

In the News

JASON MATTHEWS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement, 10980 I-29 North, Suite 1, Pembina, ND 58271, USA jason_matthews@fws.gov

JOE N. CAUDELL, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Bloomington Field Office, 5596 East State Road 46, Bloomington, IN 47401, USA

Patagonian beavers

To preserve native ecosystems, the governments of Argentina and Chile began a pilot eradication program to remove North American beavers (*Castor canadensis*) from Patagonia, according to *The Washington Post*. Beavers were introduced to the southern tip of South America in the 1940s in a failed Argentinian attempt to develop a fur trade. Now beavers number around 200,000 individuals. The bilateral eradication plan, originally developed in 2016, calls for the culling of at least 100,000 beavers. Some biologists assert that eradication might not be possible due to the remoteness of the landscape. However, containment of beaver populations should protect remaining forest and steppe habitats. Some Patagonian species, such as the Magellanic woodpecker (*Campephilus magellanicus*), may have benefitted from novel ecosystems created by beavers, but overall, beavers have wreaked havoc on forests dominated by tree species that lack coping and defense mechanisms against predation and stress caused by beavers.



Figure 1. White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*; photo by Mike W. Matthews)

French farmers fight wild hogs

Farmers in France are furious over growing numbers of wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) destroying their crops, *The Local* reported. In response, the French government set up a committee to address the problems faced by a farming industry already struggling with high inputs and low crop prices, claiming the damage is “locally unbearable for agriculture.” The FNSEA,

France’s largest farming union, asserts that 90% of damage occurs on just 15% of the land. The most commonly applied control method for wild hogs is hunting. However, *The Guardian* reports that hog population continues to increase despite hunter-harvested wild boars increasing tenfold in the last 3 decades. Eric Baubet, head of the boar study program at France’s Wildlife and Hunting Agency, asserted that current hunting strategies are “not enough to stabilize the population.”

Second Mississippi deer with CWD

After confirming the first case of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*; Figure 1) in January 2018, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) confirmed a second deer tested positive CWD in fall 2018. This most recent case in Pontotoc County is >150 miles northeast of where the first deer tested positive for CWD in Issaquena County on the Mississippi-Louisiana border. In response, MDWFP placed restrictions on supplemental feeding and transportation of deer within the newly established Pontotoc CWD Management Zone. Hunters in this management zone are being asked to provide deer for CWD testing during the 2018 fall hunting season.

Iguana cull in the Caymans

In October 2018, the government of the Cayman Islands kicked off a cull of non-native, invasive green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*), according to *Metro*. The project aims to protect native blue iguanas (*Cyclura lewisi*) being outcompeted by green iguanas, which were originally introduced because of the pet trade and for a while protected by a law that precluded the killing of green iguanas. As an incentive to get citizens involved in the cull, a bounty of £4.75 per green iguana is offered for each animal turned in to authorities. *The Cayman Compass* reported that officials hope to cull a million green iguanas in the first year. The budget for the project is £8.6 million, and >300 residents have already registered to participate.

Man-eating tiger shot in India

After months of hunting, forest rangers killed a tiger (*Panthera tigris*) suspected of killing 13 people in India, *The New York Times* reported in November 2018. The chase involved drones, camera traps, and even Calvin Klein cologne, which rangers used to try and lure the big cat. The initial goal was to tranquilize and capture the tiger, but India's Supreme Court authorized lethal take if no alternative was available. While many rural citizens celebrated the tiger's death, urban residents and animal rights activists criticized the use of lethal tactics. Human–tiger conflicts likely result from increasing tiger populations expanding from protected reserves to human-dominated landscapes.

Birds intoxicated by berries

A police report in Gilbert, Minnesota informed residents not to call the cops on publicly intoxicated birds that wobble when they walk or fly into windows, *The New York Times* reported. The phenomenon is fairly common, typically caused by freeze-thaw cycles in the spring. When the same weather events occur in autumn, fruits that normally stay frozen all winter can ferment earlier. Birds commonly affected by fermented berries are American robins (*Turdus migratorius*) and Cedar waxwings (*Bombicilla cedrorum*). According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Manitoba residents have also noticed inebriated birds this autumn. Usually, drunken birds sober up quickly and have no lasting effects from the experience.

Rabies vaccines in the Southeast

According to local news outlets in Tennessee and Georgia, state and federal wildlife agencies partnered to distribute oral rabies vaccines across portions of northern Georgia, Alabama, and eastern Tennessee. The project, completed in October 2018, is part of USDA's National Rabies Management Program (NRMP), in effect since 1995. The most effective distribution method is to drop vaccines coated with fish-meal bait from planes and helicopters over large areas. However, hand-placing baits allows for targeting urban environments. The NRMP distributes baits in 17 states. Tennessee has participated in the program for 17 years, and according to the Tennessee Department of Health, rabies has not spread as rapidly there as in other states. Sixteen other states on the Eastern Seaboard receive vaccines specifically designed for the raccoon variant of

rabies, and the fish-meal coatings are particularly attractive to raccoons (*Procyon lotor*; Figure 2).

Mink in Scotland

North American mink (*Neovison vison*) were first introduced to Scotland in the 1920s to establish ranch fur operations. Now, the Scottish National Heritage (SNH) is partnering with citizens and communities to trap the invasive mustelid that preys on native ground-nesting birds, small mammals, and fish. Volunteers monitor "mink rafts," or enclosed floating platforms with a soft clay bottom to which mink are lured. When volunteers notice mink tracks in the clay, officials place a trap in the mink raft to catch the animal. The SNH plans to set around 500 mink rafts throughout northern Scotland during the project.

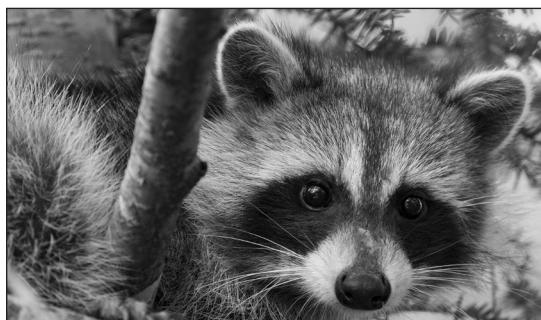


Figure 2. Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*); photo by Mike W. Matthews)

Javelinas go trick-or-treating

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) tweeted about how to "decorate wildlife-safe" for Halloween, along with a photo of a javelina (*Tayassu tajacu*) snacking on a jack-o-lantern. To avoid wildlife such as deer (*Odocoileus* spp.), bears (*Ursus* spp.), and javelinas from eating decorations, AGFD advises placing pumpkin carvings high off the ground or indoors. A local NBC station in Tucson, Arizona reported that residents suffered injuries in past years when confronting javelinas eating pumpkins on their porches. Even disposing pumpkins can be problematic, as animals often knock over garbage cans if they smell something to eat. If residents encounter problematic wildlife, AGFD has a 24/7 hotline for assistance.

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