

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Georgia

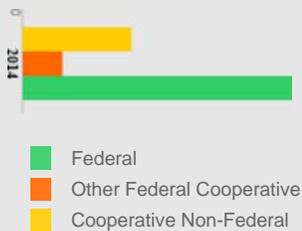


Contact Information:

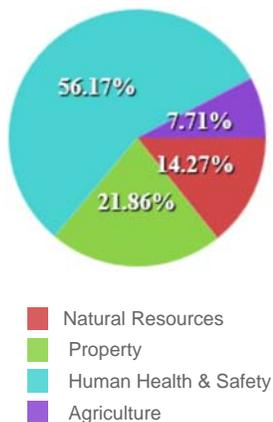
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Georgia

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Georgia helps citizens, organizations, industries, and Government agencies resolve conflicts with wildlife to protect agriculture, property, and natural resources, and to safeguard human health and safety. WS' professional wildlife biologists and specialists implement effective, selective, and responsible strategies that value wildlife, the environment, and the resources being protected. WS manages wildlife damage according to its public trust stewardship responsibilities as a Federal natural resource management program. WS supports the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, based on the principle that wildlife resources are owned collectively and held in trust by Government for the benefit of present and future generations.

WS-Georgia helps protect property and agriculture from damage caused by deer, feral swine, pigeons, vultures, and Canada geese. The Program strives to minimize wildlife-aircraft conflicts by providing expertise to numerous civilian airports and military installations. WS-Georgia helps reduce damage to Georgia's timber industry, transportation, natural resources and property caused by beaver and associated flooding. It also protects people, pets and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases, such as rabies; guards many natural resources from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management.

Applying Science and Expertise to Help the Public

WS frequently provides information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided in person, by telephone or through the mail or internet. During 2014, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people.

In most cases, landowners and resource managers use technical information to implement habitat management and other methods to reduce damage on their properties. During 2013, WS-Georgia conducted over 500 technical assistance projects involving more than 1,040 people and 57 different species.

WS also implements solutions on-site, through direct management assistance, when a wildlife-related problem is complex and cannot be safely or effectively resolved by others. WS' National Wildlife Research Center conducts scientific research and assessments to refine methods and develop new science-based solutions to wildlife challenges.

WS applies and recommends an integrated wildlife damage management approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental and other information into decision making. WS implements a wide range of damage management activities. The following highlight WS' role in protecting resources in Georgia.

Nearly 1,000 requests are received annually to help identify and alleviate wildlife conflicts on public and private property. Typically, protected resources include crops, timber, parks, public beaches, water treatment facilities, golf courses, residential subdivisions, airports, office complexes, schools, private residences, watershed lakes, waterfowl impoundments, power companies, automobiles, aircraft, watercraft, plant nurseries, landscaping, industrial sites, and public and private buildings. Mammals involved include armadillo, bat, bear, beaver, deer, groundhog, muskrat, skunk, raccoon, opossum, otter, coyote, fox, bobcat, and squirrel. Birds include geese, ducks, cormorants, pigeons, herons, egrets, blackbirds, crows, starlings, sparrows and vultures. Other animals include snakes and alligators. A variety of methodologies are used to assist cooperators including habitat modification, exclusion, repellents, lethal control, as well as the controlled use of explosives to remove beaver dams.

Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources — Agricultural landscapes provide abundant wildlife habitat. WS assists farmers and ranchers throughout the United States to protect crops and other agricultural resources and facilities from damage caused by waterfowl, deer, wild turkeys, gulls, black bears, and other species.

With Georgia's abundant wildlife, conflicts commonly arise that require professional assistance. WS-Georgia provides assistance in reducing browsing damage to tree seedlings by deer as well as addressing timber stands flooded due to beaver activity. Crop damage from deer, blackbirds and geese occurs in grain crops, feedlots, vineyards and hayfields. Vultures not only feed on carrion, but will attack newborn calves, horses, goats and pigs; WS-Georgia aides in dispersing unwanted flocks of these large scavengers. WS-Georgia has assisted Federal and State Agriculture Experiment Stations in protecting valuable research plots from depredating species such as deer, blackbirds, and geese.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports WS provides certified airport wildlife biologists to assist military, commercial, and general aviation facilities in reducing conflicts from wildlife. When requested, WS prepares Wildlife Hazard Assessments and Management Plans for these airports in



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

conjunction with the Federal Aviation Administration. WS also assists in reducing strike hazards associated with a variety of birds and mammals around airport runways and air space.

Monitoring and Controlling Wildlife Diseases — WS-Georgia works on a variety of wildlife disease issues as it continues to partner with other States in an oral rabies vaccination program to prevent the spread of the raccoon strain of rabies into the central United States, with the ultimate goal of eliminating this strain of rabies. Collaborative work has been done with State and Federal agencies for the detection of several wildlife diseases including classical swine fever, pseudorabies, and swine brucellosis among others.

Reducing the Negative Impacts of Feral Swine — Feral swine, an invasive species, are prolific breeders and thrive in rural, suburban and urban habitats. By 2012, their populations had expanded to at least 38 States, numbering approximately five million animals. This expanding population and distribution is associated with property damage and negative effects on public health, domestic animal health, crop production, and natural resources. Currently, the total aggregate cost of damage is estimated to be \$1.5 billion annually, with at least \$800 million related to direct costs to agriculture.

In the early 1980s feral swine were found only in South Georgia and some mountain areas. In 2012 they were found in all but nine Georgia counties. WS has assisted Federal and State wildlife agencies by protecting endangered sea turtles and plants and has protected agriculture producers and industries from damage caused by feral swine.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide safe, professional and humane assistance to combat the diverse range of wildlife conflicts that exist in the State. Increased habitat loss, human population growth, and the adaptability of many wildlife species to human environments will expand the need for professional resolution of wildlife conflicts and diseases in the future. Significant species of concern include deer, geese, beaver, raccoon, vultures, pigeons, predators, and feral swine.

Wildlife Services Funding in Georgia

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from program beneficiaries including agricultural producers, airports, individual citizens, businesses, organizations, and other Federal, State, and local Government agencies. (See charts for sources of funding and resources protected.)

Top 5 Major WS Assistance Activities in Georgia

- Safely and efficiently managing overabundant deer herds in sensitive environments while donating venison to area food banks
- Protecting human health, property, and public utilities from damage incurred by vulture roosting activity
- Protecting human safety, aircraft and military operations from wildlife hazards at airports and military bases
- Humanely relocating Canada goose flocks and controlling overabundant feral pigeon populations to reduce associated property and health problems
- Co-teaching a wildlife damage management course at the University of Georgia

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Georgia

- Developing tools/methods to reduce beaver damage to property and natural resources
- Quantifying and assessing the damage caused by feral swine to agriculture, natural resources, and property
- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management methods to reduce feral swine damage to property

- Evaluating and monitoring feral swine for pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, classical swine fever, swine influenza virus, leptospirosis, trichinella, and toxoplasmosis
- Comparing different methodologies for establishing deer density estimations

Major Cooperators:

- Georgia Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Health
- Moody and Warner Robins Air Bases
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- USDA, Agricultural Research Service & Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)
- Georgia Port Authority
- Georgia Cooperative Extension Service
- University of Georgia, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources