



Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

**Protecting Property and Natural Resources**—Most birds are protected by an international treaty known as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). This very important legislation is responsible for the conservation and the continuing population growth of many bird species. However, the MBTA protects some bird species such as Canada geese and vultures that often cause great economic and ecological damages. FWS recognizes WS expertise when it comes to the prevention and control of damage caused by migratory birds.

With nearly 400,000 Canada geese migrating through Maryland each year, and as many as 93,000 Canada geese that call Maryland home year-round, many of Maryland's farmers and waterfront property owners experience problems with these birds. Since 1997, WS has provided technical assistance for more than three hundred geese-related problems each year and more than one hundred annual requests for vulture-related assistance.

In FY 2002, WS initiated a new partnership with FWS and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to protect wetlands along the Chesapeake Bay from damage caused by nutria. The nutria is an invasive species that has proliferated along the Chesapeake, damaging both wetland and agricultural environments. The abundance of this large rodent, coupled with rising sea levels, is resulting in the large-scale conversion of emergent marsh to open water. The goal of WS' management program is to test various nutria removal strategies and to determine if nutria can be eradicated from the bay. As part of this effort, WS is also testing associated marsh restoration strategies.

**Protecting Public Health and Safety**—In 2001 WS joined the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Anne Arundel County Department of Health in their efforts to control raccoon rabies through the use of oral vaccines. With assistance from WS, the rabies program was able to expand its efforts to two peninsulas and one island in the Annapolis area. More than 17,000 oral rabies vaccination baits were dropped in September from helicopters, vehicles, and by hand to ensure the vaccine was distrib-

uted throughout the targeted areas. When raccoons ingest the oral bait, they become vaccinated against the deadly disease. In addition to protecting Maryland residents, pets, livestock, and wildlife, this effort is part of a larger campaign to create a rabies-free barrier along the East coast that will stop the westward spread of the disease.

## Looking to the Future

The growth in air travel coupled with the growth in the deer and bird populations has created a greater need for wildlife management at airports to reduce threats posed by wildlife.

Another public safety issue facing Maryland is the growing need to protect people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases. Rabies and West Nile virus are two major health concerns on the East coast. While Maryland WS is now active in rabies control efforts, the program could provide greater West Nile virus assistance to Federal, State, and local public health officials if program capabilities become expanded.

## Maryland Wildlife Services Funding ●●●●●●●●●●

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

