

Controlling Wildlife Damage on Public Lands



California least tern

The Federal Government's Wildlife Services (WS) program works to alleviate wildlife damage to agricultural, urban, and natural resources and threats to public health and safety. The WS program also protects endangered and threatened species from wildlife depredation. WS is part of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Public Lands Management

Most WS work is conducted on private lands, but WS also manages wildlife damage problems on public lands, particularly those under the responsibility of USDA's Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI) Bureau of Land Management. Control work is also conducted on lands managed by DOI's Fish and Wildlife Service; the Departments of Defense and Energy; Native American tribal lands; and parklands managed by local, State, or Federal agencies. WS works on public lands only when authorized or requested to do so by the responsible land management agency and only as authorized in written agreements containing specific guidelines. These guidelines ensure that control efforts pose no significant risks to the environment, overall wildlife populations, or public safety.

WS currently helps resolve wildlife damage problems on a small portion of the Federally managed lands in the United States. Handling these problems often requires no more than a few hours' work in a particular area during the course of an entire year.

WS' Work on Public Lands

Land management agencies authorize or request WS assistance for several different reasons. Predation by wildlife on domestic livestock permitted to graze on public lands is a problem. The coyote is the species primarily responsible, but mountain lions and black bears also cause damage. Rodent populations damage rangelands and forests.

WS is often asked to remove wildlife that pose a threat to public safety. For example, in Wisconsin WS frequently relocates black bears away from public campgrounds. DOI's National Park Service requested that WS reduce prairie dog numbers at the Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado to prevent the spread of bubonic plague.

Managers of public lands also request WS assistance for the protection of endangered or threatened wildlife species. In California, WS employees protect the endangered California least tern and the light-footed clapper rail from fox predation. In Louisiana, WS efforts help protect an endangered mussel, the Louisiana pearlshell, by controlling beavers that are damaging critical habitat. Similar control efforts on public lands have been conducted to protect other endangered species, such as the roseate tern, the Aleutian Canada goose, and the Attwater's greater prairie chicken.



Coyote

Additional Information

You may obtain further information about the services of WS from any State APHIS, WS office. For the address and telephone number in your area, call the WS Operational Support Staff at (301) 734-7921.

You can also visit the WS Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws>.

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