

In the News

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Bear attacks across the United States

In late July 2020, an elderly man in New Jersey, USA was attacked by a black bear (*Ursus americanus*) after returning home from walking his dog, according CBS New York. Reportedly, the man left his garage door open while walking and returned to find the bear searching for food in a refrigerator. The injured man required 30 stitches to his face. Wildlife officials in New Jersey euthanized the bear after the attack. Each year, approximately 30 people are attacked by bears throughout North America (Conover 2019). During summer 2020, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee was attacked by a grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*; Figure 1) in Montana, USA, another Montana man was attacked by a grizzly bear at a neighbor's farm, and a jogger on Kodiak Island, Alaska, USA was mauled by a bear while on a trail near his home.



Figure 1. Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*; photo by Mike W. Matthews).

Wildlife officials issue advice about bears

Instances of close encounters with bears (*Ursus* spp.) in parts of the United States have led to some state wildlife agencies providing residents with information to mitigate human–bear interactions. In Vermont, USA, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department issued a press release advising residents on how to safely store or compost

food scraps after state law banned citizens from disposing of food scraps in the regular trash. In Montana, USA, the *Missoula Current* reported that state, local, and wildlife officials were working to reduce bear conflicts in the rural areas surrounding the city of Missoula. In Missoula, a ban on feeding wildlife that includes regulations on bird feeders and garbage storage has helped reduce the number of human–bear conflicts within the city; however, there is not a similar ban in the surrounding rural communities. Officials agree that problems with human sanitation and artificial food sources, such as bird feeders, are large contributors to human–bear conflicts. For now, officials are working together to develop solutions to protect both residents and bears.

Substation upgrades mitigate wildlife conflicts

Power outages caused by caused by turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*; Figure 2) getting too close to the Western Area Power Administration's (WAPA) Lingle Substation in Wyoming, USA prompted WAPA to complete upgrades to the structure. Officials with WAPA stated in a news release that several recent power outages were all caused by wildlife. Among other updates, additional space was added between substation switches and other components. Insulators were also replaced to prevent future power outages caused by wildlife.

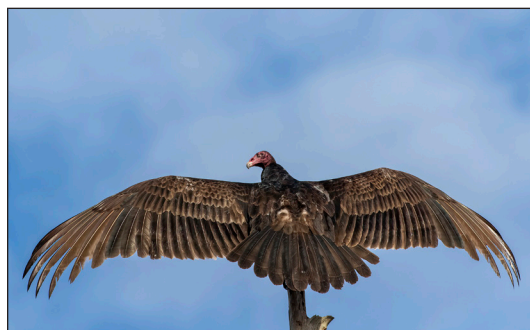


Figure 2. Turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*; photo by Mike W. Matthews).

Study predicts leopard predation hotspots

In a recent study published in *Scientific Reports*, scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India studied the patterns of predation on livestock by leopards (*Panthera pardus*; Figure 3) in relation to landscape features in the Indian Himalayas. The goal of the project was to provide wildlife managers and community leaders with information to mitigate leopard predation on livestock. While densely forested protected areas are often set aside for leopard management, researchers found that leopards had adapted well to human-modified landscapes, such as sugarcane fields, tea tree gardens, and abandoned homesteads. In fact, researchers found that livestock predation increased in areas with a heterogeneous mix of dense forests and more-open habitats. Researchers suggested that increasing community awareness of high-risk areas, supervising livestock grazing, and removing vegetative cover around human villages could reduce predation.



Figure 3. Leopard (*Panthera pardus*; photo by Mike W. Matthews).

Elephant tramples car on Malaysian highway

A video posted to Facebook shows an elephant (*Elaphas maximus*) trampling a vehicle on a Malaysian highway, according to the Singapore newspaper, *Today*. Reportedly, the driver stopped his vehicle when he encountered an elephant in the middle of the road. The vehicle behind the driver then began honking, enraging the elephant. When the elephant began stomping on the vehicle, the passengers exited the vehicle uninjured. Local wildlife officials advised motorists to be patient and wait for elephants to cross the road without provoking the animal.

Residents feeding nutria in Texas

A photograph posted to Twitter showed >20 nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) gathered in a park in Fort Worth, Texas, USA. Wildlife officials told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* that residents have been feeding cat food to the nutria in the park, leading to abundant nutria populations. Nutria, a non-native, semi-aquatic rodent native to South America, wreak havoc on native ecosystems and burrow into man-made water control structures, such as levees and dams. Nutria are present in other states as well. California, USA, saw the unexpected return of nutria in 2017 and has been conducting an eradication program since then. In July 2020, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to provide California with federal monies for their eradication efforts.

Virginia wildlife corridor

The 2020 Virginia General Assembly passed SB1004, which directed several state agencies to collaboratively create a State Wildlife Corridor Action Plan. The plan would identify animal crossing hotspots and recommend sites to implement crossing projects. The legislation is expected to save motorists and insurance companies money spent on repairing vehicles damaged in wildlife–vehicle collisions. A recent study of a wildlife crossing under Interstate 64 near Charlottesville, Virginia, USA showed that deer–vehicle collisions decrease an average of 92% in the area. Further, deer–vehicle collisions at the ends of the fencing did not increase, supporting evidence that the animals were using the underpasses and not going around them. Trail cameras at the underpasses also recorded black bears (*Ursus americanus*), coyotes (*Canis latrans*), and bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) utilizing the structures.

Literature cited

Conover, M. R. 2019. Numbers of human fatalities, injuries, and illnesses in the United States due to wildlife. *Human–Wildlife Interactions* 13:264–276.

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