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WILDLIFE SERVICES—LOUISIANA

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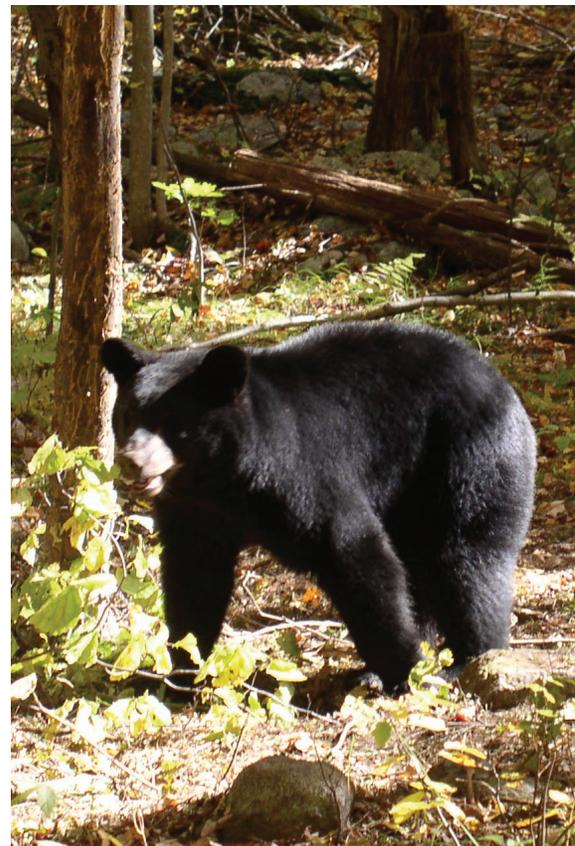
Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Louisiana

Each day, residents, industry, organizations and other public agencies call on Louisiana Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting a variety of resources that are threatened by wildlife damage. Birds can seriously damage rice and other grain crops or fruits and nuts such as strawberries and pecans. Some birds prey on aquacultural crops, such as crawfish and catfish. Beaver frequently cause significant damage to timber and other natural resources, row crops, dams, roadways, bridges, and public utilities. Louisiana WS personnel strive to resolve these types of wildlife conflicts. Louisiana WS also supports safety in aviation

by working with airport managers and regulatory agencies to develop and implement airport wildlife management plans that ultimately protect pilots, passengers, and aircraft from dangerous collisions between aircraft and wildlife. WS assists State and Federal wildlife agencies to protect threatened and endangered species and natural habitats from other wildlife species. Program personnel also conduct monitoring activities related to rabies, avian influenza, and other zoonoses. WS's professional wildlife biologists respond to requests for assistance by implementing effective, selective, and humane wildlife damage management strategies.

Louisiana citizens represent a diverse melting pot of ethnic cultures and socio-economic classes. The state has a wide variety of ecological habitats, including large cities, small towns, and sparsely populated rural areas comprised of agricultural lands, prairies, upland forests, swamps, and marshes. The State population exceeds 4.5 million and is increasing. Consequently, increased contact between humans and wildlife is inevitable. The continued encroachment of people into wildlife habitat will result in more reports of wildlife damage to resources that are economically or aesthetically important to humans.



Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting sprouting and headed rice from blackbird damage
- Protecting resources from damage by the Federally-threatened Louisiana black bear
- Protecting timber and other natural resources, highway infrastructures, threatened and endangered species, row crops, and property from beaver damage
- Protecting human health and safety from wildlife hazards at airports
- Monitoring for the potential spread of raccoon rabies, avian influenza, and other zoonotic diseases into the State

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Louisiana:

- Improving available damage management methods for the protection of coastal marshes from damage by nutria
- Developing new repellents and improving existing damage control methods for the protection of sprouting and headed rice from blackbird damage
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Identifying baits that can be used to deliver oral rabies vaccines to skunks and other wildlife
- Collecting data to address issues related to beaver, fish-eating birds, and the Louisiana black bear

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS often enables many people to resolve reported wildlife conflicts on their own by offering advice, written information, equipment and materials. This *technical assistance* may be provided in person, by phone or mail. However, when resolving wildlife conflicts is beyond the means of the affected individual or is otherwise too complex to handle, WS may provide *direct assistance* at the damage site. WS also conducts *scientific research* across the nation to find answers to new problems posed

by wildlife and to develop state-of-the-art science and technology that can be used by the Program.

Protecting Agricultural and Aquacultural Crops—Blackbirds, particularly red-winged blackbirds and brown-headed cowbirds, can cause severe damage to sprouting rice, especially in the vicinity of large winter roosts. Estimated losses of this resource range between \$5 and \$10 million annually. Since the early 1990's, Louisiana WS has worked diligently to protect sprouting rice fields located near large winter roosts from blackbird damage. Based on direct responses from rice growers in Evangeline Parish, programs conducted in 1989 and 1990 saved growers an average of over \$4,000 per farm or about \$2.8 million annually. Still other surveys estimate the annual

direct savings to rice farms from WS activities at more than \$5.8 million. Researchers are currently investigating ways of increasing these savings by improving program methodologies. Louisiana Wildlife Services provides assistance with these research projects.

Louisiana is the largest producer of farm-raised crawfish in the country and has a significant catfish industry. The aquaculture industry is estimated to spend more than \$17 million annually to control bird damage at facilities nationwide. WS conducts research to determine the magnitude of impacts and develop methods to control damage by birds that prey upon catfish and crawfish. The same research will provide additional information for developing strategies that address the management of birds that prey upon sport fish in Louisiana. Louisiana WS routinely provides assistance to crawfish and catfish producers experiencing problems with birds including cormorants, white pelicans, and numerous herons and egret species that feed on these commodities. WS personnel were instrumental in identifying white pelicans as the source of a parasitic trematode that infects fingerling catfish and weakens their immune system, often causing economically significant losses. Consequently, researchers are now looking for better methods of controlling this disease.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Louisiana WS continues to assist airports experiencing problems involving wildlife and associated threats to aircraft and the flying public. Biologists reviewed wildlife hazard management plans required of airports having significant wildlife problems and conducted assessments following major strikes between aircraft and birds or when requested by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Major Cooperators

- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
- Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Federal Aviation Administration
- Black Bear Conservation Committee
- Louisiana Rice Growers Association
- Various Airport Authorities
- Various Parish Police Juries (i.e., county commissions) and Road Commissions

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species Activity—WS protects threatened and endangered (T&E) species from damage by other wildlife species. In Louisiana, WS works to protect the Louisiana pearlshell, a mussel found in the central part of the State, from damage by beaver. Since this work began in the late 1980's, the Louisiana pearlshell has experienced notable recovery, which resulted in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service re-categorizing the species from endangered to threatened.

WS also protects T&E species by providing immediate responses to problems they cause. For example, WS works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to address complaints involving the Louisiana black bear, a threatened species. This work has been well received by the public and has resulted in the WS program being recognized by both the Secretary of Agriculture and the Black Bear Conservation Committee for its role in protecting the Louisiana black bear from extinction.

Likewise, WS protected almost \$400,000 of bottomland hardwood timber from beaver damage in 2005. This also resulted in intangible benefits related to the maintenance of important habitat used by a myriad of wildlife species, including those protected as threatened or endangered.

Protecting Property from Beaver Damage—In 1993 alone, Statewide losses of commercial timber to beaver in Louisiana exceeded \$13 million. Between 1998 and 2005, more than \$6.8 million of various beaver-caused resource losses were reported in Louisiana. Consequently, WS conducts numerous beaver management projects on private, State, and Federal properties to protect agriculture, human health and safety, general property and natural resources from damage. Since 1999, WS in Louisiana has protected more than \$14 million in valuable resources, including bottomland hardwood timber, highways and bridges, dams, drainage ditches and canals, and crops.

Monitoring Zoonotic Diseases—For several years, Louisiana WS has been a participant in monitoring activities related to wildlife-borne diseases that can be transmitted to humans and domestic animals, such as rabies, west Nile virus, and avian influenza. Information from this work may be used to develop plans for managing the spread of these diseases into new areas.

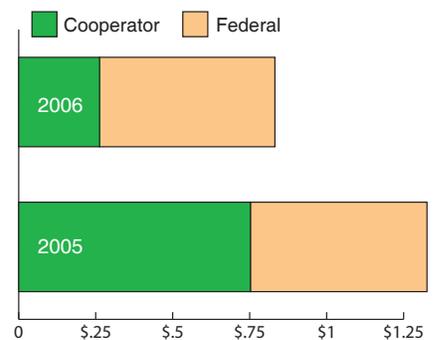
Looking to the Future

The need to control wildlife damage to valuable resources is increasing and WS strives to provide safe, effective and humane assistance to its customers experiencing wildlife conflicts. For example, various birds damage rice, other grain and fruit crops, aircraft, and other airport property; threaten air passenger safety; serve as potential disease vectors for many pathogens, including avian influenza; and prey upon crawfish and other aquatic species. This is resulting in an increased demand on our available expertise and resources. Beaver and bears are other causes of increased wildlife damage in the State. In addition, raccoon rabies is threatening to enter Louisiana from states to the east. Without timely, professional attention to emerging conflicts, it will become more difficult for WS to successfully resolve many wildlife conflicts and ensure equal access for all Louisiana citizens to Program services.

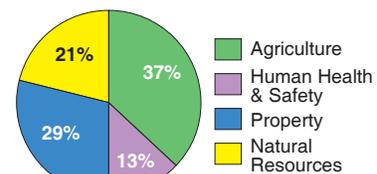
Louisiana Wildlife Services Funding

WS operates a cooperatively funded program that uses both Federally-allocated funds and funding and/or other resources provided by co-operators, including producers; Federal, State, and Local government agencies; and private individuals who are experiencing or have an interest in wildlife damage management.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA is an equal employment provider and employer.