

As I look into your faces, I can see that my dream has become a reality and my vision is in good hands. You have become experts in keeping the environment safe, while also recognizing the interests of the public. Dream on and give 'em hell.