

In the News

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Florida fights iguanas

Non-native reptiles are commonplace in Florida; Burmese pythons (*Python bivittatus*) are wreaking havoc on the Everglades. Recently, wildlife officials in Florida recognized green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*; Figure 1) as a threat to infrastructure and native ecosystems, according to the *Miami Herald*. Previously, state management of iguana populations as nuisance animals was secondary to more injurious species, such as pythons and lionfish (*Pterois* sp.). However, human–iguana conflicts increased in recent years as the animals burrowed into sewers, tunneled through seawalls, and showed up in shopping centers and homes. In addition, iguanas threaten plant communities on which native species depend. In response, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) hired trappers to remove iguanas from the Keys. The FWC also held classes to teach landowners how to remove iguanas from their properties.

Lasers aren't just for millennium falcons

After farmers in Scotland voiced concerns over white-tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) preying on lambs, the Scottish Natural Heritage began monitoring trials of a new deterrent: laser beams. According to the BBC, laser beams would be shone onto hillsides near eagles to scare the birds off hillsides around areas where lamb predation is high. If successful, the use of laser beams could be available under a license in areas with problem eagles. White-tailed eagles were controversially reintroduced into Scotland in the 1970s and remain one of the most protected species in the UK.

Nutria found in California

In February 2018, state wildlife officials in California confirmed populations of nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) in the San Joaquin Valley, according to the *Fresno Bee*. A non-native, semi-

aquatic rodent, nutria destroy wetlands and damage manmade water-control structures, such as levees and dikes. In response to the infestation, a multiagency response team including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and other state and federal agencies began preparing an eradication plan for the affected area. Officials with CDFW asked landowners to report any damage or signs on nutria on their property.

Wildlife crossings are a success

An analysis by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) showed that wildlife crossings along Colorado State Highway 9 reduced the number of wildlife–vehicle collisions by nearly 90%, according to the *Denver Post*. Other wildlife crossings in Colorado are also



Figure 1. Green iguana (*Iguana iguana*; photo by Mike W. Matthews)

being utilized by wildlife, evidenced by game camera photos of animals inside the structures. “Animals are using the [structures]; we’re not just moving the problem,” said Mark Lawler, a biologist with CDOT. Because of these successes, CDOT is working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to identify other major wildlife corridors that intersect roadways across the state. Wildlife crossings have also been successful in protecting pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*; Figure 2) migrations in Wyoming, as well as protecting endangered Florida panthers (*Puma concolor coryi*) in southern Florida.

Low “sealings” at Alaska airport

While cleaning snow off the runway at Wiley Post-Will Rogers Memorial Airport (BRW) in Alaska, an airport official noticed a bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*) relaxing on the runway. According to the Associated Press, the seal was removed with a sled, and airport operations continued normally. The Alaska Department of Transportation issued a warning to pilots who would be using the airport of “low sealings” in the area.



Figure 2. Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*; photo by Mike W. Matthews)

CWD-positive deer found in Mississippi

In January 2018, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) determined that an emaciated white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) carcass found near the Mississippi-Louisiana border tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD). In response, MDWFP banned baiting in surrounding counties. This is the first CWD-positive deer found in Mississippi, making it the twenty-fifth state to confirm the disease. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) had previously issued a ban on importing cervid carcasses in February 2017. However, LDWF officials also encouraged Louisiana landowners to refrain from supplemental deer feeding to limit potential spread of the disease.

Japan and India track wildlife and trains

Wildlife deaths caused by trains are gaining widespread attention in India, where iconic animals like Bengal tigers (*Panthera tigris tigris*) and Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are among the impacted species. According to India Today, conservation organizations in India blame food waste thrown from train passengers as a significant reason animals are attracted to train tracks. Many train routes run through migration corridors or separate habitats from water sources. In Japan, transportation officials have also noticed the problem of animal–train collisions on their railway system. However, rail companies in Japan have turned to infrastructure reform to solve the problem. West Japan Railway Company constructed trenches under tracks that allow turtles (Testudines) to cross safely. Kintetsu Railway Company deployed ultrasonic sound barriers to keep Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) from crossing tracks when a train is passing. So far, Japanese rail companies that have implemented solutions have seen reductions in accidents caused by wildlife on the tracks.