

In the News

JOE N. CAUDELL, Department of Biological Sciences, 2112 Biology Building, Murray State University, Murray, KY 42071 USA jcaudell@murraystate.edu

No easy answers for declining Minnesota moose numbers

In Minnesota, the moose (*Alces alces*; Figure 1) population has dwindled to about 4,000, nearly half its population in the state since 2005, the Minneapolis *StarTribune* reported. To help insure the iconic animal's survival, the



Figure 1. Silhouette of bull moose (*Alces alces*) standing in water. (Photo by Mike Lockhard, courtesy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

state listed the moose as a “species of special concern.” Scientists implicate global warming among the reasons for the declining moose population; hotter summers reduce the time moose normally spend browsing. But, simply climate change may not offer the only answer to dwindling herds. While Minnesota moose are migrating northward to western North Dakota, in Maine they are migrating southward toward Massachusetts.

Feral hog menace invades Dallas

Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are an invasive species that threaten human health and agricultural resources; they are spreading rapidly throughout the United States. Now, faced with their incursion into downtown Dallas, Texas, the city has put a contract out on them, hiring a company to catch the hogs and dispose of them, the *Guardian* reported. According to Mark Tyson of Texas A&M University, between

1.8 and 3.4 million feral hogs are in Texas, or half the number in the United States, the article stated. Texas has declared open season on the hogs, and although Texas hunters have enthusiastically turned their guns on them, only about 700,000 of the animals are harvested each year. Feral hogs tear up the landscape while browsing for food and contaminate ground water; they destroy croplands and now city parks. An estimated 15,000 hogs roam in George Bush Park just outside of Houston, Texas, according to a park official.

Badger harvest in England sparks tempers

A trial cull of badger (*Melis melis*) in Somerset and Gloucestershire, England, this summer initiated a standoff between preservationists and farmers who hired sharpshooters to hunt them, the *New York Times* reported. Dairy farmers, who are concerned about the rapid spread of bovine tuberculosis, aimed to kill 5,000 badgers in this year's cull. Preservationists protested, but went unheeded by the government, and the hunt began. Turning out with flashlights during the nocturnal cull (badgers are nocturnal), protesters lost the first round but vowed to continue trying to foil the hunt during subsequent nights. An American



Figure 2. American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) on the alert. (Photo courtesy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

badger (*Taxidea taxus*), close relative to the European variety, is pictured in Figure 2.

Wind farms caused 67 eagle deaths in 5 years, report says

A recent study appearing in the *Journal of Raptor Research* and reported by the Associated Press, noted that at least 67 eagles in the United States have been killed by wind energy facilities in the past 5 years; many of the birds were golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*; Figure 3). The number of raptor deaths caused by wind farms since 1997, the report stated, is estimated to be >85 birds.



Figure 3. Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) in flight. (Photo by Donna Dewhurst, courtesy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Beavers save the bay

When Chevron Oil Company leaked 27,000 gallons of diesel fuel into Willard Bay State Park, Utah, a beaver (*Castor canadensis*) dam blocked most of the oil from entering the soil and marshes, the Associated Press reported. The beaver dam “absolutely saved the bay,” said one wildlife specialist with the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah. Several of the beavers, which were covered slick with oil, were rescued and cleaned with Dawn liquid detergent and sustained minor injuries. The spill, which occurred in March 2013, was the third one in Utah since 2010, and federal authorities have barred Chevron from reopening its pipeline pending government approval.

(See related articles in Commentary, this issue of *Human–Wildlife Interactions*.)

Deer consume 4,000 heads (lettuce)

A farmer in Yarmouth, Maine, recently began experiencing an unprecedented amount of deer damage to his lettuce crop, according to a report from the *Portland Press Herald*. Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) have chewed their way through 4,000 heads of lettuce this past summer, which is a lot for Bruce Hincks’s small farm. Hincks believes that the unprecedented crop loss was caused by a line of stalled railway cars that were blocking the deer’s path to the hay field on the other side where they normally dine. Hincks has taken steps, so far unsuccessful, to stem the problem, including erecting an 8-foot net around the crop, planting a clover crop as diversion, and sprinkling blood meal and human urine around the fields to repel the deer. He has even resorted to playing talk radio in the field at night to repel the deer.

Deer are not just eating lettuce in Maine. According to the *Upper Michigan Source*, deer and the occasional bear (*Ursus americanus*) are causing damage to Johnson Farms alfalfa and corn fields in Daggett, Michigan; the crops are used to feed 1,500 dairy cows. Johnson Farms supplies milk to retail chains, including Culvers and Dairy Queen. Deer have caused a 15% loss to the crops, which they estimate amounts to >\$200,000 in damage.

Information from In the News can be cited as: Caudell, J. N. 2013. In the news. *Human–Wildlife Interactions* 7:169–170.