

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## State Report

FY 2010

# Tennessee



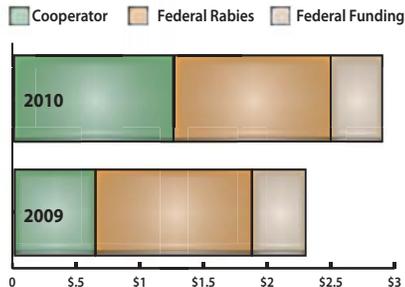
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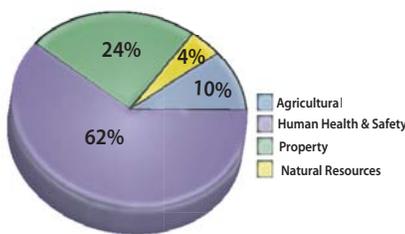
### Major Cooperators

- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- Tennessee Department of Health
- West Tennessee River Basin Authority
- Memphis International Airport
- Federal Express

### Total Funding (Millions)



### Resources Protected % of Total Funds



### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Tennessee

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

Tennessee has a diverse mix of urban, suburban and rural environments, forest and agricultural lands, and a wide array of wildlife species. This diversity, combined with both human and wildlife population expansion, has led to increased encounters and conflicts between people and wildlife. WS in Tennessee works with Federal and State officials, industry, and individuals to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports, businesses, residential areas, public lands and along roadways. The program also protects against wildlife-borne diseases, guards natural and transportation resources, such as watersheds, roads, and timber from beaver damage, protects agricultural interests, like livestock and crops from wildlife depredation, and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by WS in Tennessee include protecting people, and domestic animals from rabies through the use of oral rabies vaccination (ORV), sampling and monitoring for swine pseudorabies and classical swine fever, Lyme disease, Chagas disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, rabies, and distemper; and managing damage caused by vultures, pigeons, starlings, Canada geese 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**—Wildlife strikes with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$615 million annually and pose a flight hazard. From 1990 to 2010, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported more than 3,213 wildlife strikes at Tennessee airports. The FAA estimates, however, that only about 20% of all wildlife/aircraft strikes are reported. The majority of strikes involve birds.

WS is internationally recognized for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to aviation. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research to understand wildlife hazards at airports and to develop management tools that reduce these hazards. WS works with all major Tennessee airports and 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 Property Damage Caused by Vultures**—Complaints related to turkey and black vultures have increased by 165 percent 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.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

### **Protecting Human Health and Safety from Raccoon Rabies—**

In August 2002, Tennessee joined the Appalachian Ridge ORV Project to stop the westward spread of raccoon rabies, and the next year joined with Georgia and Alabama to begin the GAT ORV Project. To date, more than 4.9 million oral rabies vaccination baits have been distributed on more than 4,400 square miles in eastern Tennessee. Raccoons that ingest the bait become vaccinated against this deadly disease. In cooperation with the Tennessee Department of Health, WS is working to create a rabies-free barrier in the eastern United States where the raccoon strain of rabies is a threat to humans, pets, livestock, and pets.

### **Addressing Property Damage from Canada Geese—**

About 20 percent of all assistance requests to WS in Tennessee concern Canada geese due to contaminated water, aggressive geese, and feces accumulations on public and private property. Most Canada geese are non-migratory, residing year-round in Tennessee. They live in urban and suburban areas benefiting from abundant food, water, and few predators. WS provides technical assistance and public educational programs and can remove flocks of problem geese. WS annually removes about 2,000 resident Canada geese from golf courses, residential communities, and recreational areas, relocating them to areas with suitable habitat away from urban settings in cooperation with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

### **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 are located in urban industrial and residential areas on utility structures and trees. Blackbird problems are the second most common complaint received by Tennessee WS and not just due to noise. Property damage and human health concerns are caused by accumulation of droppings on landscaping, vehicles, houses, plants, and sidewalks. Bird droppings are corrosive to paints, metals, and other building materials, and pose health hazards to workers and the public. For example, large roosts may create environmental conditions conducive to the development of histoplasmosis, which can cause severe human respiratory problems. WS assists dozens of cities, industries and residential communities annually by dispersing roosts with pyrotechnics and assisting property owners in vegetation and habitat management.

### **Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage—**

Protecting transportation, agriculture, and natural resources through beaver damage management is a major activity for WS in Tennessee. Historically, beaver represented a valuable natural and economic resource. In recent years, lower demand for beaver products resulted in less trapping and increased beaver numbers. Beaver now occupy nearly all State watersheds, and population estimates are increasing. Typical assistance requests involved damage to roadways and bridges, agriculture and timber resources, property and flooding of municipal sewer and water treatment facilities. WS enters into cooperative relationships with Federal, State, city and county governments, soil and water conservation districts, private landholders, and others with beaver problems to fund management projects. More than \$5 million in losses to timber, agricultural crops, and property are prevented annually in Tennessee due to WS' beaver damage management.

WS assists on a variety of properties, using an integrated management approach that includes water level manipulation, exclusion, population reduction, and dam removal. WS personnel are trained and certified in the safe and effective use of explosives to remove beaver dams that are flooding property.

### **Looking to the Future**

In Tennessee, wildlife managers are concerned with public safety, urban wildlife and beaver damage. Of particular interest is aviation safety and airports: increased air travel through state airports combined with population and range expansion of wildlife species has heightened the need for airport-wildlife hazard management. Additional attention must be given to this specialized work.

A second public safety issue involves managing raccoon rabies. Attacks on people and pets by rabid raccoons in northeast and southeast Tennessee increased the public's awareness of this issue. WS in Tennessee participates in WS' national effort to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies, and, eventually to eliminate it from the United States.

Third, 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/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.

Increased populations of wildlife (including deer, waterfowl, beaver and coyote) combined with greater urbanization and expansion into formerly rural areas has led to a rise in wildlife conflicts with people. Other urban conflicts, presented by vultures and Canada geese, involve threats to human health and safety and damage to homes, buildings, lawns, utility structures, and other property. The State's expanding beaver population and damage have created an increased need for beaver damage management throughout Tennessee.

### **Tennessee Wildlife Services Funding**

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from 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
- Managing raccoon rabies through the use of ORV

#### **Top 3 WS Research Projects of Interest to Tennessee:**

- Improving aquatic rodent damage management methods
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating Canada geese through translocation