

## The Back Page

# Managing wildlife means managing information

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THIS ISSUE OF *Human–Wildlife Interactions* is dedicated to providing wildlife managers and their public stakeholders with better information regarding the management of human–bear conflicts, with the goal of improving human–bear interactions. Managing human–bear, or for that matter, human–wildlife conflicts (HWC) in general is becoming increasingly difficult as human populations grow and individual interests in wildlife diversify. When individuals who are polarized to one extreme or the other create the narrative, mitigating HWC tends to get very divisive, and as wildlife professionals we are rarely successful in pleasing all. To resolve HWC, managers tend to stick with the science, results from research, years of experience, and our education when making decisions, keeping emotions at arm’s length to maintain our professional objectiveness.

However, social media and the amount of misinformation spread through it on the internet can greatly affect public and political opinions. Often times, the individuals responsible for distributing this misinformation are not held to the same level of accountability or credibility as wildlife professionals. This becomes problematic when misinformation becomes perceived as fact. Social research indicates that most public stakeholders do not hold a strong opinion one way or the other in regards to wildlife management (Duda et al. 1998). Public perception of wildlife management and managers is often a by-product of the information and the quality of that information that they receive through the various media (Gore and Knuth 2009).

Although many state wildlife management agency decisions may reflect public desires regarding the management of wildlife, increased involvement with better informed stakeholders during the public process of making wildlife management decisions and policy remains a paramount concern for managers (Peterson and Messmer 2010). Thus, it is so very important to recruit more knowledgeable people to the table.

One way to do this is by making all of our research more readily available to the public. By engaging the public in the science, while it is being done, we are in effect ensuring an enduring partnership with a more conversant and educated public—and one that is better equipped to make decisions during the public process. Doing so will further our conservation strategies and enhance our credibility. This issue of *Human–Wildlife Interactions* contains several management case studies that describe innovative approaches used by wildlife managers to better inform and engage wildlife management stakeholders. There remains still much to do, but managers are committed to the task.

### Literature cited

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