

Letter from the Editor

Innovation to resolve conflicts

IT IS DIFFICULT to overstate that nearly everything we do has an impact on wildlife populations and behavior. It seems like every time we read the news, we've discovered another problem and another negative impact to natural resources. However, I would like to think that it is not all doom and gloom. Around the globe, wildlife professionals are addressing a massive breadth of concerns in an attempt to alleviate conflict. With each year, we learn, adapt, and strive to spread the news of better understanding, more effective actions, and reduced conflicts.

I think it is amazing that we are always learning, and the more we learn, the more questions we need to explore. Sometimes, when reading an article, I wonder how nobody had studied such an important question yet. But the field of ecology is barely 100 years old—and by comparison, *Human–Wildlife Interactions* is just getting started.

Sometimes controlling damage and negative interactions is just a matter of increasing our understanding of the situation. For example, feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) have been causing problems since the European colonists and conquistadors brought them to North America. And even though we've been working to control their damage for centuries, we continue to learn new and more efficient ways to manage (dare I say control?) their populations—which is good, because new research is shedding light on pig attacks on humans, a source of pig–human conflict that has been overlooked until recently. Another under-studied topic is Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) depredation of livestock. New research highlights the timing and nature of depredation events, a first step toward understanding and mitigating the damage caused by leopards in India.

Our studies can also shed light on how to balance the management of 2 different conflicts. For example, Trap-Neuter-Release programs for feral cats (*Felis catus*) are a popular nonlethal method to manage their populations, particularly within

feral cat “colonies.” However, it turns out that coyotes (*Canis latrans*) view feral cats as a food source. Could it be that feral cat populations can increase coyote activity in an area?

Thankfully, researchers also focus on the “how” questions: How do we avoid conflicts? Recreation in our wilderness areas continues to increase, and new potential conflicts come to light. Sometimes, the answer to avoiding the conflict can be pretty simple, once we recognize the problem. For example, knowing when bears (*Ursus* spp.) use certain habitats, and avoiding those habitats at the right time, can reduce or eliminate direct interactions between humans and bears. Similarly, mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) attacks are on the rise, but there are ways to avoid direct confrontations with mountain goats while still recreating in our wilderness areas. As we continue to investigate our changing landscape, we may sometimes find that what at first seems to be a conflict, simply isn't. For example, there may be some positive trade-offs for ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) that use telecommunications towers instead of their more traditional nesting structures.

Every day brings us new information about our natural world, through news and social media apps. I'm pleased to present to you this next issue of the journal, which contributes to this new knowledge and will hopefully broaden your understanding of wildlife conflicts and human–wildlife interactions.

S. Nicole Frey, Editor-in-Chief
