Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2008

New York

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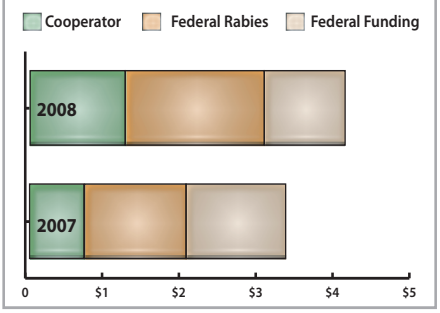
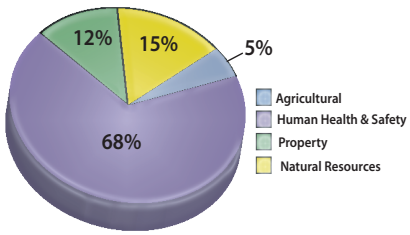
Major Cooperators

- The New York State Departments of Agriculture and Markets, Health and Environmental Conservation
- The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
- Albany County Airport Authority
- Stratton Air National Guard Base
- Oneida Lake Association
- The Cities of Albany, Troy, Utica, Colonie
- Cornell University Diagnostic Laboratory and Cooperative Extension
- Plum Island Animal Disease Center
- Orange and Nassau Counties
- Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in New York

Every day, New York residents, industries, organizations, municipalities and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) in New York 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 professional strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

New York, a diverse ecological mix of urban and suburban settings and agricultural and forested environments, is home to nearly 19 million people with 47,223 square miles of land and 7,000 square miles of inland water. Accordingly, WS works to reduce public safety risks and property damage by managing wildlife populations at airports, protecting domestic animals from rabies, and protecting natural resources, such as threatened and endangered birds from mammal predation and fisheries from bird depredation.

Protecting Natural Resources to Save Jobs and Local Economies

In a landmark 2004 Cornell University study, double-crested cormorants were implicated in the decline of yellow perch and walleye fisheries on Oneida Lake. The fisheries decline resulted in a steep drop of non-resident anglers coming to central New York. A USDA economist worked with State and local agencies to determine a loss of 12,800 jobs and $539 million in revenue to the four counties around Oneida Lake just from cormorants eating these two fish species. WS initiated an integrated cormorant hazing program requested by a Citizen Task Force in 1998. The program reduced the number of nesting cormorants to 15 and fall feeding cormorants from a high of about 700 per day to 103 in 2007. The result was a recovering walleye and yellow perch fishery which has saved 5,000 jobs and $171 million in revenue for the four county area. Non-resident anglers are now returning to Oneida Lake and this supports the local economy.

Lake Champlain has an estimated 16,000 cormorants feeding on fish and nesting on trees in sensitive habitat. Nesting cormorants kill the trees with their acidic fecal droppings, reducing nesting habitat for species of special concern such as the migratory common terns, great blue herons, and black-crowned night herons. WS is working with the States of New York and Vermont, as well as several bird conservation and fish conservation organizations, to manage cormorants. Current management focuses on egg oiling and limited shooting of cormorants in New York to complement egg oiling, shooting, and hazing activities in Vermont. The two States and several non-governmental organizations are working with WS to write a management plan for cormorants and other waterbirds on Lake Champlain.

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 Agriculture Resources—New York ranks third nationally in milk production. Overabundant starlings at dairies consume feed denying dairy cows protein, which reduces milk product and farmers' income while increasing feed costs. Also, starlings can spread bacteria, increasing the health risk to cattle. During the winter WS treats starlings with a registered toxicant at dairy farms that pay for the service. WS assisted 48 dairy farms in 2008 and is working with NY Farm Bureau and NYS Agriculture and Markets to assist more dairy producers. This is the program's fourth year.

USDA APHIS
United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Bird strikes to aircraft cost civil aviation more than $625 million annually in the United States and pose a hazard to flight. Globally, wildlife strikes have killed more than 219 people and destroyed over 200 aircraft since 1988. In the United States, wildlife strikes killed 11 people and injured 197 people from 1990 to 2007. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) reported between 80 and 315 aircraft collisions annually with birds at John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport over the last 29 years. WS reduced gull strikes to aircraft by 76-99% which provided a safer operating environment for aircraft and passengers. WS is helping other NY airports, which reported 2,813 aircraft collisions with birds, deer, and coyotes from 1990 to 2007.

WS has been working with airports to provide a safe operating environment since 1979 with the goal of minimizing hazardous wildlife threats to aviation while balancing natural resources protection. WS conducts wildlife hazard assessments, control measures, and training for airports so they can comply with Federal Aviation Administration regulation and safety policies. Additionally, the research arm of WS develops innovative methods to minimize wildlife use of airports or to detect wildlife and avoid an aircraft strike.

WS has conducted wildlife hazard assessments or site visits at all 24 certificated airports in New York State plus military installations and general aviation airports. In the last two years, WS implemented wildlife management measures to reduce immediate risks at 12 airports. Wildlife management measures used were integrated hazing programs, removal of hazardous deer, coyotes, or Canada geese, and working with the airports' neighbors to manage local wildlife. In FY 2008, WS trained 161 airport personnel from 20 of New York's civilian airports and military installations. Some training programs were joint ventures with the NY Airport Management Association and the NYS Bureau of Aviation.

Urban Human Health and Safety—Canada geese threaten public health and safety, property, and crops. The peak resident Canada goose population in New York was approximately 249,000 birds. WS biologists work with local government to design and implement Canada goose programs that meet local needs. Some communities utilize technical information to implement goose management programs themselves. WS programs have included hazing programs with a border collie, nest and egg treatment, population management, seminars, one-on-one consultation by telephone, and assisting landowners and managers in obtaining federal and state permits to manage geese. New York WS responds to more than 200 requests for assistance with geese each year.

Reducing the Occurrence of Raccoon Rabies—First reported in New York in 1990, raccoon rabies quickly spread and is now present throughout most of the State. WS has contained the spread of raccoon rabies in western New York, pushed raccoon rabies out of the Champlain Valley and St. Lawrence River Plain, and kept raccoon rabies from entering New York from Vermont and Quebec. Raccoon rabies containment is accomplished by a combination of three methods. A trap-vaccinate-release (TVR) program created a barrier of vaccinated raccoons in Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Clinton, and Niagara Counties in 2007 and 2008. An estimated 65% of the raccoon population was vaccinated in each zone. Second, broad areas were baited with 1,309,562 oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits across 7,895 square miles in 2008 for the tenth consecutive year. The ORV bait contains a vaccine pouch released when eaten by a raccoon. The TVR and ORV baiting in combination has resulted in no new raccoon rabies cases in these four counties in 2008. Finally, raccoon populations were monitored. These accomplishments are possible through a cooperative effort with the New York State Department of Health, Cornell University's Diagnostic Laboratory, and other State and local agencies.

Looking to the Future

In 2008 WS has received requests to protect threatened and endangered shorebirds nesting on Long Island beaches. Studies have shown non-native red fox, raccoons, feral cats, and gulls are a cause of the decline of many shorebird species. WS has been requested by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to remove raccoons and red fox preying on federally threatened piping plovers and roseate terns on federal refuges. Additionally, a number of bird conservation organizations, public parks, and the Department of Homeland Security has requested WS assistance with managing predation to protect these rare birds. WS is working with other government agencies and bird conservation organizations to develop a bird conservation plan. During plan development WS will implement limited predator management to protect declining shorebird populations. WS possesses the expertise to assist with this vast array of emerging wildlife damage issues.

New York Wildlife Services Funding

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

Major Assistance Activities:

- Reducing double-crested cormorant impacts to fisheries and rare species
- Reducing public health threats from raccoon rabies
- Protecting public safety and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting property from damage caused by resident Canada geese
- Increasing milk production and profits at dairies by reducing European starlings
- Protecting property and public health from damage caused by large, urban crow roosts

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to New York:

- Evaluating techniques for reducing double-crested cormorant impacts to fisheries
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Develop long-term techniques to disperse winter crow roosts from urban and suburban areas
- Looking at the impact of beaver to the recovery of native brook trout
- Evaluating techniques for managing voles to restore natural areas in New York City