

## In the News

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### Wildlife cause game delays

Wildlife can often be disruptive in urban areas when they attend organized events. According to MLB.com, in August 2018, a gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*; see video at [https://youtu.be/RL9qF\\_tfMA8](https://youtu.be/RL9qF_tfMA8)) made its way onto the field of a Minor League Baseball game in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, USA, causing a short disruption. Not to be outdone by their smaller mammalian cousins, a group of deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) in April 2019 jumped the fence at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, causing a short delay. The MLB.com site reported that this may be the first deer-related game delay in history (see video at <https://youtu.be/OamU4pf8Ccw>). After a brief trip around the outfield, the deer returned to the fence they had jumped and politely exited the field.

### Wildlife–vehicle collisions in national parks

Worldwide, national parks, wildlife preserves, and other conservation areas are designed to protect wildlife and the habitats on which they rely. Yet, roads built through these protected areas often result in wildlife–vehicle collisions, which damage both wildlife populations and humans. *The Himalayan Times* reported that in Nepal, the Department of National Parks and

Wildlife Conservation attributed speeding in national parks and increased traffic to the uptick of wildlife–vehicle collisions on park roadways. During fiscal year 2017–2018, 72% of the wildlife deaths in Nepal’s 3 major national parks were caused by wildlife–vehicle collisions. In the United States, a National Park Service (NPS) report in 2009 listed wildlife–vehicle collisions as the leading cause of single-vehicle crashes on lands managed by the NPS. According to *USA Today*, NPS park rangers tallied more time managing traffic last year (2018) than any other law enforcement activity, documenting >25,000 speeding stops. Providing wildlife-friendly crossings in the National Park system (e.g., overpasses) could help mitigate wildlife–vehicle collisions, but the structures are costly for an agency already backlogged with infrastructure maintenance.

### Mountain goats on Mount Evans

Travelers ascending the Mount Evans Scenic Byway, the highest paved road in the United States, received a warning from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) about unnatural behavior of mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*; Figure 1) motorists might encounter along the route. Specifically, mountain goats were approaching vehicles to lick salt from the tires, according to the CPW Twitter page. According to KDVR, a local Fox News station, mountain goats and bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) have been recorded running toward people with food, sticking their heads in car windows, and even entering restrooms. In response, officials with CPW, the U.S. Forest Service, and Denver Mountain Parks planned to use physical barriers and hazing tactics throughout summer 2019 to discourage animals from approaching humans and vehicles.



**Figure 1.** Mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*; photo by Mike W. Matthews).

### Human–bear conflicts in Slovenia

After the World War II, brown bears (*Ursus arctos*; Figure 2) in Slovenia risked extinction, but recent efforts to rewild some parts of Europe



**Figure 2.** Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*; photo by Mike W. Matthews).

have resulted in expanding populations of bears in many European countries. As bear numbers increase, conflicts with humans are on the rise, according to reporting by *The Guardian*. In response, the Slovenian government outlined a plan to cull 175 bears by prescribing hunting quotas for the most affected areas. Yet, opponents of killing the bears want the government to first provide nonlethal deterrents, with lethal measures used only against routinely problematic bears. Hunting, the anti-culling activists argue, does not target any particular bear and would not necessarily reduce human–bear conflicts. Despite the outcry, government officials plan to continue with the cull, insisting that all practical, nonlethal options have been considered.

### Wallabies in New Zealand

Reports of increasing wallaby (Macropodidae) populations have farmers in some parts of New Zealand worried that the nonnative marsupial will wreak havoc on rural farming communities. Introduced almost 150 years ago, wallabies pose threats to forestry, ranching, and natural areas by eating seedlings and pasture, and destroying native habitats. Wallabies reportedly cause an estimated NZ\$28 million in damage annually. According to Radio New Zealand, government officials submitted a plan to create a national management program for wallabies in December 2018. However, no funding was allocated to wallaby control efforts in the latest budget (2019). In many areas, farmers are already spending thousands of dollars on eradication and control efforts annually. According to the *Ortago Daily Times*, one farmer described the wallaby problem as the “biggest threat to farming since the rabbit plague of 100 years ago.”

### Wildlife feeding ban in Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has proposed expanding a current ban on feeding black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and elk (*Cervus canadensis*) to include white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus americanus*) and wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*). Baiting during hunting season is already illegal in Pennsylvania, USA. State wildlife officials say the proposed feeding ban would reduce the artificial congregation of big game animals and could help eliminate the spread of diseases, such as chronic wasting disease in cervids. Even so, some residents have expressed frustration over the proposed change, citing the aesthetic value of seeing deer near residential areas. A final report on the proposal is due in October 2019, but no action is expected on the proposed ban until 2020.

### Alligator in Florida home

In late May 2019, an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*; Figure 3) broke through a ground-level window in a woman’s home and ransacked her kitchen, according to a local NBC station in Clearwater, Florida, USA. Ultimately, a trapper was called to remove the gator, but the aftermath left broken bottles, holes in the walls, and a boarded-up window. Why the gator broke into the home is not known, but the homeowners believe that the 11-foot male saw his reflection in the window prior to the incident, which occurred during the large reptile’s mating season.



**Figure 3.** American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*; photo by Mike W. Matthews).

*Disclaimer:* The findings and conclusions in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.