

The Outdoorsman

Bulletin Number 42

Jan-Feb 2011

Mule Deer Working Group Supports Feeding Deer to Predators Instead of Restoring Healthy Herds

By George Dovel

In December of 2010, Nevada's Board of Wildlife Commissioners decided Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) biologists must take the necessary biological steps to restore and maintain mule deer populations as a condition of continued employment. See *Outdoorsman* No. 41 Pages 10-11 for details.

Like their counterparts in other western states, NDOW wildlife managers have ignored science and state law in order to implement the radical 1991 "Wildlands" agenda adopted by the United Nations in 1992, and promoted by assorted national and international interests. Their goal of "Re-wilding" North America – by replacing rural humans with protected large carnivores and "native" plants in a vast system of "Core Areas" and "Wildlife Corridors" – is already being implemented.

NDOW Director Refused to Obey Commission

As happened earlier in Idaho and in other western states, when a majority of Nevada Wildlife Commissioners directed NDOW to implement predator control in depleted mule deer herds during the past two years, the Director and his biologists refused to do it. Early in 2010 USDA Wildlife Services control agents explained they could not control predators when the state agency that normally gave them direction refused to agree to it.

In November of 2010, after repeatedly refusing to follow Commission direction to control mountain lions and coyotes in selected areas where they were decimating mule deer herds, NDOW Director Ken Mayor was fired by outgoing Gov. Jim Gibbons. But once Nevada's new Governor, Brian Sandoval, was sworn in, he re-hired Mayer as Acting Director and made no secret of his intention not to reappoint Commissioners whose terms expire in June.

Those Commissioners have already solicited applicants for the Director position and are providing Sandoval with three names from which the law says he may hire one. But if Mayer is not one of the three, Sandoval is expected to re-hire him after the Commission terms expire.

With Acting Director Mayer influencing the new governor and his legal counsel, the Commission lost the opportunity to acquire additional funding that was needed to

restore a healthy predator-prey balance in areas where mule deer exist in a predator pit.

NDOW Director Solicits Help from MDWG

Then in an effort to completely discredit the Commissioners he was refusing to obey, Mayer sent the Commission Findings to WAFWA* Mule Deer Working Group Chairman Jim Heffelfinger, a biologist with Arizona Game and Fish Department. Heffelfinger responded with a letter he signed, plus four unsigned pages titled, "Comments from the WAFWA Mule Deer Working Group regarding the findings of the Mule Deer Restoration Committee of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners."

(* Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)

Instead of responding to any statement in the "Findings of the Committee" with biological facts, the amateurish response brags about how many mule deer biologists from 23 (WAFWA) member states or provinces have been involved in the Working Group since it was formed 14 years ago. It also brags about the multiple publications it has issued and claims it "is considered one of the most respected and productive working groups ever sponsored by WAFWA."

It neglects to tell the Nevada Commission that the mule deer biologists who provided all of this "expertise" are the same biologists who supervised the destruction of healthy mule deer herds they inherited in the 1980s. It also neglects to mention that every state that has followed their advice during the past 14 years has experienced an accelerated decline in mule deer populations and harvests.

MDWG Stopped Short of Exposing Its Real Agenda

Although the MDWG response criticizes several proposed solutions in the "Committee's Findings", it remains quiet about its major findings, (e.g. that NDOW is currently structured to focus on observational biology and research – not to act on the results of the research and correct the biological problems). And the Committee's recommended solution (to restructure NDOW to re-focus on the biology of game production) was also not mentioned by the MDWG because doing so would expose its real agenda.

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As you will soon learn, that agenda has nothing to do with restoring mule deer – and everything to do with trying to re-create “native” ecosystems according to a fanatical belief that has no basis in fact. If you doubt that, I challenge you to read “the rest of the story.”

MDWG Blames Mule Deer Decline on Human Development, Greenhouse Gases

The several hundred pages in the assorted publications referenced by Heffelfinger in his letter to Nevada Commission Chairman Raine display the same message. That is – human-caused habitat destruction and global warming (referred to more recently as “climate change”) are the causes of the mule deer decline.

In their 2009 87-page “Habitat Guidelines for Mule Deer Intermountain West Ecoregion” (one of seven *ecoregions*), NDOW Biologist Mike Cox is a major author. On page 24 it admitted: “conservation and predator control dramatically reduced deer mortality (Leopold et al. 1947).”

Yet on page 66 it quoted Wallmo in 1981, “In my view, the only generalization needed to account for the mule deer decline throughout the West is that practically every identified trend in land use and plant succession on the deer ranges is detrimental to deer. Hunting pressure and predators might be controlled, and favorable weather conditions could permit temporary recovery, but deer numbers ultimately are limited by habitat quality and quantity.”

Aldo Leopold was talking about the first half of the 20th Century when he was a leader in the historical restoration of game populations, using predator control and reduced hunting seasons as the major tools. Wallmo was expressing a personal opinion that was already disproved by a dozen long-term studies using the same two tools following the second game decline in the 20th Century.

MDWG Offers Excuses to Ignore Research

Yet none of those highly publicized studies are even mentioned in the MDWG literature except for studies in Alaska (Gasaway and Boertje) and Canada (Bergerud). Although these extensive studies concluded, beyond any reasonable doubt, that predators – not habitat – prevented recovery of declining game herds, WAFWA claims they are not relevant for two reasons:

1. Although the prey species studied were all members of the deer family, black-tailed or mule deer were not the major species studied.
2. They said the Alaskan and Canadian research occurred in “natural” ecosystems where they say predators “behave differently” than they do in systems that have been altered by humans like those encountered in the lower 48 states.

Whether the MDWG information was published in 2009 or 10 years earlier, the claim that ecosystems in Alaska and Canada were not influenced by humans is

simply not true. The MDWG material contains frequent statements about predation that are either unsupported opinions or, in some cases, a misrepresentation of known facts.

For example, they offer a 16-page review of deer-predator relationships published in the Wildlife Society Bulletin in 2001, which claims that 10 of 12 western states, including Alaska and Idaho, reported they did not have predator reduction programs to benefit big game species. Yet Idaho’s ongoing bear and lion reduction during the late 1970s through mid 1980s to restore Clearwater Region elk populations, and Alaskan and Canadian wolf control programs to restore moose and caribou populations were a matter of public record during the review’s 1987 survey.

Predator Control, Short Seasons Restored Game

Regardless of what they were taught by college professors caught up in the anti-establishment revolution of the 1960s, every wildlife biologist has access to historical documents that provide facts. Game populations in the 11 contiguous western states and Alaska were over-harvested by both Native Americans and by the settlers who arrived in the latter part of the 19th century.

Compared to the number of present day hunters, a relative handful of people, equipped with primitive weapons and primitive forms of transportation by today’s standards, decimated the West’s game populations in a few short years. The hunter-conservationists who reversed the slaughter did not require decades of study and debate or expensive satellite tracking systems to implement a course of action.

They dramatically reduced the kill by predators with intense predator reduction programs, and imposed reduced hunting season lengths and bag limits to prevent excessive human take. They also banned commercial harvest of game species and mitigated the loss from occasional extreme winters in Northern states with timely emergency feeding in scattered critical areas.

And contrary to many biologists’ practice in the lower 48 states in recent years, they never allowed hunters to participate in an extra late season hunt to kill off the breeding stock because of drought or wildfire damage to forage, or early indications of a severe winter.

Yet the MDWG information wrongly claims that killing adult female mule deer in a special late season hunt before a severe winter is “compensatory” rather than “additive” by claiming the deer are going to die anyway. They conclude this will leave fewer deer to eat the limited forage and wrongly claim these remaining deer will then produce more replacement fawns.

If they took the time to read the Alaska studies, they might learn how ridiculous their statements sound to anyone with a basic knowledge of wild ruminant nutrition. Forcing deer to further deplete the fat reserves needed to survive a severe winter with an extended late season hunt guarantees fewer will survive and in even poorer condition.

Alaska Learned the Truth – and Published It

Long, either-sex seasons and multiple bag limits for deer in Idaho and Utah, and for moose and caribou in Alaska, resulted in record harvests during the 1950s and 1960s. Abnormally deep snow during the 1968-69, 1970-71 and 1971-72 winters in all three states triggered simultaneous declines in juvenile survival and adult populations.

With easy killing in the deep snow, predators increased those declines but biologists in all three states ignored biology and listened to earlier unsupported claims by Durward Allen and others that nature would balance itself. Later, in a 1985 *National Wildlife* magazine article, Allen's former graduate student, David Mech, admitted he was responsible for the balance of nature myth that had all but destroyed the moose on Isle Royale and the once famous whitetail deer population in northeast Minnesota.

Boertje's 20-year study in Alaska's 6,564 square mile Unit 20A admitted they harvested more female moose than the number of replacement calves that survived, and said mortality from severe winters, hunting, and wolf predation were largely additive. And unlike biologists in Idaho and Utah, when the moose herd continued its decline to 2,500 in 1975, they reduced the number of wolves by 70-80% for five years and by 55-60% for two more years.

During the next 11 years, biologists did not kill wolves in 20A and the small number taken by hunters and trappers allowed the wolves to recover to a healthy level for the restored moose population. In 1984, there were 13,800 moose in the study area – 5.5 times as many as there were in 1975 – and hunters had harvested several thousand more caribou and moose than they could have without the temporary, but necessary, wolf reduction

MDWG Offers More Excuses to Hide Its Agenda

The hundreds of pages provided by WAFWA's MDWG biologists mention the claim by hunters and by a growing number of respected biologists that controlling predators is essential to restoring healthy mule deer populations. But instead of being honest and admitting they don't believe in controlling predators, they either ignore the several dozen long-term studies published during the past 30 years supporting this action – or else provide flimsy excuses for dismissing the research and claim even more research is needed.

Their four most common excuses are: 1) research does not concentrate on mule or black-tailed deer or 2) research on those species is confined to islands; 3) research is limited to tiny areas too small to allow effective control; and 4) predator control is too costly to be cost-effective.

Vancouver Island, B.C., the location of several black-tailed deer research projects, is significantly larger than nine states in the U.S. A deer-predator study at the MDWG website reported, "Reid and Janz (1995) estimated that resident deer hunters on Vancouver Island received a \$5.90 benefit for every \$1.00 spent on wolf control."

A 1986 Alaska Board of Game document may be even more revealing because the cost per wolf killed by airplane or helicopter appears quite expensive. From 1976-1984 Alaska biologists spent \$824,200 to kill 1,313 wolves in the entire state, an average of \$628 per wolf even then.

But based solely on the market value of \$2.74 per pound for the *extra* 1.24 million pounds of wild meat that was harvested as a direct result of the wolf control, the direct benefit for meat production alone was \$3.4 million. This 1-to-4 cost-to-benefit did not include the multiplier value of increased recreation and tourism providing income to merchants, pilots, guides, etc., or the increased wildlife viewing and photographic opportunities for everyone.

Despite these examples of the massive economic benefit from controlling wolves, a 2008 *Reno Gazette-Journal* interview of NDOW/MDWG Biologist Mike Cox included his quote: "We're trying to find a (predator control) prescription that works, and if we can find that, we will use it in other parts of the state. So far we have not found anything that is going to work or that we won't need to spend a half-million dollars for a small increase in the number of (deer) tags for that expenditure. In my book that is not an economically viable management tool."

Yet without expressing any concern for the citizens who must pay the horrific cost of supporting their non-game agenda, Cox recently joined Western Governors in endorsing a \$6 billion multi-state sagebrush-steppe habitat project that will not even slow the mule deer decline.

The MDWG claim that declining adult mule deer weights prove deer populations exceed the carrying capacity of their habitat ignores lengthy research by Creel, Winnie et al concluding that harassment by predators is the real culprit (see also "Predator Mediated Competition" and "Predation and the Ecology of Fear" by Dr. Charles Kay in *Outdoorsman* No. 40 & 41). The decades-long 3-Bar study described on the next page indicates the carrying capacity for mule deer is much higher than is claimed by biologists.

State Wildlife Biologists Experts at Deception

The elaborate deception engaged in constantly by state wildlife biologists reflects a disdain for the law, for the license buyers who pay their wages, and even for the Predator Policy established by their F&G Commission.

For example, Arizona's Predator Management Team stated, "Predators and their prey cannot be managed separately." And the Policy adopted by the Commission in 2000 states in part: "Mountain lion and coyote management may occur in, but is not limited to, the following circumstances: • Where wildlife populations are below management objectives and where there is evidence that predation may be a factor." (emphasis added)

Yet MDWG Chairman Hebblewhite and former Chairman deVos brazenly ignored the Policy and let lions and coyotes decimate their mule deer population – pretending that habitat is always the problem. Read "Deer Predators and Drought" to see what they are covering up.

Deer, Predators, and Drought

New research holds surprises

By Rory K. Aikens

(NOTE: This article by Arizona Game and Fish Department Public Information Officer Rory Aikens was published in the July-August 2004 issue of *Arizona Wildlife News*. – ED)

An ongoing research project on the 3-Bar Wildlife Area near Roosevelt Lake is helping biologists to better understand – and to an extent redefine – the predator-prey relationship.

The study's findings so far indicate that predators may have a more significant impact on deer populations than biologists previously thought. The prevailing biological belief is that habitat conditions are the primary controlling factor for deer populations, not predation. The long-term deer study at the 3-Bar is punching holes in parts of biological theory, and others.

Jim deVos, research chief for the Arizona Game and Fish Department, says the findings have many biologists scratching their heads. Despite a prolonged drought, biologists are seeing deer densities within the predator-proof enclosures rivaling those in places like the prime whitetail country of the southeastern United States. Yet deer densities outside the 3-Bar enclosure have experienced significant declines during that same period.

Professor Warren Ballard with Texas Tech, one of the principal researchers on the department's deer study, says, "Deer numbers inside the enclosure are around 10-times higher than the surrounding country. One of our challenges is determining all the factors of why that is so."

Professor Paul Krausman, a renowned wildlife biologist with the University of Arizona, is also involved in the project.

3-Bar is a unique outdoor lab

The 602-acre Walnut Canyon Enclosure in the 3-Bar Wildlife Area is located in the Tonto National Forest. The Walnut Canyon Enclosure is a fenced area of almost one square mile that provides a unique outdoor wildlife laboratory for biologists.

This predator-proof enclosure has been used for more than 30 years to study mule deer declines and for other research as well. Two mule deer declines have been documented in the western United States since the 1960's. The exact reasons for declines are varied and often difficult to pinpoint.

The original 3-Bar mule deer study in the late 1970's found that fawn survival was 30 percent greater inside the enclosure than outside during a six-year wet period. The current 3-Bar study shows that despite one of the worst droughts in the past 700 to 1,000 years, fawn

survival has remained high in this predator proof enclosure", says deVos.

Outside the enclosure during the drought, fawn survival rates and mule deer populations have plunged to the lowest numbers in the past half-century. During 2002, which was the driest year in Arizona's recorded history, the fawn-to-doe ratios within the enclosure were 100 fawns per 100 does.

Outside the enclosure in Game Management Unit 22 the ratio was 18 fawns per 100 does. "The only significant difference between the two areas is the absence of predators in the 3-Bar enclosure," Ballard says.

Deer capture helps research efforts

A recent deer capture provided an opportunity to assess deer nutritional condition as part of the process to better understand the interaction between habitat quality, deer nutrition, predation, and fawn survival.

Eight deer were captured inside the enclosure and seven deer in the habitat outside the enclosure. The captured deer were fitted with radio telemetry collars so biologists can track them and determine their habitat use. The radio collars will also send out a "mortality signal," so that biologists can determine the cause of death.

A student working on his doctoral thesis in wildlife biology at Texas Tech, Rugilio Carrera, is conducting a vegetative analysis to compare vegetation inside and outside the enclosure on a seasonal basis. Carrera, an exchange student from Mexico, says one question he is trying to answer is whether the high density of mule deer within the enclosure is negatively impacting the vegetation.

A prevailing wildlife biological belief is that deer numbers can reach a density at which they will negatively impact the vegetation, such as on northern Arizona's Kaibab Plateau during the 1930's. A browse line as tall as a deer can reach and eat standing on its hind legs still can be discerned on the Kaibab today.

DeVos says a nonscientific appraisal of the 3-Bar habitat is that the deer are not impacting the vegetation. "Some of the top wildlife biologists in the field, such as Dave Brown have looked at the habitat and not readily detect overuse by deer. The threshold of when deer densities impact habitat may be much higher than we ever believed possible, at least in this habitat type."

Portable ultrasound used to assess deer nutrition

Dr. Ole Alcumbrac, a wildlife veterinarian working with the department on the project, used portable ultrasound equipment during the deer capture-and-release operation to determine the thickness of each deer's layer of fat. The ultrasound machine also allowed Alcumbrac and

Scott Bender, a veterinarian with the Navajo Nation who was helping with the capture effort, to determine whether or not the does captured were pregnant. All but two of the does were pregnant, and most were carrying twins.

"The ultrasound equipment allows us to do a body fat assessment on live animals. In the past, we could collect such information only on dead deer, usually at check stations during the fall hunts. The new technology gives us real-time data on live deer," Alcumbrac says.

Carrera explains that vegetation quality and quantity data are being collected from the 3-Bar study site quarterly. Biologists are measuring vegetation inside and outside the enclosure to observe possible changes in habitat quality on an annual and seasonal basis.

Annual deer drive conducted

"Once a year, we conduct a deer survey where every animal is counted. Therefore, we know exactly how many deer are in the enclosure, including how many fawns, does, and bucks. We even know their ages," deVos says.

Deer are counted during a deer drive each fall using 60-100 Game and Fish Department employees, interns, and volunteers. "We form a long human line across the entire enclosure and walk from one end to the other. Each animal that passes through the line along the way is counted. Believe me, it's not an easy task because most of the enclosure has steep rocky terrain, with dense vegetation, including lots of Cholla cactus," says deVos.

3-Bar study challenges theories

The 3-Bar deer study findings challenge many accepted biological theories.

For instance, de Vos says, biologists have long believed that deer are "density" dependent, which means that once deer density ratios get high, deer experience a reduction in fecundity – the physical ability to reproduce. "That's not happening on the 3-bar. That tells us that density dependency may not be a valid theory or that the threshold for it is much higher than anyone thought."

Another generally accepted biological theory is that habitat conditions, not predation, control deer numbers. "That theory may be true when weather and habitat conditions are good, such as our study during the 1970's in the 3-Bar. However, we have had a decade-long drought in 2002 – the driest year in recorded history – yet deer numbers, densities, and reproduction have remained as high as during the wet years," de Vos says. "The absence of predation is the only variable that has changed."

More about Lions and Mule Deer

By George Dovel

In 1971 a 5-year field study of a mountain lion population with a density of one resident adult lion for each 15 square miles was initiated by Arizona GFD Research Biologist Harley Shaw. In the 175-sq.-mile study area on the Spyder Ranch northwest of Prescott, Arizona, the lions'

principal prey was: mule deer - 60%; cattle - 37% (Shaw 1977: 1981).

Shaw's study reported that a high percentage of the lion-killed cattle were calves and he reported that the predation on cattle increased substantially during the spring when calves were born and deer numbers were at their lowest.

As a panel member during the Third Mountain Lion Workshop in Prescott in the mid-1980s, longtime lion hunter and, more recently, cattle owner, Steve Smith, advised that, during his first year as a rancher on the Salt River in central Arizona, his branding calf losses were 51%. He pointed out that two decades earlier, during the 1960s when mule deer were more abundant, calf losses in the area averaged only about 10 percent.

Recently in a *Western Hunter* article by Smith entitled, "Out of Balance", he pointed out that long-term mismanagement of Arizona's mule deer, was a major cause of livestock losses as well as losses to other wildlife species. When the deer populations decline, the lions kill more calves and when a significant number of Arizona cattle allotments were also reduced in central Arizona's Tonto National Forest, the lions simply began killing far more desert bighorn sheep.

Steve Smith reported that from 1989-91 AZGFD Biologist Stan Cunningham captured, radio-collared and monitored 49 desert bighorns yet lions killed only two of them. But more than 10 years later when Thorry Smith collared 36 bighorns, lions killed 12 of them.

A study conducted by McKenney, Smith and deVos from 1988-2003 concluded that once the lions began killing the sheep, lion control resulted in increased bighorn populations even during the most severe drought on record. Published in *Wildlife Monographs* 164: 1-36. 2006, this study "found no evidence of forage over-utilization" and hypothesized, "short-term removal of mountain lions by lethal harvest contributed to higher growth and productivity of the small, isolated population, even during periods of drought."

In his "Out of Balance" article, Smith wrote that drought is used as an excuse that absolves agencies from any responsibility. He points out there were up to 30 times as many deer per square mile inside the 3-Bar enclosure as existed outside of the fence.

With no evidence that forage utilization has been excessive during any season of the year, including years of severe drought and a year when half of the forage inside the enclosure burned, he asks why this information from ongoing studies has been kept from the public for 20 years.

The answer is simple. Like Idaho, Nevada, Utah and other western wildlife management agencies, AZGFD biologists are feeding their state's mule deer to excessive numbers of lions and other predators – rather than manage these species to benefit all wildlife and provide a healthy deer population to the deer hunters who pay their wages.

The effects of thousands of impoverished trappers and wolf bounties in northern Alberta early in the 20th century on predators, and its relation to the myth of the harmless wolf.

By Dr. Valerius Geist

(In November 2010, a handful of people received the following information from world renowned wild ungulate authority Dr. Valerius Geist. It is presented here with his permission to let a growing number of Outdoorsman readers, including thousands on the various websites, understand a major cause of the myth that wolves won't attack humans. – ED)

Dear Colleagues,

I have been digging into historical literature in my quest to understand why the myth of the "harmless wolf" took such a severe hold in North America, to the point of perverting scholarship and quite probably leading to the death of some believers. The conventional view of the harmless wolf, which I also believed in throughout my academic career and four years into retirement, is in sharp contrast to experiences elsewhere. Yet, it certainly coincided with my personal experience pre-1999 when a misbehaving pack of wolves settled about our and our neighbor's properties at the edge of a farming district in central Vancouver Island.

I subsequently discovered that the wolves were much the same in their behavior, whatever their origins, but that circumstances lead to vastly different outcomes. In general, the evidence indicates that wolves are very careful to choose the most nutritious food source easiest obtained without danger. They tackle dangerous prey only when they run out of non dangerous prey, and they shift to new prey only very gradually, following a long period of gradual exploration.

Wolves are very sensitive to strangeness, including a potential prey species strange to them. Garbage is the easiest and safest food source for wolves, and they do take advantage of such. Once they are habituated to people due to their proximity, they may begin to investigate people. The ultimate exploration of a strange prey by a carnivore is to attack such. Consequently, the danger from habituated wolves.

However, they need not have garbage, just a shortage of prey to begin investigating and eventually attacking humans. This means that as long as wolves have sufficient natural prey, they leave livestock alone. As long as they have livestock they leave humans alone. When short of natural prey and livestock they turn their attention to humans and their habitations and may even break into such to extract cattle, horses, pigs, sheep or poultry.

Dogs and cats are attacked before that. We humans are next in line, primarily children. But even then the initial

attacks are exploratory in nature and clumsy, allowing some victims to escape. However, this scenario is of exceptional scarcity in North America, though it is practiced occasionally by coyotes targeting children in urban parks.

However the discrepancy between global and conventional American experiences with wolves is crass. Wolves have killed thousands upon thousands of people as chronicled by European and Asian sources, yet in North America fatal attacks are few and disputed. The differences are real. What then was going on in the past century in North America to make wolves so harmless? I felt I had obtained part of the answer that showed that wolves are wolves wherever they occur, but that circumstances can generate very different outcomes in wolf behavior.

I Continued Digging

In a teleconference with a committee of the Montana legislature on or about April 27, 2010 I suggested that in Canada trapping and official wolf control via hired predator control officers was likely a good part of the answer. Subsequently I ran into most unlikely sources, plus follow-ups. These are the memoirs of two German authors, the first is the two-volume work of Max Hinsche (1935) *Kanada wirklich erlebt* (Canada really experienced) and Reinhold Eben-Ebenau (1953) *Goldgelbedes Herbstlaub* (Golden yellow fall leaves).

In addition I examined C. Gordon Hewit's (1921) *The Conservation of the Wildlife of Canada*, and followed up with some reading by a like-minded and qualified author on Russian and Siberian conditions Egon Freiherr von Kapherr (1941) *Wo es trommelt und röhrt* (Where [wildlife] drums and roars).

Max Hinsche arrived in Canada in 1926 and became a trapper and collector of wildlife. He was a taxidermist by trade. He spent eight years on the Athabaska River in Northern Alberta, but traveled for a year in the then unexplored Yukon before returning to Germany in 1935. He wrote his memoirs in two volumes, and died shortly thereafter.

He arrived in Canada virtually destitute, and rumor has it he fled the law. When he returned with a significant collection for the Dresden Natural History Museum, somehow, all was forgiven, and his books made him a hero for a short time. Hinsche is an excellent, vivid writer, and a close, careful, objective observer. His is far and beyond the best account of how trappers lived in Northern Alberta in 1926-1935.

He illustrates a community of desperately poor

hard struggling men who at great danger to themselves trapped for a meager grubstake in winter. In summer they were employed as laborers, which earned them just enough to go trapping once again. Most held down a trap line alone, some lived in pairs, however, all were united in a code of conduct and a web of mutual support. It is evident that there were many such poor trappers as Hinsche met them on the Athabaska going to and fro on his trap lines.

After a first dreadful year in which Hinsche and a companion of his almost starved to death, he set up a routine that made him reasonably successful and allowed him some museum collecting. He was out virtually day and night and experienced Canadian winter conditions in their full severity.

What were Hinsche's views on wildlife and wolves? When he came in 1926 moose were scarce, but increased and were abundant when he left in 1935. Mule deer were abundant throughout. Wolves were present, but not common and in eight years Hinsche had only one serious run-in with a wolf pack. However, that run-in, described in exquisite detail, is classic. A pack confronted him as he trespassed into an area where they had killed three moose and three deer. Hinsche pointing out that he had only four shells in his rifle, backed out without shooting and reached his cabin safely. (A Saskatchewan friend of mine did exactly the same thing opposing seven very pushy wolves with five cartridges in his rifle's magazine and chamber).

Of course Hinsche trapped a few wolves along with other furbearers. His significance resides in his detailed account of the attitude of trappers towards wolves due to the problems wolves cause them. He points out that when wolves arrive in a trapper's area, they first of all spook off the big game which the trappers rely on for food. These desperately poor men and their few dogs relied almost entirely on big game for food to come through the long winter, and when wolves emptied the land of moose and deer the trappers could be in serious difficulty.

As we learn later in detail from Eben-Ebenau, keeping meat safe for personal use was not easy as some bears managed to get at cached meat, which meant that the trapper had to disrupt trap line work and go hunting once again. Finding no wildlife to hunt was thus a very serious concern for a trapper.

Secondly, wolves notoriously followed trappers, and destroyed the catch in the traps. This was a serious financial loss to men who were already very poor, especially if wolves destroyed a high value fur such as lynx, marten, mink or cross fox. Thirdly, wolves could destroy sled dogs, another economic blow. (And I must add that there are also incidents of a wolf or more attacking a trapper and/or his sled dog team as told to me by native trappers, though neither Hinsche nor Eben-Ebenau mention such). Consequently, and understandably, trappers sought to rid themselves of wolves.

Wolf fur was of no particular value. However, with a bounty added, there was incentive to trap wolves. One advantage of the bounty system was that only the scalp had to be handed in to receive the money. Consequently, one only needed the scalp and one could save oneself the trouble of skinning, preparing and transporting the bulky wolf pelt.

Hinsche makes a point that while poison on the trap line was outlawed in 1922, trappers continued to use it on wolves because they could - with some luck - eliminate a wolf pack in one setting. Whereas with leg-hold traps they could only catch one or two wolves at best leaving the survivors to continue with their mischief.

Eben-Ebenau makes much the same point, but with snares, which were also outlawed though the prohibition was largely ignored by trappers. A well-set series of snares could catch most of a pack, and kill the caught wolves quickly. Ebenau was very skilled in setting snares for wolves, and caught or shot many more wolves than the average trapper. Moreover, leg-hold traps large enough to securely hold a wolf were fairly heavy and bulky, which would be added work for the already stressed-out trapper.

Traps were set along trap lines that were up to a hundred miles long and carrying traps such distances was hard work. Dog teams were not always at hand. After all, game had to be shot for the dogs, or fish caught and dried and transported to the distant line cabins. And then there was the serious problem of bears breaking into trapper cabins and caches. There was thus incentive to not only remove wolves but bears as well. And that, we can safely expect, had a positive impact on the survival of fawns and calves of deer, moose and woodland caribou.

Eben-Ebenau, who came to Canada in 1929, and to northwestern Alberta in 1931, describes matters up to 1951. He was a German blue blood, an educated man with an insatiable thirst for hunting. An excellent writer, he was a hard-nosed, very skeptical man who hunted down hard facts with determination. That's why he records not only the life of trappers quite similar to Hinsche, and social circumstances far superior to the latter, but of interest from the current perspective is his accumulation of quantitative data about trappers, as well as his observations of the behavior of wolves.

Therefore we know how many trappers there were in northern Alberta, how many wolves they killed, how high the bounty was and how much was paid out. Next: Eben-Ebenau was so excellent an observer of wildlife, that I made use of his observations in synthesizing the biology of moose in my books 1998 *Deer of the World* and 1999 *Moose*.

Eben-Ebenau remained well connected to Germany as he provided a first rate exhibition of Canadian moose trophies to the 1937 hunting exhibition in Berlin. He maintained a close contact with the natural museum there,

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Wolf Bounties and the Myth – *cont. from page 7*

as well as with famous German personalities he guided or hunted with in Canada. I got to know Eben-Ebenau personally, exchanged correspondence and we visited each other. I was able to admire his 1937 collection, now displayed at his home at Lesser Slave Lake where he homesteaded. He became a well known guide and outfitter and was honored by the Province of Alberta for his conservation work. This all becomes significant in view of what Ebenau ultimately wrote about wolves in northern Alberta.

Trapper Income

Max Hinsche's and partner's 1926/27 catch (p.53) amounted to one wolf, and 131 ermines for an income of \$74.05. In 1951, according to Eben-Ebenau (p.203), the average income of an Alberta trapper was \$426. Eben-Ebenau (p. 197) also intoned that he never made more than \$500 a winter. He could make twice that working as a carpenter. Clearly, the income from trapping was very low, even if the value of the dollar then was much greater than today. Hinsche's and his partner's 1926/27 expenses were not covered by the above return from trapping.

The Bounty Paid for Wolves

The bounty for wolves (Ebenau p. 214) in 1935 was \$5.00 while a wolf pelt was worth \$4.00. In 1940 the bounty rose to \$10.00. In 1944 the bounty was still \$10.00, but the wolf fur fetched \$15.00. In 1948 the bounty rose to \$15.00, but the value of a wolf's fur was only \$4.00. It stayed like that until 1952. Clearly, the bounty added considerably to the value of a dead wolf and was an incentive, especially since only the scalp needed to be surrendered.

The Magnitude of the Wolf Kill.

The registered wolf kill climbed from 165 in 1930, to 187 in 1935 when the first bounty was paid, but climbed to 1143 wolves in 1948 when the bounty reached \$15.00. The registered wolf kill dropped to 829 in 1952. The rise and fall in wolf kills by trappers roughly parallels the pre-war increase and post-war decline in moose in northern Alberta.

The Number of Trappers

In 1944 there were 2668 registered trap lines, 1948 it was 2839, 1950 it was 2813, 1951 it was 2797 and in 1953 it was 2654. However, there were also trappers' licenses issued to homesteaders, farmers and ranchers. In 1951 there were 3127 such licenses, plus 2797 trap lines for a total of 5924 licensed trappers and the 1953 figures are similar. In addition to trappers, hunters, farmers and ranchers, game wardens as well as predator control officers also killed wolves.

The official kill of wolves was roughly one wolf caught by three trap-line owners per year. Of course we do not know the total kill, including wolves not submitted for bounty payments. Before proceeding, one must note that the apparent low wolf kill in the early 1930's took place

when wildlife was recovering from a low in earlier decades, so that trappers concerned about their own food situation were all too eager to rid themselves of wolves. The low wolf kill thus reflects a low wolf population.

Now some very interesting observations by Eben-Ebenau follow. He points out that during the peak of snowshoe rabbit abundance, when the countryside was saturated with rabbits (as I can attest to personally having witnessed the 1961/62 rabbit high in BC's Spazisi northern wilderness), wolves lived to a large extent off rabbits. This was matched by other smaller carnivores. As rabbit abundance dropped wolves switched increasingly to mule deer (as well as livestock, according to Alberta's game guardian since 1905, Mr. B. Lawton p. 109, Hewitt 1921).

At the Same Time Wolves Ignore and Avoid Moose

Eben Ebenau observed packs of wolves hunting rabbit among moose while the latter kept on feeding and ignored wolves completely. Ebenau goes on to say that, in his very extensive travels he never found a moose killed by wolves. This was in the western part of northern Alberta. Hinsche operated in the eastern-central parts. He did not see or kill many wolves, but did find a few moose kills and did find that moose avoided wolves. That matches with my observations in every region I worked in.

What arises is a picture of thousands of desperately poor men in Northern Alberta, hostile to wolves, trapping for a meager living and eliminating wolves as much as possible, especially when they get paid a bounty and only need to bring in the scalp. The magnitude of the annual wolf kill is so high that wolves can survive on the massive abundance of rabbits, with a few deer thrown in, while avoiding moose.

Wolves were thus severely depleted in Alberta in an ongoing manner early in the 20th century, so much so, they avoided difficult and dangerous prey, left livestock alone, and avoided humans virtually completely. Since wolf packs favored deer, and a deer is quickly consumed, the packs did not have much opportunity to confront humans over kills.

The foregoing suggests that the bounty paid on wolves, far from being ineffective, was very effective in lowering wolf numbers so that big game could build up. Moreover, it is only with current insights into wolf behavior that Eben-Ebenau's observations on wolves and moose gain significance.

With an army of desperately poor men extracting a living from the wilderness not only were wolves routinely depleted, but almost certainly, grizzly bears as well. Thousands of poor men trapping for fur were thus exercising severe predator control.

However, the myth of the "harmless wolves" is grounded in more than the reality generated by severe wolf control due to commercial trapping for fur by thousands of poverty stricken trappers who could ill afford wolves close by. In addition there was systematic destruction of wolves

Wolf Bounties in the lower 48 – cont. from page 9

Harding Published the Truth about Bounties

In his 1909 book Harding pointed out that bounties had already reduced the number of large predators in some eastern states and cited the severe impact of wolves and coyotes on game and livestock in most of the western states. The book correctly explained that the largest wolves were the white and “dusky” wolves found in northern Canada and Alaska, weighing up to 150 pounds, while the more common timber wolf weighing 80 to 100 pounds was spread over most of the U.S. and Canada.

It also described smaller timber wolves in the southern U.S., including the red wolf found in Texas and the brindled wolf in Mexico. The following map illustrates the location of timber wolves (*Canis lupus*) throughout the contiguous United States in 1909, and Harding references numerous federal bulletins and other documents providing recorded statistics throughout his book.

In the upper Green River Valley the local stockmen's association paid a bounty of \$10 on each wolf pup, \$20 on each grown dog wolf, and \$40 on each bitch with pup. Fremont County added \$3 to each of these, and the State of Wyoming paid \$3 more.

Although Wyoming reportedly increased its wolf bounty payment to \$5.00 before 1909, it remained one of the lowest wolf bounties paid by any state or province. Yet in the ten years preceding 1909, Wyoming paid State bounties of over \$65,000 on wolves alone, and \$160,156 on wolves, coyotes and mountain lions together,



One of Wolf Trapping Photos in Book, Titled “A Good Catch”

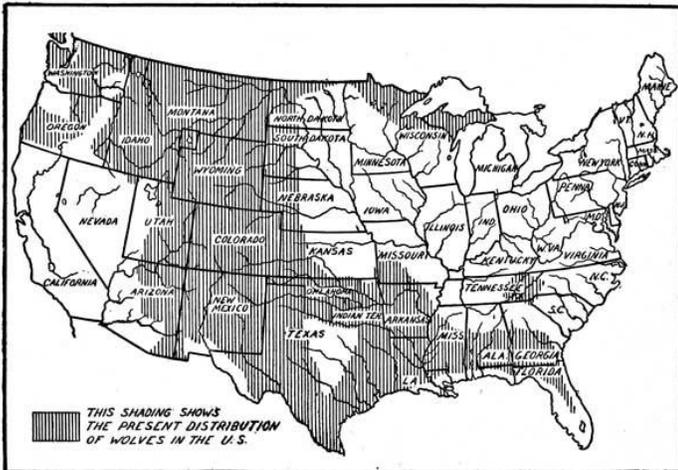
In Chapter III, Harding discusses killing of stock and game by wolves. Outdoorsman readers already know the extreme decline of big game populations when wolf numbers exceed the game’s ability to sustain them. But documented and estimated livestock losses, especially in States like Wyoming, averaged as high as 15% or more.

The great losses suffered by stockmen in the West led the U.S. Biological Survey, in connection with the Forest Service, to make a special investigation, and later a general campaign against the wolves of the National Forests began. During the year 1907 a large number of wolves and coyotes were killed in and near the forest reserves as shown below in just four of those states:

STATE	WOLVES	COYOTES
Wyoming	1,009	1,983
Montana	261	2,629
Idaho	14	3,881
New Mexico	232	544

The total number of wolves and coyotes taken in 12 western states in 1907 by Forest Guards and a few professional trappers that were hired was 1,723 wolves and 22,528 coyotes. Utah paid a larger bounty on wolves and suffered severe sheep losses from coyotes so no wolves were taken but 5,001 coyotes were killed.

On the Gila National Forest in New Mexico one Forest Guard killed 36 wolves, 30 coyotes, 9 bears, 7 mountain lions 17 bobcats, and 46 grey foxes in 1907 and sent the skulls to the Biological Survey for identification.



The Range of the Timber Wolf

Note the absence of wolves in California and all but a tiny area in the Northeast corner of Nevada next to the Idaho and Utah border. Although the book references the “small black wolf still found in Florida,” the few reports of large black wolf sightings were not confirmed leading one to believe they were not nearly as common in the U.S., and possibly also in Canada, as they are today.

Added to multiple recorded accounts of white fur traders and others observing Indians crossing their dogs with wild wolves, this is one more bit of evidence that these black wolf-dog crosses were accomplished far more recently than wildlife biologists want to admit.

Wolf Density and Bounty Payments

The U.S. Biological Survey report for the years 1895 to 1906, inclusive, but not including the year 1898, shows that bounties were paid on 20,819 wolves in Wyoming during that 11 years, representing an average of 1,893 wolves killed per year. The largest wolf density reportedly was in the Wyoming portion of the Green River Basin and the headwaters of the Green River.

Use of Poisons

Although poison was used by some bounty trappers and some of the FS trappers, it wasn't until 1916 that the Biological Survey divided the West into predator control districts and organized to eliminate wolves using strychnine and other tools. By 1946 wolves in most of the lower 48 states were already exterminated when Sodium Fluoroacetate (Compound 1080) was introduced, and proved to be a selective killer of canines providing it was nixed properly.

During the 1950s and 60s its successful use at bait stations to control wolves in Alaska and Canada is a matter of record but its use to control carnivores, except in certain public emergencies, was outlawed by President Nixon. It is still lawfully used for purposes like rodent control and to lace collars on domestic sheep so it will kill the coyote or other predator when it attempts to bite the throat.

Beginning about 1900

It is interesting to note that although Forester Aldo Leopold's 1933 book "Game Management" is used to qualify him as the father of modern wildlife management, trapper/author/publisher Arthur Robert Harding was one of

the first national advocates of the growing field of scientific wildlife management, conservation and fair regulations long before Leopold's book was published. Many of Harding's suggestions, like controlling predators in the spring, have been adopted.

In 1898, Harding was already an editor and publisher and within a few years he had received letters from thousands of trappers and other experienced outdoorsmen sharing their experiences and knowledge. When the federal government began its campaign to eradicate all predators from the West rather than control them, he offered better solutions.

Wildlife professionals and others who are still able of sift through historical material to gather facts will benefit from cutting and pasting the following link:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34501/34501-h/34501-h.htm#pic062>

Most of the federal reference material has probably been destroyed following changes in agendas, but some of it may still be available at the editorial offices of *Fur-Fish-Game* which is currently operated by fourth generation members of the Harding family.

IDAHO FOR WILDLIFE – News Bulletin No. 8

Following are just a few of our scheduled 2011 events and conservation projects for IFW Chapters across the state. We will be giving away many fabulous prizes and hunts so you won't want to miss attending one of our fun filled banquets!

Preston/Bear Lake: Saturday March 19th, Doors open at 6; 30, and dinner starts at 7:00. Grand prizes include one of the following: (1) 3 night Jackson hole getaway for 2 including attending the famous Bar J wranglers supper and show, scenic boat trip or a whitewater rafting trip,. (2) \$1,000 spending cash, (3) New Remington model 700 Sendero rifle, (Any choice of caliber), (4) Nikon spotting scope and tripod:

Last year we poured the concrete for the roof pillars at the Preston shooting range and this summer we will finish the support roof and awning. Our pheasant surrogate produced over 600 pheasants also! We also held a Big Buck contest for students at the Preston High school and awarded a new Nikon scope to the winner and gave custom engraved IFW Buck Knives to the other winners.

Snake River Banquet: Saturday April 2nd. Doors open at 5:30 and dinner will be at 7:00
Donated guided hunts with Non-Typical outfitters in Wyoming, and a 19' Nomad camp trailer donated by Bishes.

Last year we built more than 15 surrogators and were involved with the release of over 20,000 pheasants and chuckers in the upper snake River!

Latah Chapter: With their serrogators, they released over 800 pheasants into Latah County!

Bonnors Ferry: Banquet date is Saturday 7/23/2011. We have formed a committee to look into giving a scholarship to a graduating high school student or students. We are planning to rebuild goose nesting boxes which were destroyed on the river during the high waters. We are also preparing/planning for a youth whitetail mentoring/hunting course for this fall.

Mini Cassia, (Burley) Banquet and auction scheduled for Saturday, July 23rd 2011. We have 14 surrogators and rereleased over 4,000 pheasants in 2010. We also plan on working on a seeding project with Pheasants Forever this year.

"To protect Idaho's hunting and fishing heritage. To fight against all legal and legislative attempts by the animal rights and anti-gun organizations who are attempting to take away our rights and freedoms under the constitution of the United States of America. To hold all Federal and State Agencies who are stewards of our Wildlife accountable and ensure that science is used as the primary role for our Wildlife management."

Admit the Truth – Before it's Too Late

Recently the world we're living in appears to be spinning out of control. For most of us, just trying to pay our bills has become more than a full time job.

The people we elect to serve our interests are letting those we don't elect destroy our freedoms and our children's and their children's future. Yet we keep telling ourselves we don't have the time to make the changes we know are needed.

The state biologists whose wages we pay to manage our renewable wildlife resources are instead deliberately destroying them. The so-called "Mule Deer Working Group" and Idaho's "Mule Deer Initiative" are simply charades to destroy what belongs to everyone by pretending that locking everything up so nature can take its course will somehow restore the deer.

The wildlife biologists are not even preserving the predators they refuse to control – the predators are simply killing each other once they kill off the elk and deer and birds and rabbits that are no longer abundant.

Whether they call this absurd lock-up of pseudo wilderness and connecting corridors the "Wildlands Initiative" or "Restoring 'Healthy' Native Ecosystems" the end result is the same.

If you have ever gone back to look at an abandoned farm that is now a jungle of collapsed buildings

and weeds, you have seen a vision of exactly what this unmanaged mess will look like a few years from now.

During the past year the food we buy and the fuel we burn increased by a whopping 30 percent and that is just the beginning. Our western governors have put these radical nincompoops in charge of our energy and development so guess what will happen next.

"Ecosystem Management"

The conception of a "*utopian philosophy of ecosystem perfection absent of all human activity*" is such intellectual rubbish, that it raises the hackles on my neck. The "leave it alone" philosophy - if one can call it such - is a baseless faith, believing in a mythical "balance of nature". It is worthless intellectually, ethically or morally - whatever the relation of ethics and morality. It is an expression of intellectual laziness, me-too-ism, and a destructive force if expressed in policy. Like it or not we are the makers of our future today, and intellectually lazy, incompetent minds are no help for us in our crisis.

Valerius Geist

Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science.

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