



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

FY 2006

## WILDLIFE SERVICES—District of Columbia

### Contact Information:

Kevin Sullivan, Maryland, Delaware, and District of Columbia

Wildlife Services State Director

1568 Whitehall Road, Annapolis, MD 21401

Phone: (410) 349-8055 FAX: (410) 349-8258

Toll-Free Number: 1-877-463-6497

E-mail: kevin.sullivan@aphis.usda.gov

Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\_damage

### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in the Washington, D.C. Metro Area

Every day, Washington, D.C. and Maryland residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) of the District of Columbia and Maryland for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS has teamed with the Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide professional guidance to citizens who have concerns and problems with wildlife. As the operators for the DNR's toll-free

#### Major Assistance Activities:

- Providing technical assistance and educating the public about wildlife, particularly in urban areas
- Reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Protecting natural resources and reducing nutria damage to the Chesapeake Bay
- Managing problems caused by Canada geese
- Protecting public health through monitoring of rabies and highly pathogenic avian influenza

#### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to the District of Columbia:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by vultures
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies, West Nile virus, avian influenza and chronic wasting disease
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

Nuisance Wildlife Information Line (1-877-463-6497), WS provides technical assistance to thousands of callers on a one-to-one basis. WS has worked with several airports to help protect human safety and aircraft from wildlife/aircraft collisions. WS also works with Andrews Air Force Base, the home of the 89th Airlift Wing and Air Force One, as well as Martin State Airport, the home of the Maryland Air National Guard, to reduce wildlife hazards.

### 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 this effort, 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 Air Travel**—Wildlife collisions with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$550 million annually. More importantly, these strikes place the safety of passengers and flight crews at risk. Baltimore/Washington International Airport (BWI), the nation's second fastest growing airport, reported 320 wildlife/aircraft strikes from 1990 to 2000. WS has a full-time wildlife biologist stationed at BWI assisting with projects and research aimed at minimizing wildlife hazards. This presence at BWI has helped to increase awareness of wildlife hazards and reduce the threat of



wildlife collisions with commercial aircraft. Since 1999, WS has provided technical assistance to five Maryland airports and an airbase, either through initial consultation visits or through the development of wildlife hazard assessments. WS also provides training to airport personnel to help lower the risk of wildlife/aircraft collisions. Currently, WS is helping the Maryland Aviation Administration develop comprehensive wildlife hazard management plans for two airports.

In addition to hands-on technical assistance, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and the public through habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used 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 Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects some bird species, such as Canada geese and vultures, which 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.

Nearly 400,000 Canada geese migrate through Maryland each year and as many as 93,000 Canada geese call Maryland home year-round. Since 1997, WS has provided technical assistance for hundreds of geese-related problems each year. WS partners with the National Park Service and the Washington, D.C. Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to assist with wetland restoration and Canada geese management.

Since FY02, WS has partnered with FWS and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to protect wetlands along the nearby Chesapeake Bay from damage caused by nutria, an invasive mammal that has proliferated along the Chesapeake, damaging both wetland and agricultural environments. The abundance of this large rodent, coupled with the 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.

**Major Cooperators:**

- D.C. Department of Health
- Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments
- National Park Service, D.C. region
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Andrews Air Forces Base
- Transportation Companies
- Maryland Aviation Administration
- Baltimore/Washington International Airport

**Protecting Public Health and Safety—**

The highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of avian influenza currently is not present in the United States although it has been found in an increasing number of countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. During FY06, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of the Interior initiated an enhanced interagency program to monitor wild migratory birds for the disease. As part of this program, the WS worked with the D.C. Department of Health to conduct surveillance activities for avian influenza in wild migratory birds.

White-tailed deer present a wildlife damage management challenge. Loss of wildlife habitat and the adaptability of deer to the urban environment create an ever-increasing demand for the resolution of human-deer conflicts. Deer combined with urban traffic typically result in hazardous situations for both deer and drivers. Deer host ticks that carry Lyme disease, which can spread to humans. In addition to increased disease threats, vehicle collisions, and other property damage, deer also destroy habitat in city parks and natural areas. WS partners with the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments to assist in reducing deer-vehicle collisions in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

In 2001 WS joined the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Anne Arundel County Department of Health in efforts to control raccoon-variant rabies. With assistance from WS, the rabies program was able to expand in the Annapolis area. Oral rabies vaccination baits are dropped from helicopters, vehicles, and by hand throughout a target area. When raccoons ingest the oral bait, they become vaccinated against the deadly disease. In addition to protecting area residents, pets, 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 the area is the growing need to protect people, pets, and other animals from wildlife-borne diseases. Rabies, West Nile virus, chronic wasting disease and avian influenza are major health concerns on the East Coast. The rabies control program could provide greater disease surveillance to Federal, State, and local public health officials if program capabilities become expanded.

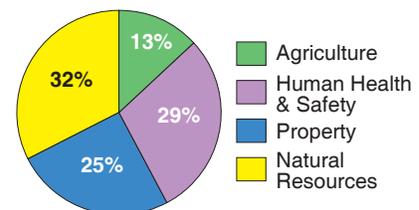
**District of Columbia Wildlife Services Funding**

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: 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.

**Total Funding (Thousands)**



**Resources Protected % of Total Funds**



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