

Letter from the Associate Editor

State of bird damage management



READERS OF *Human–Wildlife Interactions*, I am pleased to report that the state of bird damage management is strong! Over 100 scientists, managers, and industry representatives

ranging in experience from master’s students to retirees attended the 2020 Bird Damage Management Conference (BDMC) held on February 10–13, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA (<https://conference.usu.edu/blackbirds/>). The conference focused on blackbirds (Icteridae), European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), corvids (Corvidae), and vultures (Cathartidae), all of which are known to conflict with human endeavors. It was particularly gratifying to see a good number of young scientists presenting their research. These budding professionals, with their fresh ideas and unique perspectives, are the future of bird damage management and should be nurtured.

The BDMC provided a venue for participants from across the United States to discuss and share management approaches, research strategies, policy, and messaging regarding the management of nuisance birds. In this special issue of *HWI*, you will find papers covering issues related to blackbirds, European starlings, black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*), and ravens (*Corvus corax*) causing threats to agriculture, personal property, aircraft safety, and human health. (Additional papers on ravens will be featured in another special issue of *HWI*.) The authors focused on developing successful cost-effective and environmentally sound strategies and tools for bird damage mitigation. Just as important, authors called into question doing “business as usual” and suggested there might be better approaches for solving bird damage issues. Even so, they were quick to point out there is a certain inertia, sometimes related to funding, that makes “turning the ship” challenging.

Readers will learn that large (≥ 1.8 kg) bird populations are increasing and, in some cases, expanding their range. This has ramifications for airport safety and, in the case of black vultures,

yet another challenge for livestock producers who also must manage large starling populations known to raid cattle feed and carry diseases (Homan et al. 2017). Want to build a better trap for capturing starlings or delineate starling activity areas? We have papers for you to read. Authors noted that agriculturalists continue to be plagued with bird damage and there are still issues with birds entering flight paths of aircraft. To that end, this issue contains several papers that present information on the use of various methods for mitigating damage to fruit orchards, grain crops, and reducing hazards to aircraft. We have a paper that describes the use of radar to detect birds and mathematical models to estimate damage to sunflowers. And finally, there is a paper that questions the benefits and costs of using lethal methods for the management of brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) populations. One common theme throughout these papers is that effective bird management often requires the use of multiple methods, which is often an impediment for users because of cost or logistics.

What does the future look like (Klug 2017)? Unknown of course, but it does not take a futurist to predict that our world will continue to rapidly change. As the human population increases, so will the need to produce and protect food supplies. Perhaps technological advances such as the use of radar detection integrated with unmanned aerial systems will result in a giant leap forward in the bird damage management arena (Wandrie et al. 2019). This brings to mind another thought: how do we mitigate damage by “nuisance” birds without causing undue harm to other birds that are struggling to maintain viable populations? This is one of the most difficult conundrums for bird management scientists to address. Even so, this research needs to be conducted and reported during future conferences and publications.

All this aside, what a wonderful time to be working on bird damage issues! I encourage you to use your imagination and energy to pur-

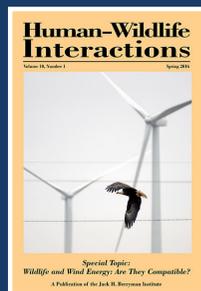
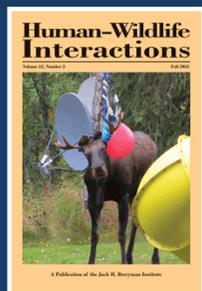
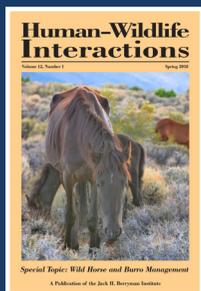
sue improved and new bird damage management ideas and not let the naysayers discourage you—for as Theodore Roosevelt said, “it is not the critic who counts.” I will be watching.

George M. Linz, Associate Editor

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