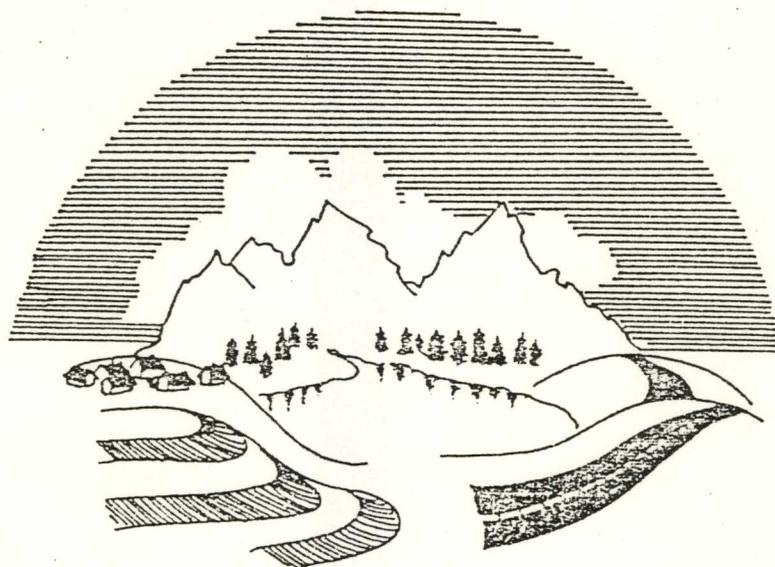


"PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE"

COLORADO URBAN CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM

PROCEEDINGS



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HILTON INN SOUTH, DENVER, COLORADO

## THE FEDERAL ROLE IN URBAN WILDLIFE

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Traditionally, Federal agencies have not had a large role in the management of urban wildlife. However, between 1931 and the mid-1960's the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had an extensive urban animal damage control program designed to control vertebrate pests of stored food and to control animals that spread zoonotic diseases like rabies and tularemia. Prior to and during World War II, the animal damage control program began assisting local and state health agencies in combating rodent problems in slum areas of large, industrialized cities. The "Urban Rat Control Act" of 1946 provided additional funds for increasing personnel and research. Local health department personnel were trained in environmental sanitation, building maintenance, and rodent population reduction. The development of many commercial rodenticides, the use of "block clubs" and organized "rat campaigns", and the establishment of the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) in Atlanta were the result of animal damage control efforts. After World War II, many of the tasks of the urban animal damage control personnel were gradually assumed by the private sector. During the middle 1960's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began to deemphasize the urban portion of the animal damage control program in favor of the agricultural portion. In December, 1985 the federal animal damage control programs were transferred to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture), leading to further emphasis on agricultural involvement.

There has been renewed state and community interest in urban animal damage control problems because the nation's population has shifted from rural to primarily urban. Currently 75 % of the U.S. population resides in metropolitan areas where much original wildlife habitat has been modified or eliminated. While populations of many wildlife species have declined, populations of other species have proliferated and become pests in urban areas. Conflicts have increased between urban wildlife and man; e.g., in many states over half of the requests received by county Extension Agents for information on wildlife problems are now from urban clientele.

Today, urban animal damage control programs at state and local community levels should consider at least four areas: Training, Information/Education, Product Testing, and Research. Such programs should involve not just commensal rodents, but also commensal birds and other problem-causing wildlife, such as raccoons, skunks, bats, squirrels, prairie dogs, and urban waterfowl. Wildlife problems include: (1) Disease and Health Hazards; (2) Food Storage and Contamination; (3) Damage to Structures and Property; (4) Safety Hazards; (5) Nuisance; and (6) Competition with Desirable Wildlife Species. Initiation of such programs presents an exciting challenge because of their high visibility and sensitivity. Effective public education is vital to meet the needs of both wildlife and the public. The objective of urban animal damage control programs should be to develop habitat for desirable wildlife populations while simultaneously managing those populations to reduce conflicts with man.