

In the News

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Coyotes kill hiker in Nova Scotia

ABC News reported that two coyotes attacked and killed a lone female hiker on the popular Skyline Trail in Cape Breton Highlands National Park in October, 2009. The animals must have been very habituated to people, probably because they were used to being fed by hikers, said wildlife biologist Robert Crabtree. Coyote attacks are rare, Crabtree said. He noted that in Yellowstone National Park, USA, which receives >3 million people a year, <12 incidents of coyote attacks on humans have been reported in recent decades; all of the incidents involved animals that had been fed (Wilkinson 2009).

Out of bounds

In October, the *Columbus Dispatch* reported that a child playing football near his home in Ohio was attacked by a deer. The football rolled into the adjacent wood, and the young boy followed the ball, encountered a buck, and was flipped and gouged by the animal. The investigating officer thinks that a second buck was in the area and that the boy wandered in as the 2 rival animals were gearing up for a fight (Columbus Dispatch 2009).

Utah looks to wildlife crossings to help reduce deer fatalities

Utah transportation and wildlife officials are working together to include more wildlife crossings in future highway construction plans, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported. Officials have identified numerous hotspots on Utah highways for installing wildlife crossings as funds become available. Utah is one of the leading states in the number of wildlife highway crossings. The state has 22 crossings strategically located on highways around the state to keep migrating deer and other large animals from encountering vehicles. Many states find it difficult to fund such roadway modifications as wildlife overpasses, underpasses, and tall fences because these measures are expensive, costing from \$500,000 to \$3 million per site.

The loss to deer herds that result from deer–

vehicle collisions combined with deer taken by hunters is staggering, according to wildlife officials. An estimated 20,000 deer are killed in road accidents in Utah alone, and, in 2008, a similar number (20,755) of deer were shot by hunters. While the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources does not allow hunters to harvest females, approximately 70% of the carcasses picked up from deer–vehicle collisions are female (Prettyman 2009).

Deer–vehicle collision news around the country

About 220 people nationwide are killed annually by encounters with wildlife, including collisions with vehicles, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*. From 1996 to 2002, property damage (Figure 1) and loss of human life and injury resulting from such collisions cost more than \$7.5 million annually in Utah alone.

In Minnesota, deer–vehicle collisions appear to be on the rise, according to the Detroit Lakes Online (Minnesota). In the last 3 years, there were 9,820 deer–vehicles collisions, eighteen resulting in death. In South Dakota, the U.S. Argus Leader reported that deer collisions are up 11% to 8,056, making them number six on the list of states with the most deer–vehicle collisions. West Virginia tops the list as number one in deer–vehicle collisions. Nationally, deer collisions are up 18%. As in most areas, these



Figure 1. Damaged car after collision with deer.



Figure 2. Both federal and state agencies work to control exotic pests in Florida. Pythons, such as the one shown in the photo held by USDA employees, are commonly found in both the Florida Everglades and Key West, Florida.

collisions typically increase in November and December (Gabrukiewicz 2009, Prettyman 2009, Revering 2009).

Deer–aircraft collisions have airports scrambling

At the Hazleton Municipal Airport, according to the *Standard Speaker* (Pennsylvania), deer can be a problem for landing aircraft. One airline owner reported 4 separate strikes to his planes during landings recently. There is little that a pilot landing his aircraft can do when he or she encounters a deer but apply the brakes and hope the deer avoids the plane. Because of the deer problem, managers have eliminated night operations except for special cases. Prior to operations, airport personnel drive on the runway to chase the deer away. Hunting deer with firearms is not an option at the airport because of its proximity to stores and roads (Jackson 2009).

Military applies nonlethal solution to deer on runway

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) in Elwood, Kansas, planned to enhance a 1,000-acre area south of Elwood for deer and waterfowl, according to the *New Press* and *St. Joe Now*. But the wildlife area would have caused problems for the nearby Air National Guard (ANG) Base and the airport for the city of St. Joseph. The Advanced Airlift Tactics Training Center at the base conducts low-flying sorties, and the wildlife area would have presented an increased bird–aircraft-strike hazard. The COE was able to revise its plan to include trees and grasses that are less attractive to waterfowl. A consultant for the ANG also recommended that native grasses and other nongrain alternatives be used to reduce waterfowl hazards. The ANG

and the city also will work with other agencies to determine if a Federal Aviation Administration-approved fence could be erected to prevent wildlife entry (White 2008).

Florida mobilizes to halt python invasion

The Nature Conservancy reported that thousands of Burmese pythons (*Python molurus bivittatus*; Figure 2) have infested Everglades National Park, Florida. The former pets swam from Key West, Florida, northward to the Everglades, the Nature Conservancy reported.

Although the large constrictor snakes do not ordinarily attack humans, they pose a threat to the public. To meet the challenge, over 60 individuals, including postal carriers, police, meter readers, and delivery drivers, in Key West, Florida, have been trained to spot Burmese pythons on their routes and handle them properly for capture. The local sheriff's office has set up a python hotline (1-888-IVE-GOT-1), according to the *Palm Beach Post News*. If someone spots a python and calls the hotline, the sheriff's office will dispatch someone trained to capture the invasive pest (Austin 2009, Clark 2009).

Invasive species bill loved by some, not others

H.R. 669, the Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act, was introduced on January 26, 2009 in the U.S. House of Representatives, the *Greenville News* reported. The proposed law would make it illegal to buy, sell, and breed most exotic animals for pets. The bill has been referred to committee and, if passed, according to GovTrack, would severely impact the multibillion dollar pet industry, which is against the measure.

The bill is intended to prevent the introduction and establishment of nonnative wildlife species that negatively impact the economy, environment, other animal species, and human health. The Nature Conservancy and >40 other groups support the bill, citing that it would give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the authority to assess the potential impact of species before they are imported, potentially saving taxpayers billions of dollars. Florida alone spends approximately \$1 billion a year on invasive species management (MacIntosh 2009; GovTrack 2009).

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(Photos courtesy USDA/Wildlife Services)

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