

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Kentucky



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Major Cooperators

- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Louisville International Airport
- Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport
- Louisville Gas and Electric
- KY Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Kentucky

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) in Kentucky for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Rich in natural resources, Kentucky is home to a mix of urban and suburban settings, rural environments, forests, and agricultural lands. This ecological variety supports a remarkable diversity of wildlife species. WS in Kentucky works with Federal and State officials, industry, and individuals to protect property, agricultural and natural resources, and the quality of life for residents. It also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards natural resources, such as watersheds and timber, from beaver damage; and educates the public about wildlife and damage management.

Specific projects conducted by WS in Kentucky include managing roosting blackbirds and starlings in urban areas, sampling and monitoring for swine pseudorabies and classical swine fever, Lyme disease, Chagas disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, distemper and rabies. WS also protects watersheds, roadways, and timber from beaver damage, property and human health from Canada goose damage, aviation from wildlife strikes, and manages damage caused by vultures, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support these efforts, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Bird strikes with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$615 million annually and pose hazards to passengers and flight crews. Located along the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways for migratory waterfowl, Kentucky also contains one of the country's busiest airports, with more than 13.5 million passengers annually. From 1990-2010, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported more than 2,578 wildlife strikes at Kentucky airports, although it estimates only about 20% of all actual strikes are reported.

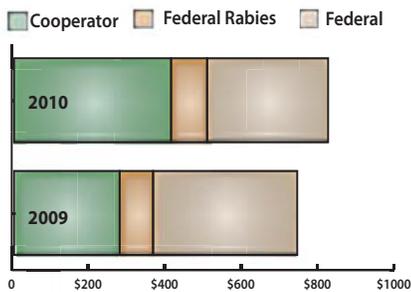
WS biologists work with airport officials at all major and regional airports in Kentucky to manage wildlife populations on and around airfields. Wildlife strikes have been reduced significantly through habitat modification and WS-enhanced wildlife damage management programs directed at several species including waterfowl, raptors, and blackbirds.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to aviation. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand wildlife hazards at airports and to develop management tools that reduce these hazards. WS provides on-site evaluations, comprehensive hazard assessments, and consultation on airport expansion and design to minimize threats. It trains airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife/aircraft collisions.

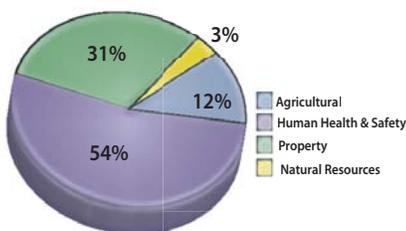
Addressing Residential and Industrial Property Damage Caused by Roosting

Blackbirds—European starlings, red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, and grackles congregate in large night-time winter roosts often containing thousands of birds. Most roosts are located in urban, industrial and residential areas on utility structures and trees. Blackbird problems are the most common complaint received by Kentucky WS property damage and human health concerns are caused by accumulation of droppings

Total Funding (Thousands)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

on landscaping, vehicles, houses, and sidewalks. Bird droppings are corrosive to paints, metals, and other building materials, and pose health hazards to workers and the public. Large roosts may create environmental conditions conducive to the fungal disease histoplasmosis, which can cause severe respiratory problems for humans. Annually WS assists dozens of communities by dispersing roosts with pyrotechnics and assisting property owners in vegetation and habitat management.

Addressing Property Damage Caused by Vultures—Requests for assistance with black and turkey vultures have increased approximately 54% in the last 5 years. Vulture roosts often contain more than 1,000 birds and damage homes, non-residential buildings, vehicles, equipment, and utility structures. The birds' droppings and associated odor cause property damage, necessitate expensive clean up and maintenance, and prevent people from utilizing their property. Additionally, the accumulation of droppings is often a human health concern. WS assists homeowners and the utility industry by removing birds, dispersing roosts, and helping local officials and property owners obtain Federal permits to shoot vultures in an effort to reinforce harassment programs.

Addressing Property Damage from Canada Geese—Canada goose problems represent the second most common wildlife complaint received by Kentucky WS. Frequently found in residential areas, the birds are non-migratory year-round residents. Concerns include feces-contaminated water, accumulations of droppings on sidewalks, beaches and golf courses, and aggressive geese that attack children and the elderly. The majority of these geese live in urban and suburban areas adjacent to schools, parks, and residential areas, benefiting from abundant food and water with few predators. In addition to technical assistance and public educational programs, WS removes about 500 resident Canada geese from golf courses, residential communities, and recreational areas each year in Kentucky.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage—WS provides direct assistance throughout Kentucky to remove beavers that damage timber, crops, natural resources, roadways, culverts, sanitation lines, and property. Flooding due to dams causes the majority of damage; however the cutting of ornamental trees and shrubs also creates concerns around parks and lakefront properties. Historically, a valuable economic and natural resource, the lower demand for beaver products led to a decrease in trapping and subsequent increase in population. Beaver now occupy nearly all State watersheds, and State-wide population trend estimates are increasing.

To address these problems, WS in Kentucky enters into cooperative relationships with Federal, State, city and county governments, soil and water conservation districts, private landholders, and others with beaver problems, with funding from State, county, Federal, and private sources. WS assists on a variety of properties, using an integrated management approach that includes water level manipulation, exclusion, population reduction, and the safe and effective dam removal by certified WS personnel. On average, over \$1 million per year in losses are prevented to timber, agricultural crops, and property due to WS beaver damage management.

Looking to the Future

Human safety, urban wildlife and beaver damage are concerns for Kentucky wildlife managers. Increased travel through

Kentucky airports, combined with population and range increases of numerous species of birds and wildlife, has created a greater need for airport managers to deal with wildlife threats. Additional attention must be given to this specialized work.

Kentucky faces an increased need for beaver damage management due to rapidly growing beaver populations throughout the state with subsequent damage and economic loss. Flooding and damage to timber, roadways, drainage structures, and property have increased the public's awareness of these issues. The lack of recreational trapping has also contributed to the rapid growth of beaver populations.

Coupled with rising populations of waterfowl, white-tailed deer, coyote, skunk, beaver, and raccoon, the increased urbanization and expansion into formerly rural areas has increased wildlife conflicts with people. Other urban conflicts involve threats to human health and safety and damage to buildings, utility structures, and property from vultures, woodpeckers, Canada geese, and skunks.

Feral swine populations have significantly expanded in portions of the state in recent years. They are beginning to create serious losses to agricultural crops, sensitive habitats, threatened and endangered species, and many native wildlife species. WS is actively engaged in the management of these animals through partnerships with other agencies and novel population reduction techniques.

The State also has needs to manage the transmission and spread of raccoon rabies. WS in Kentucky participates in the national effort to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies and, hopefully, to eliminate rabies from the United States.

Kentucky Wildlife Services Funding

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

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting public safety and property from Canada goose, pigeon, starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by beavers to natural resources, timber, agriculture, and transportation infrastructure
- Protecting municipal utility structures, residential property, and livestock from vultures
- Protecting public safety from wildlife diseases

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Kentucky:

- Improving damage management methods for aquatic rodents
- Identifying and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Assessing Canada goose damages through translocation
- Assessing problems caused by starlings, blackbirds, and vultures
- Evaluating wildlife transmission of rabies