



North Dakota Reader

AG IN THE CLASSROOM

Who owns the wildlife in our nation?

You do. Every **citizen** of the United States is an owner of the wildlife that live here. All species of wildlife belong to the **public**. The people as a whole are responsible for managing wildlife problems.

Watching wildlife is an enjoyable experience to most people. It is fun to watch birds, deer, coyotes and other wildlife species. However, problems sometimes result when wildlife and people live close together. For example, squirrels may find a way into your attic and chew on things you have stored there. A raccoon may tip over your garbage can, spill garbage and make a mess. Sometimes wildlife can carry **diseases**

that can make people sick.

Skunks can carry the rabies virus which can be fatal (cause death) to your pets.

Some animals are **predators**. This means they eat other animals.

Coyotes can cause problems for ranchers when they eat sheep or calves.

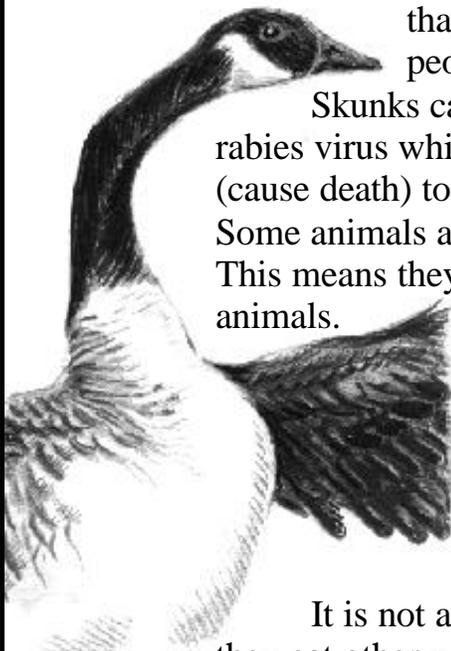
It is not a problem when they eat other wild animals, such as rabbits and mice.

Living with Wildlife



Who can help if wildlife is causing damage to property?

There are individuals and government **agencies** who work to solve wildlife problems. These agencies may be part of **local, state or federal** governments. An example of a state agency is the North Dakota Department of Game and Fish. An example of a federal agency is the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, Wildlife Services division (big name huh?). These agencies have people who work solving wildlife problems. These agencies provide information and sometimes equipment to solve wildlife **conflicts**.





Wildlife -- a valuable public resource.

Wild animals are an important part of our **environment**. For thousands of years people relied on wild animals for food and clothing. Wildlife adds to the beauty of the outdoors. Wildlife adds excitement and fun to such activities as hiking, camping and photography. As a renewable natural resource, wildlife provide hunting and fishing opportunities. Some hunters use the animals they hunt for food and clothing. Wild animals can help control animals and insects that we consider pests. Pests can cause damage to our crops and homes.

Managing conflicts between people and wildlife is important. It is often difficult to do. Many questions need to be answered before the best solution to a problem can be found.

- y** *What species of wildlife is causing the damage?*
- y** *What kind of damage is the wildlife causing?*
- y** *Is there a lot of damage?*
- y** *Can the wildlife be encouraged to move someplace else where they won't cause damage?*
- y** *If the wildlife can't be forced to leave, what other options are available?*

Federal and state governments are responsible for keeping healthy, stable wildlife **populations**. When wildlife cause damage to public and private property or threaten human health and safety, trained

people from government agencies work to manage the damage. Sometimes a wildlife problem can be solved by providing self-help information to people.

In North Dakota, three agencies are responsible for the management of wildlife. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for managing **migratory** birds like ducks and geese. They also manage federally listed **threatened** and **endangered** species like Interior Least Terns and the Gray Wolf. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is responsible for native North Dakota wildlife species. These animals include deer, pheasants, beaver, coyotes and other furbearing animals. Federal laws authorize the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) to help manage damage caused by wildlife. Wildlife Services is the division of the USDA/APHIS that deals with wildlife/human conflicts. These agencies cooperate with each other and other government agencies and individuals to help manage damage caused by wildlife.



Wildlife living in harmony . . .

Wildlife living in conflict . . .



Most of the time wildlife and humans live in **harmony**, but sometimes **conflicts** arise. Read the following examples. Place a “C” in the box in front of the examples showing animals and humans in conflict. Put an “H” in the box front of the examples showing humans and animals living in harmony or when wildlife are helpful to humans.



A large flock of blackbirds eats sunflower seeds before the the farmer can harvest them.

A bat living in a hollow tree eats hundreds of mosquitos that live in your yard.

A coyote eats a rancher’s lambs.

Several deer have been crossing the runways at the local airport.

A coyote eats prairie dogs that eat grass in a cattle pasture.

An elk eats grass in a national park.

Now it is your turn. Pick a wild animal found close to where you live. Write an example of how that animal lives in harmony with humans.

Now think of an example of a conflict between humans and wildlife. Write your example here.

Sometimes certain methods can be used to stop wildlife damage. Examples are: building a fence to keep coyotes out of a sheep pen; using guard animals like dogs, llamas and donkeys to protect sheep. Other methods are using loud noise-making devices, bright lights or shiny tape to scare animals away. Chemicals that cause a bad taste or smell to the wildlife are another control method. Sometimes problem animals are captured and moved to a different area. All these methods are **non lethal**. They do not result in the death of the wildlife. Non lethal methods are the preferred choice to solve wildlife conflicts.

Sometimes there is no choice but to use a **lethal** method of control. Lethal methods include shooting or euthanization (injection of a drug that causes death). Diseased animals that could infect humans or dangerous animals may have to be killed. Animals are killed with quick, humane methods.



A Day in the Life of a Wildlife Specialist

A Wildlife Services Specialist usually receives complaints about wildlife problems over the telephone. The first call today is from Ms. Jones who is a sheep rancher. She has found several dead lambs in one of her pastures. She suspects that the lambs were killed by coyotes. The specialist agrees to meet Ms. Jones in the afternoon.

The specialist already has many stops planned for the day, but as he includes Ms. Jones on his list, the phone rings again.

This time the call is from the local medical clinic. A muskrat that lives in a nearby river has fallen into a window well and is unable to get out. The people at the clinic are afraid the muskrat might bite someone. The specialist tells them that he will be there within the hour. Before the specialist leaves, he receives another call from the local airport about deer on the runway. Because there is a big threat to human safety with wildlife at airports, the specialist tells the airport personnel he will be there as soon as possible.

The specialist loads equipment into his truck that he knows he will need during the day.

At the clinic he explains he will catch the muskrat and take it back to the river. He suggests the building owners might put covers over the window wells to



keep wildlife from falling in. The specialist captures the muskrat by using a catch pole. He places the muskrat into a cage and then carries it to the river. He releases the muskrat unharmed.

The specialist makes another stop in town at Mr. Jackson's house. Mr. Jackson called the specialist about a skunk living under his front porch. Mr. Jackson said the skunk was acting funny. He was afraid the skunk might have rabies and be a health threat to his family and pets.

The specialist shows Mr. Jackson a live trap. The trap, a plastic box with a door on one end, is set to catch the skunk. The specialist shows Mr. Jackson how to place bait in the trap. Later, when the skunk goes

into the trap to get the bait, the door will close, and capture the skunk inside. The skunk can then be euthanized by the specialist and tested for rabies by the State Health Lab.

On the way to the airport, the Wildlife Services Specialist stops to check some traps and snares he has set. A colony of beaver built a dam that was flooding a highway. The specialist was contacted by the state highway department to remove the beaver. The specialist has removed four beaver from the area. There were no beaver caught in the snares or the traps today. He digs a hole in the beaver dam to release water. The next time he stops to check his equipment he will know whether or not he has caught all the beaver in the area. If there are still beaver around, they will plug the hole in the dam.





If the specialist has captured all the beaver, the state highway department can remove the rest of the dam with big equipment. The Wildlife Services Specialist, who has a license to use explosives, could also remove the dam by blowing it up.

The specialist arrives at the airport and meets with two airport administrators. They discuss the problems of deer on the runway. Several jets have just missed hitting the deer during take-offs and landings. The concern is the deer might cause an aircraft to crash. The specialist suggests the deer be chased out of the fenced area around the runways. He shows them ways to improve the fence so it will keep the deer out.

On his way to Ms. Jones' ranch he stops by another farmer's

house. Mr. Martinez called the specialist about problems pocket golfers have been causing in his alfalfa field. The specialist shows Mr. Martinez how to get rid of the pocket golfers.

The specialist finally arrives at Ms. Jones's house late in the afternoon and finds her waiting for him. The specialist asks questions about what happened to Ms. Jones' sheep. He asks Ms. Jones how many lambs were killed, where the dead lambs were found and if Ms. Jones has seen or heard any coyotes close to her ranch. He also asks Ms. Jones what she has done in the past to keep coyotes away from her lambs.

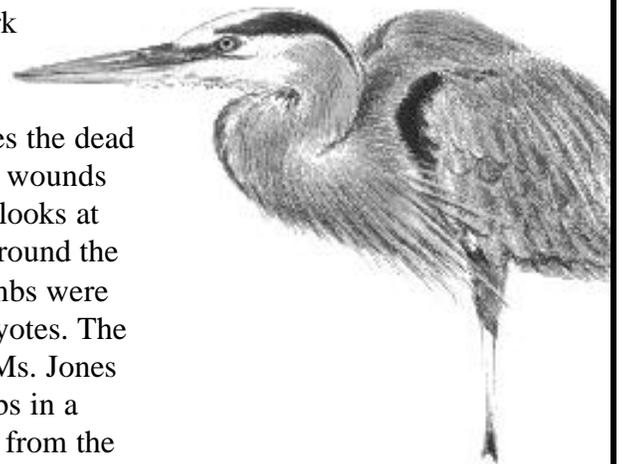
Ms. Jones tells the specialist that eight lambs have been killed in the past two days. All of her lambs were found dead on a brushy hill in her pasture. Ms. Jones said she hasn't seen any coyotes, but she hears them howling and barking almost every night. Ms. Jones tells the specialist that in the past she had a guard dog she used to protect her sheep, but the dog has become too old to work anymore.

The specialist examines the dead lambs. He looks at the wounds on the lambs. He also looks at tracks on the ground around the lambs. He sees the lambs were definitely killed by coyotes. The specialist suggests to Ms. Jones that she graze her lambs in a different pasture away from the

brushy hill where the coyotes hide. He also recommends to Ms. Jones that she put her lambs in a fenced area next to her house at night. He also suggests that she buy a new guard dog.

The specialist has been to other ranches in the area. All the ranchers are having problems with coyotes killing lambs. After talking with Mrs. Jones, the specialist agrees to set traps to catch the coyotes that are killing her lambs. Before the specialist can help Ms. Jones, she must sign an agreement that gives the specialist permission to work on her property. The agreement also explains the type of work the specialist will do.

Back at his office, the specialist finishes his busy day by returning calls to other people who have called asking for help.





Reading Charts

When a plane crashes because it runs into a flock of birds, what is the cost of that loss? How do we put a value on human lives? Do you think it is possible to put a value on the loss of a plane?

On the loss of human life?

It is easier for us to put a value on the loss of livestock caused by wildlife than the loss of human lives. We can determine the loss to a rancher when they lose a lamb to coyotes or the loss when crops are destroyed by deer or a flock of birds.

1993-1996 North Dakota Losses to Predators

Predator	Adult Sheep	Lambs	Adult Cattle	Calves	Poultry
Coyotes	253	1462	37	574	942
Red Foxes	0	1	0	0	1683
Raccoons	0	0	0	0	218
Skunks	0	0	0	0	67

1. What predator kills the most lambs?
2. How many more adult sheep were killed than adult cattle?
3. What is the total number of poultry lost to the four predators?
4. If each lamb is worth \$75.00, what is the total dollar amount of lambs lost to the predators?

1993-1996 Public Health and Safety Problems Caused by Wildlife in North Dakota

Wildlife	Disease(Rabies,Plague)	Airport Hazards
Coyotes	1	0
Red Foxes	3	0
Raccoons	7	0
Skunks	35	0
Deer	0	8
Birds	0	8
Badger	1	0



1. Which wildlife species had the most disease cases?
2. What problem did deer cause?
3. How many kinds of animals were reported as problems?
4. Which three wildlife species cause the most health and safety problems?
5. Do you think it is important to work to keep people safe from wildlife problems? Why?

CASE STUDY: Blackbird Problems

It is fall. The sunflower crop has grown tall. The flowers are thick with seeds. Tom and Mary, the young farmers who grew the sunflowers, are excited to have a good crop. They need the money from the sale of the sunflower seeds to help pay for their farm.

Unexpectedly a large black cloud appears in the east. As it moves closer, Tom and Mary realize the cloud is actually hundreds of blackbirds. The birds swoop down and land on the sunflowers. They begin eating the sunflower seeds. Worried the blackbirds will destroy their crop, Mary calls for help.

Sarah, the Wildlife Services Specialist, tells Mary and Tom that blackbirds are best kept from damaging crops if several methods are used. Using several methods is called IWDM. The letters stand for Integrated Wildlife Damage Management. When IWDM is used, it frightens the blackbirds faster and keeps them away longer.

One of the management methods Sarah suggests is to set up and fire propane exploders. These cannons send out a loud bang every few minutes to help scare the blackbirds away. She also suggests using loudspeakers to play blackbird distress calls. Sarah's office has both types of equipment needed to implement these methods. She agrees to loan Tom and Mary the equipment and help set it up.

After visiting Tom and Mary's farm, Sarah suggests ways to prevent bird damage in the future. They can consider planting sunflowers that aren't as easily damaged by blackbirds. Tom and Mary might want to remove the cattails in a nearby wetland. Doing so will remove the nesting and roosting habitat for the blackbirds. Another idea is to use a chemical repellent on the sunflower crop that causes the blackbirds to get sick and avoid the sunflowers.



How well did you read?

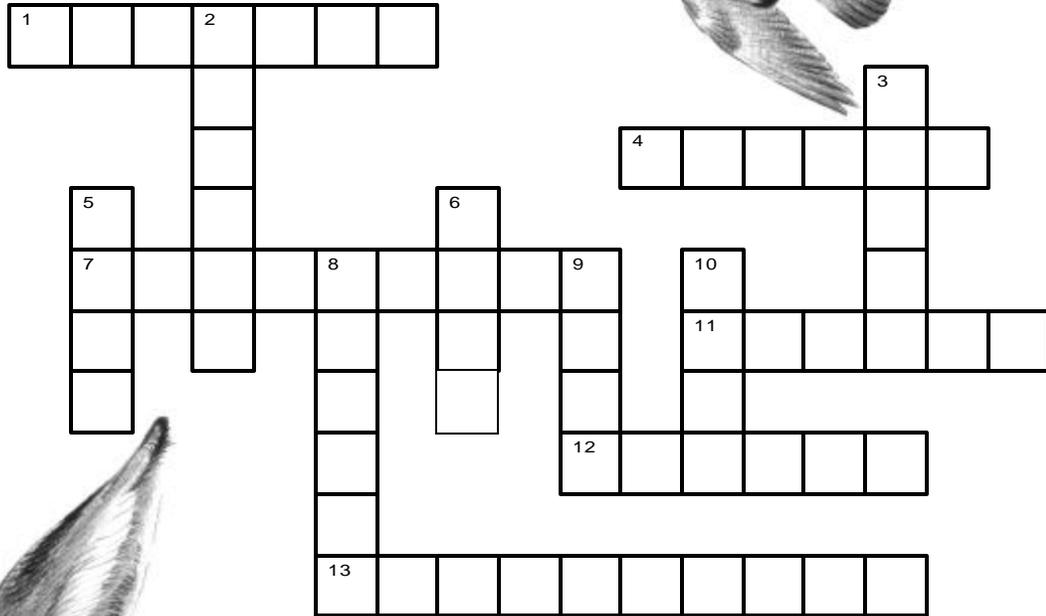


What are some ways to scare the blackbirds away?

What are some things Mary and Tom can do in the future to prevent blackbird damage?

What do we call it when we use many methods to prevent wildlife damage?

WILDLIFE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

DOWN

1. This animal is called “the masked bandit or ringtail”.
2. The most common livestock predator in North Dakota.
3. Put this around your garden to keep the rabbits out.
4. One type of guard animal used to protect sheep from predators.
5. Initials for Integrated Wildlife Damage Management
6. Female cattle are called ____.
7. Another name for ducks and geese.
8. Skunks can transmit this disease to humans or pets.
9. A young sheep is called a ____.
10. Initials for United States Department of Agriculture.
11. In order to maintain _____ at airports, wildlife must be kept off runways.
12. This rodent builds dams and lives in water.
13. Blackbirds eat this crop.

Prepared by the North Dakota/South Dakota Wildlife Services office in cooperation with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department and North Dakota Department of Agriculture and United States Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Legislative and Public Affairs. For more information contact:
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