

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## State Report

FY 2008

# Georgia



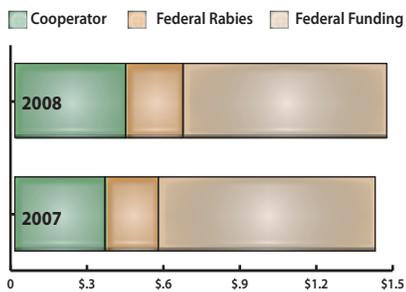
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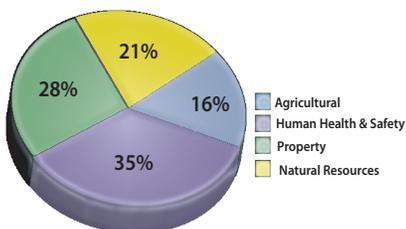
### Major Cooperators

- Georgia Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Health
- Moody, Warner Robins, Kings Bay and Dobbins Military Bases, US Army COE
- Georgia Cooperative Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Stations
- University of Georgia, Auburn University, Tall Timbers Research Station
- Georgia Department of Transportation, CSX Railroad, Georgia Power
- Cobb County Water Department and multiple County Road Departments
- State Botanical Gardens and State Arboretum
- Private Companies (timber, transportation, chemical, aerospace, manufacturing, etc)

### Total Funding (Millions)



### Resources Protected % of Total Funds



### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Georgia

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Georgia Wildlife Services (WS) for assistance in addressing damage or threats posed by wildlife to agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources and property. WS' professional wildlife biologists employ an integrated management approach to resolve conflicts with effective, selective, and humane strategies.

WS biologists help protect property and agriculture from damage caused by deer, wild swine, pigeons, vultures, and Canada geese. They strive to minimize wildlife-aircraft conflicts by providing expertise to numerous civilian airports and military installations. WS helps reduce damage to Georgia's timber industry, transportation, natural resources, and property caused by beavers and associated flooding. It also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases, such as rabies; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries or threatened and endangered species, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific Georgia WS projects include predation management for landowners to increase Bobwhite quail populations; sampling and monitoring for avian influenza, rabies, swine diseases, and West Nile virus; managing wildlife conflicts in State parks; and controlling squirrel damage to fiber optics.

### 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 Agricultural Resources**—With Georgia's abundant wildlife, conflicts commonly arise that require professional assistance. WS provides help whether to reduce browsing damage to tree seedlings by deer or to combat timber stands flooded due to beaver activity. Crop damage from deer, blackbirds and geese occurs in grain crops, feedlots, vineyards, and hayfields. Vultures not only feed on carrion, but will attack newborn calves, horses, goats and pigs; WS aides in dispersing unwanted flocks of these large scavengers. Aquaculture, a growing industry in Georgia, experiences bird depredation problems and producers are provided with efficient ways to help reduce losses. WS has assisted Federal and State Agriculture Experiment Stations in protecting valuable research plots from depredating species such as deer, blackbirds, and geese.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—WS provides certified airport wildlife biologists to manage military and commercial facilities to reduce conflicts from wildlife. When requested, WS prepares wildlife hazard assessments and management plans for these airports in conjunction with the Federal Aviation Administration. WS assists in reducing a variety of birds and mammals from airport runways and air space. This behind-the-scenes work makes air travel safer.

**Wildlife Disease Management Activities**—WS works on a variety of wildlife disease issues. Georgia continues to partner with other states in an oral rabies vaccination program to prevent the spread of the raccoon strain of rabies into the central United States, with the ultimate goal of eliminating this form of rabies. WS has developed an Interagency Strategic Plan and is working closely with the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in surveillance for the early detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in wild birds. A long-term challenge remains to combat histoplasmosis, associated with accumulations of droppings from birds or bat roosts. Excessive waterfowl populations at parks and playgrounds can create unsafe levels of E. coli and other fecal borne diseases.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Collaborative work has been done with state and federal agencies for the detection of several wildlife diseases such as classical swine fever, foot and mouth disease, chronic wasting disease, and dove trichomoniasis, among others. Concern over elevated West Nile virus presence in the Atlanta area has called for continued pigeon control at a railway facility to reduce the potential for this illness.

**Protecting Health and Safety in the Workplace**—WS works at military bases, steel manufacturing facilities, power plants, paper mills, railroad facilities, hospitals, and public and private buildings to manage overabundant populations of birds from defacing property and creating unsanitary conditions for employees in the workplace; associated with pigeons, blackbirds, starlings, sparrows, crows, vultures, geese, bats and gulls. Here WS applies an integrated management approach to address most problems in a timely manner.

**Protecting Gamebirds**—Effort continues to determine how to restore native Bobwhite quail in the southern United States. WS has partnered in collaborative field research to determine if predator management during nesting season can enhance bird productivity on Georgia lands. The study involved private landowners, the DNR, major universities, and private research facilities to strategically increase wildlife diversity on their lands in the Albany and Thomasville areas. Based upon the study's success, landowners can receive professional predation management to help increase bird populations. WS' biologists are using safe, effective tools to manage major nest predators ranging from armadillos to raccoons and bobcats. Results are promising, with potential application not only in Georgia, but the entire Bobwhite range.

**Protecting Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites**—WS has entered into an agreement to provide wildlife conflict management expertise to any of the State Parks Division's 63 parks and historic sites. Through it, severely overpopulated deer herds at several sites were reduced. WS will continue to effectively and safely manage the herds, which will as reduce severe overbrowsing of native flora. Other species of concern include wild swine, ducks, geese, feral cats, bats, opossum, armadillo, squirrel, pigeons, beaver, wild dogs, and raccoons.

**Protecting Property**—More than 1,000 requests are received annually to help identify and alleviate wildlife conflicts on public and private property. Typically, resources protected include parks, public beaches, water treatment facilities, golf courses, residential subdivisions, airports, office complexes, schools, private residences, watershed lakes, waterfowl impoundments, power companies, automobiles, aircraft, watercraft, plant nurseries, landscaping, industrial sites, and public and private buildings. Species involved include armadillo, bat, bear, beaver, deer, groundhog, muskrat, skunk, raccoon, opossum, otter, coyote, fox, bobcat, squirrel, alligator, and snakes. Birds include geese, ducks, cormorants, pigeons, herons, egrets, blackbirds, crows, starlings, sparrows and vultures. A variety of methodologies are used to assist cooperators including habitat modification, exclusion, repellents, lethal management, and the controlled use of explosives to remove beaver dams.

### **Looking to the Future**

WS will continue to provide safe, professional, and humane assistance to combat the diverse range of wildlife conflicts that exist in the state. Increased habitat loss, human population

growth, and the adaptability of many wildlife species to human environments will expand the need for professional resolution of wildlife conflicts and diseases in the future. Significant species of concern include deer, geese, beaver, raccoon, vultures, pigeons, predators, and feral swine. WS looks forward to an expanded ability to serve the Bobwhite quail hunting community with the implementation of predation management on plantation land.

### **Georgia Wildlife Services Funding**

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators with a vested interest in the program: 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 managing wildlife damage.

#### **Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:**

- Safely and efficiently managing overabundant deer herds in sensitive conditions, donating venison to area food banks
- Protecting timber, roadways, natural resources and property from beaver damage and flooding
- Protecting human safety, aircraft and military operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Humanely relocating Canada goose flocks and controlling overabundant feral pigeon populations to reduce associated property and health problems
- Providing a wildlife course at the University of Georgia and managing wildlife problems on State parks and historic sites.

#### **Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Georgia:**

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation and problems associated with agriculture, property, and human health and safety
- Researching methods to increase ground nesting productivity of quail and other species through predation management
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife diseases and parasites such as avian influenza, rabies, West Nile virus, histoplasmosis, and E. coli
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management
- Protecting forest and wildlife resources as well as evaluating aquaculture problems in the southeastern United States