

In the News

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Otter finds expensive meal in England

According to an article on *BBC.com* (2013), a European otter (*Lutra lutra*) ate its way through £10,000 (US \$15,400) worth of fish from a small pond in Thetford, England.



Figure 1. A pair of North American river otters (*Lontra canadensis*; photo courtesy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

While the pond owners were away on vacation, otters found their way into the backyard pond, ate hundreds of goldfish and other fish, and left the heads and tails. The Wildlife Trust places blame on otter or European mink (*Lustela mustreola*). Otters (Figure 1) have experienced a significant rebound since the 1970s due to the decline in the use of pesticides and improvements in water quality and fish stocks. The pond owners also reported that they no longer see other wildlife, including snakes, lizards, newts, and ducks in the area, apparently due to the increase of the otter population.

Increasing snow goose population threatens fragile arctic habitat

During the past 50 years, the North American snow goose (*Chen caerulescens caerulescens*) population has increased from 50,000 breeding pairs to >1 million breeding pairs, according to *OutdoorLife.com* (2013). Canadian and U.S. wildlife agencies consider the swelling population of snow geese greater than the land can support and, thus, a threat to the Arctic breeding grounds. Thousands of snow geese can be seen flying from field in the northeastern United States and in Canada to feed during the day; then they return to roost in coastal wildlife refuges at night. To address the situation, the Atlantic Flyway Council has recommended extending the snow goose hunting season in

several states to try to cut the goose population by 50%. Vermont and New York have already extended their snow goose hunting seasons.

House cats have greater impact on wildlife than previously thought

A *USA Today* article reported on a study by Loss et al. (2013) appearing in the *Journal of Nature Communications*, that cats (*Felis catus*) are estimated to kill from 1.4 to 3.7 billion birds in the continental United States each year. The new study shows that cats may have a bigger impact than previously thought. In addition, the number of cat-caused fatalities of other wildlife besides birds, including mice, rabbits, and other small mammals, increases the number



Figure 2. A pet cat eyes a backyard bird feeder. (Photo courtesy of the author)

of wildlife fatalities to 6.9 billion to 20.7 billion. The study is part of a 3-year project funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to estimate the number of birds killed by predators, chemicals, and collisions with vehicles. The results suggest that cats may be the single greatest source of anthropogenic mortality of U.S. birds and mammals and that policy intervention is needed to reduce the impact of free-ranging cats.

Lear jet ambulance collides with deer; rooster attacks aircraft on tarmac

The *New Haven Register*, Connecticut, reported a collision between a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and a private Lear jet ambulance on takeoff. The plane's wing and landing gear were significantly damaged; the collision cost was estimated at millions of dollars in repair bills and lost revenue, according to the plane's owner. The airport is surrounded by a fence; however, sections of it are permeable to

deer. Because the aircraft owner believes that the airport should be protected from wildlife, he plans to file suit in federal court. The airport is currently working with the Federal Aviation Administration and USDA, Wildlife Services, to correct the problems with the fence and thereby control wildlife.

In a related item, the *Herald-Journal* (2013) in Logan, Utah, reported that a rooster (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) was taken into custody for attacking planes on landing and take-off at the regional airport. Local police took the rooster, “without incident”, to the Cache Humane Society.

Deer control gone wrong in Minnesota

Several residents in a Minneapolis, Minnesota, neighborhood, were surprised by gunshots and the discovery that white-tailed deer were being shot near their home. Sharpshooters mistakenly began harvesting deer in a neighborhood of Minneapolis instead of in the city of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, according to Fox News (2013). St. Louis Park, which hired Whitetail Management Company to control the deer population, has terminated its contract with the company due to the error.

Tracking moose along Canada’s roads: only a phone call away

Researchers at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, are trying to determine why moose (*Alces americanus*) cross roads, the *Canadian Press* reported. To find out, 25 moose will be collared with satellite phones to track their movements over a 4-year period. The Canadian Environment Ministry hopes the data collected will help with long-term moose management. Hundreds of moose–vehicle collisions occur in Canada each year. A hot spot is Highway 11 between Saskatoon and Regina provinces.

The *Alaska Dispatch* reported that scientists, wildlife managers, and transportation officials have been wrestling with the problem of moose–vehicle collisions for decades. Whistles, chemical repellents, road-side reflectors, supplemental food, and other strategies have been tried with few positive results. Reducing the number of moose around major roadways may reduce the number of moose–vehicle collisions, but this can also have unintended consequences. Slowing down drivers appears to be the most



Figure 3. Moose crossing roads cause hundreds of accidents in Canadian provinces. (Photo courtesy USDA/Wildlife Services)

inexpensive and effective way of reducing moose–vehicle collisions; however, research into determining the effects of lowering speed limits have on moose collisions have had mixed results.
