



United States  
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Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—WISCONSIN

*Contact Information: Jason Suckow,  
Wisconsin and Minnesota Wildlife Services State Director  
732 Lois Drive, Sun Prairie, WI 53590  
Phone: (608) 837-2727 FAX: (608) 837-6754  
E-mail: [jason.suckow@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:jason.suckow@aphis.usda.gov)  
WebSite: [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage)*

### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Wisconsin

Every day, Wisconsin residents, industries, organizations, municipalities and agencies call on Wisconsin Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting crops and livestock, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

The WS program in Wisconsin manages a variety of wildlife damage programs touching large numbers of citizens. WS specialists provide

#### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting and assessing crop and livestock damage caused by Canada geese, black bear, deer, and wild turkeys.
- Resolving crop and property damage and human health and safety problems regarding nuisance and depredating black bears and gray wolves.
- Protecting coldwater ecosystems, forest resources, roads and bridges from beaver damage
- Protecting public safety and air operations from wildlife hazards at civil and military airports
- Surveillance and monitoring for avian influenza, Chronic Wasting Disease, West Nile Virus and diseases that threaten the health of humans, domestic animals, wildlife and the environment.

#### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Wisconsin:

- Investigate causes of calf mortality in wolf range, techniques for effective management of gray wolf depredations
- Determine effects of overabundant Double-crested cormorants on fisheries and other natural resources
- Investigate black bear utilization of agricultural crops; movements, behavior, and damage abatement techniques
- Development of improved techniques to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation
- Improve assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

assistance to farmers who experience wildlife damage to their crops. They help the public find ways to resolve nuisance wildlife problems; protect people, pets, and livestock from zoonotic diseases; and protect natural resources from wildlife depredation. WS specialists capture and relocate problem black bears and work to reduce conflicts with Canada geese, white-tailed deer, wolves, and beaver. An active bird damage management program assists farmers, municipalities, and businesses to deal with over-abundant bird issues. WS protects public safety and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at civil and military airports throughout the State.

### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

**Protecting Agricultural Crops**— High levels of crop damage result from an abundant white-tailed deer population as well as black bears, wild turkeys, and Canada geese. Under the State's Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP), WS cooperates with 48 counties and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to provide damage abatement and appraisal assistance. WS investigated and verified more than \$2 million in wildlife damage on approximately 687 farms in 2006. Affected farmers received compensation in excess of \$1.5 million from the State crop damage fund.

**Protecting Livestock from European Starling Damage**—Starling damage remains a concern for Wisconsin dairy farmers and beef producers.



High concentrations of starlings consume and contaminate livestock feed and, potentially, increase disease transmission and reduce milk production. In 2006, WS provided free, on-site, advice about techniques to manage starling damage. When requested and warranted, trained and certified WS personnel directly assisted, using toxicant-treated bait to reduce local starling populations by 75-90%.

**Protecting Livestock and Gray Wolves**—WS works collaboratively with WDNR to continue gray wolf recovery. In spring 2006, roughly 500 wolves in more than 100 packs occurred throughout Wisconsin's forest regions. Under a cooperative agreement with WDNR, WS investigates wolf depredations involving livestock, human safety, pets, and hunting dogs. In FY06, investigation of 207 gray wolf complaints verified wolves depredated 27 cows/calves on 26 different farms and two sheep on two different farms. WS implemented nonlethal techniques on 12 farms after producers reported wolves harassing livestock and direct control on 28 farms capturing 22 wolves. Of these 22 wolves, 18 were destroyed and four were radio-collared. WS trapped and radio-collared an additional 14 wolves for research purposes, for a total of 36 wolves trapped in FY06. Where WS implemented direct assistance, only two farms had additional livestock depredations after activities ceased. WS' ability to alleviate wolf depredation of livestock is essential to the species recovery because it encourages public support and tolerance for continued recovery of the gray wolf in Wisconsin.

### Urban Human Health and Safety Issues—

Increasing populations of resident Canada geese cause human-geese conflicts in urban areas. High geese densities in city parks, business sites, and residential areas raise human health and safety concerns. To help alleviate these conflicts, WS continues aggressive management including egg oiling, nest removal (when possible), and lethal removal. In 2006, WS assisted nine communities, removing 726 geese from parks, zoos, businesses, and lakes and donating the edible meat to local food pantries and Native American Tribes. WS collects the geese for mandatory contaminant testing to enable new locations to participate in the food pantry program.

**Disease Issues—**In addition to emergency response assistance in Wisconsin, WS participates in disease monitoring and surveillance projects to safeguard American agriculture, human health, and wildlife. Chronic Wasting Disease surveillance and management in free-ranging white-tailed deer and captive deer and elk herds remains a high priority. WS assists the WDNR, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) and USDA-VS with CWD sampling and population management. Since 2001, the WDNR and the Department of Health and Family Services (WDHFS) have tried to predict and prevent human epidemics of West Nile Virus. WS manages a toll-free phone line to provide WNV information and outreach materials and for statewide reporting of sick and dead birds. WS collects tissue from suspect specimens for submission to diagnostic laboratories. In FY06, Wisconsin WS, in cooperation with the WDNR collected more than 3,000 samples from live wild birds, hunter-harvested wildfowl and other sources as part of the nationwide surveillance effort for highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza.

**Double-crested cormorants—**In 2006, WS assisted the University of Wisconsin–Madison and WDNR on a graduate research project analyzing the stomach contents of double-crested cormorants. The cormorant breeding population in the Green Bay–Lake Michigan region increased 33% annually between 1973 and 1997, raising concerns among sport and commercial fisheries about

potential cormorant impacts. Research objectives in 2004–2006 were to obtain data on the food habits and population dynamics of Green Bay cormorants. In 2006, eggs were oiled to deter the local growing cormorant population.

**Protecting Property—**WS also cooperates with WDNR to manage black bear damage in Wisconsin. WS routinely receives assistance requests from the public concerning black bears threatening human health and safety and damaging agriculture crops and property. During FY06, WS received 1,090 requests for assistance to resolve black bear complaints: 62% were handled by providing technical assistance and 38% required direct control operations, resulting in capture and relocation of 718 bears.

**Protecting Multiple Resources—**Protecting multiple natural resources through beaver damage management is a major objective in Wisconsin. WS handled about 200 complaints involving flooding of timber or roadways in FY06. WS has cooperative agreements with counties and townships to provide damage management for road and timber resources in which beaver and dam removal are estimated to save \$1 million annually.

WS also cooperates with WDNR, Federal agencies and private organizations to manage beaver damage on high-quality trout streams to protect coldwater natural resources. Beaver dams significantly impact State streams negatively by warming water, blocking trout movement, and reducing trout reproduction and survival. WS' beaver and dam removal efforts, including annual maintenance, have restored approximately 1,500 miles of high-quality trout streams to free flowing conditions, enhancing the natural reproduction of native brook trout populations.

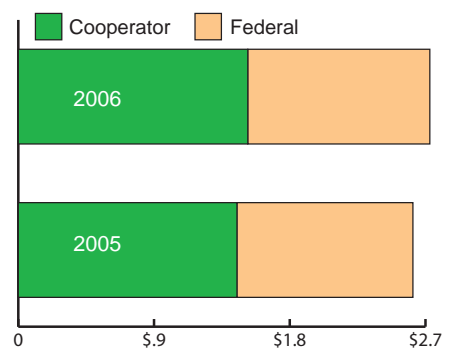
In 2006, WS removed beaver and dams from 18 lakes in northern Wisconsin to enhance the germination and growth of wild rice. Beaver dams on lake outlets create water levels too high for wild rice germination in early summer and negatively impacts the later growth stage. Beaver and dam removal has restored wild rice beds, with positive impact on wildlife habitat and recreational harvest of wild rice.

Crane populations rose steadily concurrent with increased reports of crop damage caused by cranes: 55 crop damage calls were received in 2006. They pose a potential safety threat at airports where the large, slow-flying birds use runways as loafing and feeding areas. An urgent need exists for WS assistance to landowners, businesses, and municipalities on crane issues. Feral hogs appear to be gaining ground in Wisconsin with wild pigs currently reported in 23 counties. Complaints from landowners have been increasing as has concern from State agencies due to disease transmission and property damage issues. Nationwide, double-crested cormorants have increased to levels that are destructive to natural resources, fisheries, aquaculture, and other species. WS continues to support research to guide future cormorant management in Wisconsin.

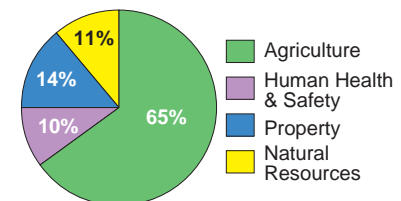
## Wisconsin Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, state, and local government agencies. In most cases, cooperators request assistance from WS to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected FY06 % of Total Funds



### Major Cooperators

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services
- U.S. Forest Service
- 67 Counties, 44 Townships, 26 Airports

## Looking to the Future

Demands for WS assistance on various issues continue to increase. Three emerging issues are assistance with damage from sandhill cranes, feral hogs, and double-crested cormorant.

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