



*Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship Through Science and Education*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Week of Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup> through June 7<sup>th</sup> 2013*

Check out the chapter on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Wildlife-Society-New-Mexico-Chapter/122478411098284>

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## **1. Governor signs wolf management legislation to support conflict prevention, expand compensation**

May 21, 2013

Contact: Dave Ware, 360-902-2509

OLYMPIA - Gov. Jay Inslee today signed legislation that will provide state wildlife managers more resources to prevent wolf-livestock conflict and expand criteria for compensation to livestock owners for wolf-related losses.

Senate Bill 5193, requested by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and prime-sponsored by Sen. John Smith, R-Colville, was supported by a broad cross-section of interest groups.

"The gray wolf population is recovering quickly in Washington," said Inslee. "This bill received bipartisan support from legislators across the state because it

represents a practical, realistic approach to minimizing wolf-livestock conflict while recognizing the need for fair compensation to ranchers and farmers."

WDFW Director Phil Anderson said the department appreciates the Governor's support for the bill and the efforts of both Republican and Democratic legislators to get it passed. "Washington state is committed to wolf recovery, but sustainable recovery requires that we address the legitimate needs of farmers, ranchers and other residents of the communities that are on the front line of wolf recovery," he said. "This bill does that."

As signed by the Governor, SB 5193:

- Increases the state's personalized license plate fee by \$10, effective Oct. 1, 2013, with the proceeds to support WDFW's efforts to monitor wolf recovery and prevent wolf-livestock conflict in collaboration with farmers, ranchers and local governments, and to compensate livestock owners. The Department of Licensing estimates the fee will raise more than \$1.5 million during the upcoming two-year budget cycle.
- Allows WDFW to compensate livestock owners for their losses at the current market value of the animals.
- Permits compensation regardless of whether livestock owners were raising the animals for commercial purposes.
- Revises other elements of state law to make it more consistent with the state's 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan as adopted by the state Fish and Wildlife Commission.

State wildlife managers estimate between 50 and 100 gray wolves are present in the state, and that the wolf population nearly doubled in 2012. As of March, there were 10 confirmed packs and two suspected packs, plus two packs with dens in Oregon and British Columbia whose members range into the state. Most of the confirmed packs are found in Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties.

Nate Pamplin, the WDFW wildlife program director, said broad support for SB 5193 sends a clear signal about the importance of collaboration to support long-term wolf recovery while respecting community values. The final version of the bill passed the Senate 43-1 and the House 96-2.

"By supporting key elements of the wolf management plan - monitoring, conflict prevention and compensation - this new law furthers wolf recovery and acknowledges the impacts on farmers, ranchers and local communities," Pamplin said.

Pamplin urged residents to contact the nearest WDFW office for assistance with measures to prevent wolf-livestock conflict. Also, he said, people can call a WDFW hotline at 1-877-933-9847 or use the website ([http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray\\_wolf/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/)) to report wolf sightings or suspected attacks.

Article link: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/news/may2113a/>

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## 2. Frog, toad and salamander populations plummeting, U.S. survey finds

By Darryl Fears, Published: May 22

Frogs, toads and salamanders continue to vanish from the American landscape at an alarming pace, with seven species — including Colorado's boreal toad and Nevada's yellow-legged frog — facing 50 percent drops in their numbers within seven years if the current rate of decline continues, according to new government research.

The U.S. Geological Survey study, released Wednesday, is the first to document how quickly amphibians are disappearing, as well as how low the populations of the threatened species could go, given current trends.

The exact reasons for the decline in amphibians, first noticed decades ago, remain unclear. But scientists believe several factors, including disease, an explosion of invasive species, climate change and pesticide use are contributing.

The study said the populations of seven species of threatened frogs, including the boreal toad and the yellow-legged frog, are decreasing at a rate of 11.6 percent a year.

More than 40 species of frogs, such as the Fowler's toad and spring peepers, are declining at a rate of 2.7 percent. If that pace keeps up, their populations will be halved in 27 years, the study said.

"We knew they were declining and we didn't know how fast," said Michael J. Adams, a research ecologist for USGS and the lead author of the study, Trends in Amphibian Occupancy in the United States, published in the journal PLOS ONE. "It's a loss of biodiversity. You lose them and you can't get them back. That seems like a problem."

The disappearance of amphibians is a global phenomenon. But in the United States, it adds to a disturbing trend of mass vanishings that include honeybees and numerous species of bats along Atlantic states and the Midwest.

Bees, which also are disappearing in Europe, serve nature and farmers by pollinating a wide range of plants and food crops. Bats, which have died by the millions from a disease called white nose syndrome, also are pollinators but, along with amphibians, eat many metric tons of insects each year, allowing farmers to cut back on insecticides.

Frogs and their like are much more than slimy animals that come alive in the dark and croak; they are deeply woven into the lives of humans. The offspring of frogs and toads, tadpoles, are the first organisms children watch in school as the creatures develop arms and legs. Adult amphibians are routinely dissected by many of those same children as they go through school.

Scientists have produced pharmaceutical drugs from chemicals found in the skin of frogs and toads, and large numbers of amphibians are collected for medical research.

For the USGS study, researchers pored over data collected at 34 watery and swampy areas from Sierra Nevada mountains to Louisiana and Florida over nine years. They traveled to sites and counted clusters of nearly 50 amphibian species, marking their decline year after year for nearly a decade.

Researchers carried a list of species — some thought to be faring well, others to be struggling — compiled by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which seeks solutions to environmental challenges. The data were studied by USGS's Amphibian Research and Monitoring Initiative.

The loss of amphibians is occurring even in areas where animals are protected, in national parks and wildlife refuges, the study said.

The disappearance of frogs, toads and salamanders first got attention in 1989 when “my colleagues and I began reporting that in familiar amphibian haunts the numbers of frogs and salamanders were declining,” biologist James P. Collins wrote in an article for *Natural History Magazine* nine years ago.

“By the mid-1990s we were hearing reports that species were going extinct in only a few years,” he wrote. So “the search for the answer to our question — why are they gone? — was becoming paramount.”

It was hard to answer the question at the time “because there was very little monitoring going on,” said Adams, the author of the new study. “We were trying to convince ourselves there was really something going on with amphibians that

wasn't happening with other species, the disappearance of frogs around the world.”

The new research is the first to document the steepness of the decline. But others sought to answer why years ago.

A study of Minnesota's northern leopard frog fingered farm chemicals as a contributor to its decline, according to the journal Nature . After studying more than 200 factors that led to infection, two stood out, a synopsis of the report said, an herbicide called atrazine and phosphate, a fertilizer.

Whatever the reason, the declines have led at least one activist group to call for an end to another practice that contributes to the mortality of frogs: dissections. Save the Frogs set an unlikely goal to get dissections out of every school by 2014.

“They are contributing to the depletion of wild frog populations and the spread of harmful invasive species and infectious diseases,” the group says.

Article link: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/frog-toad-and-salamander-populations-plummeting-us-survey-finds/2013/05/22/459c1c9e-c2f3-11e2-914f-a7aba60512a7\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/frog-toad-and-salamander-populations-plummeting-us-survey-finds/2013/05/22/459c1c9e-c2f3-11e2-914f-a7aba60512a7_story.html)

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### 3. Western Hummingbird Partnership – 2013 Request for Proposals

May 29, 2013  
Susan Bonfield

The Western Hummingbird Partnership works to build an effective and sustainable hummingbird conservation program through research, monitoring, habitat restoration and enhancement, and education. WHP has limited funding (average project budget is \$5,0000, with most projects in the \$1,000 - \$5,000 range) for projects that will benefit knowledge of hummingbird populations and their conservation and public awareness of hummingbirds, especially migratory species with ranges in western Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. We hope to be able to support larger budgets in future years, so please contact us if you are pursuing a project that would benefit from a larger award so we can keep you apprised of future year's funding options.

Examples of projects of interest include those that explore the impacts of climate change on hummingbirds, examine the habitat requirements of migratory hummingbird species, promote habitat restoration, and/or demonstrate

successful methods of engaging the public in hummingbird conservation, education, and citizen science.

During proposal development, applicants may consult with the WHP Coordinator, Susan Bonfield, for assistance and with any questions:

Susan Bonfield, [sbonfield@birdday.org](mailto:sbonfield@birdday.org) phone: 970.393.1183

Applicants should submit a brief proposal of no more than 2 pages (not including references) that details the project purpose, description, methods, partners, and budget (including any leveraged or matching funds) via e-mail to Susan Bonfield at [sbonfield@birdday.org](mailto:sbonfield@birdday.org). The deadline for submitting proposals is Friday, June 28, 2013.

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## 4. Restaurants Offering Lion Meat Are Causing Public Outrage

John R. Platt, Scientific American | May 30, 2013, 1:34 PM

Why do U.S. restaurants keep trying to sell lion meat?

This month a Florida restaurant called Taco Fusion put \$35 lion tacos on its menu, and a California restaurant called Mokutanya announced \$70 lion skewers, its second such promotion in the past year.

Public outrage rose up almost immediately, forcing both restaurants to remove the controversial fare from their menus.

Taco Fusion and Mokutanya were not isolated cases.

“There have been about 10 incidents in the past two years where restaurants have said they were adding lion meat to their menus for a very short time,” says Jeffrey Flocken, North American regional director for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). “All of them have put it forward in kind of a gimmicky, promotional type way. Each time there have been public outcries. I would call it an extremely dangerous way to drum up business.”

Although lions have experienced at least a 50 percent population decline over the past three decades, African lions (*Panthera leo*) are the only big cat species not currently protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA).

That may change in the near future: Earlier this month the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced an initial status review to see if listing lions under the ESA is

warranted. (The species is protected under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which requires signatory nations to get a license before exporting lions or their bodily parts. No import license is required on the other end of the transaction.) An unknown number of African lions, probably numbering in the thousands, currently live in the U.S. in backyard pens, roadside zoos and other less-than-desirable circumstances.

Although lions are increasingly imperiled in their home ranges, many Americans are unaware of the species's plight. People see lions on television and in zoos and assume that the cats must be doing well in the wild. Events like these short-term lion meat sales compound the problem, Flocken says. "We definitely believe that it undermines our conservation efforts, in that it makes it seem like this animal is so populous that people should eat it as a dining choice."

Although Flocken doubts the restaurants sourced their lion meat from the wild—it probably comes from those roadside zoos and backyard exotic animal enthusiasts—he says the promotions "send a message that it is okay to eat this animal. If for some reason this became popular or trendy, that would then really impact the wild because it's always cheaper to hunt and kill a lion in the wild than to raise it, slaughter it and get it to the market."

The restaurant sales also illustrate the shady side of the exotic meat market. Many previous sales have claimed the lions were raised and slaughtered humanely and that the meat had been inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or even the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"We have investigated this," Flocken says. "We have called the USDA and we have spoken with investigators at the USDA and the FDA. Every time they have said that they do not inspect lion meat, that it's not part of their remit, and that they have no history of inspecting lion meat."

Although the source of the meat in this month's sales has not yet been disclosed, many of the other restaurants selling lion meat over the past few years have purchased their supplies from a Chicago-area butcher named Czimer's Game & Seafood. Owner Richard Cizmer was convicted in 2003 for selling what he claimed was lion meat but which turned out to be tigers and leopards—which are federally protected under the ESA. He spent six months in prison.

"He's back now, and he's back operating this butcher shop in Chicago," Flocken says. "We're finding that most of this meat is going back to him again. Where he's getting his meat, he refuses to say. He says he gets it from a taxidermist and neither he nor the taxidermist will say where it's coming from."

We're also wondering, are these diseased animals? Are they surplus animals from roadside zoos or is it part of this strange culture in the U.S. where people have these big cats in private captivity?"

Restaurants aren't the only ones selling lion meat. In addition to Czimer's (whose site says it does not currently have lion available) I found at least one online vendor whose offerings, billed as "American lion," include four ounces of stew meat for \$49.99, a lion penis "with set of Rocky Mountain Oysters" for \$999.99 (sold out, by the way) and a 10- to 15-pound shoulder roast for \$1,999.99.

The site also sells lion bones for \$999.99 a pound. Lion bones have recently become highly valued on the black market, where they are taking the place of tiger bones in traditional Asian medicine.

IFAW and other organizations are working on a few different fronts to stem this shady trade. The ESA could take care of most of it, because the sale of these products would not be allowed under the act, although the process to get lions listed under the ESA is still in its early stages and could take a few more years.

IFAW has also been working with California Reps. Buck McKeon (R) and Loretta Sanchez (D), who last week introduced the Big Cats and Public Safety Protection Act. If passed, the act would ban private ownership of all big cats—including lions and tigers. The animals currently in private hands would be grandfathered in, but owners would need to register their cats with federal authorities.

"I don't want to exaggerate the restaurant angle," Flocken says, pointing out that habitat loss and American trophy hunters are bigger threats to lions than restaurants. But he notes that the public outcry to restaurant sales comes more from a visceral reaction to the idea of eating a venerated animal, not due to public awareness that lions are threatened with extinction.

Unfortunately, as long as that public misperception exists, conserving these increasingly rare cats will remain a constant challenge.

This story was originally published by Scientific American. Reprinted with permission.

Article link: <http://www.businessinsider.com/lion-meat-tacos-threaten-conservation-2013-5>

##

# 5.89 bears killed to boost moose hunting in Western Alaska

Published: May 30, 2013

By TIM MOWRY — Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — State wildlife biologists from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game recently killed almost 90 bears and delivered nearly 4 tons of bear meat to residents in eight villages in western Interior Alaska as part of a predator control program designed to increase the number of moose in the area.

Fish and Game staff shot 89 bears - 84 black bears and five grizzlies - in game management unit 19A along the Kuskokwim River during a two-week program that began on May 13 and ended Monday. The area is about 300 miles southwest of Fairbanks.

Biologists shot the bears from a helicopter in a 530-square mile area of state land that is a small part of unit 19A, which encompasses nearly 10,000 square miles east of Aniak.

The goal of the program was to reduce the number of bears in the area as low as possible, Fish and Game spokeswoman Cathie Harms said. It was the first year of a two-year predator control program approved by the Alaska Board of Game last spring at the request of local residents concerned about low moose numbers.

The nearly 8,000 pounds of meat from the bears, valued at approximately \$80,000, was distributed to villagers in Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Crooked Creek, Lime Village, Kalskag, Red Devil, Sleetmute and Stony River, Harms said.

The bears ranged in age from yearlings to mature adults. Biologists avoided shooting sows with cubs of the year. Hides from larger bears were sent to Fairbanks and will be sold at the annual fur auction in Fairbanks in March.

Removal of the bears, which cost approximately \$230,000, should boost survival of moose calves in the area, Harms said.

"Bears are most efficient at taking young moose, so calves being born now will have a much higher chance of survival," she said. "Once calves have survived a year, they're not as vulnerable."

The program won't have a permanent effect on the moose population, but it should have a measurable effect for several years, Harms said. The department will conduct moose surveys to monitor the population.

"Within the next year or two we should be able to see an increase in moose numbers," she said.

The bear control area previously was the best moose hunting area in all of unit 19A, but the moose population has declined dramatically in recent years. Most of the unit has been closed to moose hunting since 2005, and only a few subsistence hunts remain open. The moose harvest in all of unit 19A has averaged between 75 and 100 moose the past five years. The harvest objective set by the Board of Game for the unit is 400 to 550 moose.

A wolf control program has been in effect in a larger portion of unit 19A since 2004 but has not had a measurable effect on the moose population, Harms said. Approximately 150 wolves have been killed in the area in the past 10 years, she said. Most of the bear control area was within a larger wolf control area.

While biologists knew there were many more black bears than grizzly bears in the area, they didn't know how many bears were in the area before the program started or how many they would find, Harms said.

"Early estimates were we could take anywhere from 50 to 120 bears," she said.

The bear control area is so small that killing 89 bears won't have an effect on the overall bear population in the unit, she said.

The department considered other management options for killing the bears, but they either didn't work or weren't feasible, Harms said. The Board of Game liberalized hunting and trapping seasons for bears and wolves in the area, but harvests weren't high enough to affect predator populations, she said.

Issuing permits to snare bears was also considered, but public snaring programs in other parts of the state have not been successful, Harms said. Live-trapping and relocating the bears also was considered, but finding acceptable release sites was practically impossible, she said. Residents in most areas of the state don't want more bears.

"We really don't have a place to put them," Harms said. "We just can't relocate that many."

Residents in the eight villages where the bear meat was distributed were extremely grateful, she said. This is a lean time of year in rural Alaska and transportation for hunting and fishing is difficult, Harms said.

Information from: Fairbanks (Alaska) Daily News-Miner,  
<http://www.newsminer.com>

Article link: <http://www.adn.com/2013/05/30/2920609/nearly-90-bears-killed-under-predator.html>

##

## 6. Utah board OKs mountain goat introduction plan

By Brett Prettyman | The Salt Lake Tribune

First Published Jun 04 2013 05:43 pm • Last Updated Jun 04 2013 10:56 pm

**Wildlife » Critics say plan would threaten plant species, create more chances for hunting.**

The Utah Wildlife Board ruled Tuesday that mountain goats could become a part of the high-elevation ecosystem of the La Sal Mountains east of Moab, but there is work to be done before that happens.

The governor-appointed board accepted the Utah Mountain Goat Statewide Management Plan as presented by biologists from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and emphasized that approval of the plan only clears the way for the next step of a possible introduction of the nonnative species.

Conservationists have expressed concern with the impact of such an introduction. The possibility to relocate mountain goats from other successful Utah herds brought concern from conservationists while the management plan was presented to the public at a series of Regional Advisory Committee meetings.

"There is really no commitment to specific limits to declines of native plant and animal species in these communities [as a result of mountain goats]," said Mary O'Brien, who lives in Castle Valley at the base of the La Sals.

"This is pretty irreversible if the damage is done," said O'Brien, who also works as the Utah Forests Program director for the Grand Canyon Trust conservation group.

She said the alpine community of the La Sal Mountains is home to 10 plant species only found in Utah and one plant found only on the mountain.

Kent Hersey, big-game project leader for the DWR, said careful consideration has been given to impacts of the mountain goats wherever they have been introduced in Utah and monitoring in other release areas show the animals have no major impact on vegetation.

"There has been 20 years of data trend plots done by the Forest Service [in the Uinta Mountains]. They have not seen any damage by goats there," Hersey said. "If a population is set and maintained at a low enough density there is not a problem."

Models show, according to state biologists, that the La Sals could support about 200 mountain goats, and Hersey said that is a conservative number because it only includes the available forage going down to the 10,000-foot elevation. More animals could be added if the model dropped another 1,000 feet in elevation.

Other critics of the plan — which also includes augmenting existing mountain goat populations and creating new groups on the Deep Creek Mountains and on Farmington Peak — claim it is just about creating more hunting opportunities.

Byron Bateman, president of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife (SFW), said the La Sals are a good fit for mountain goats.

"There is plenty of room. Let's start with a small population and keep a close eye on them," he said. "Mountain goats enhance the overall experience for everybody who uses the outdoors in Utah. It would be a boon to tourism."

Utah Wildlife Board member John Bair, who once served as president of SFW, agreed that mountain goats in the La Sals would benefit more than hunters.

"They have been very positive for the state in all aspects of wildlife hunting and viewing," he said. "Any opportunity to expand that positive to other areas of the state should be done. It would be foolish not to do it."

The board approved the statewide management plan, but chair Del Brady pointed out that before any mountain goats are released in the La Sals — or anywhere else in new areas of the state — that the wildlife agency will come up with unit-specific management plans that will be conducted with all involved land management agencies and go through another public comment process.

Also Tuesday, the board approved the Utah Bighorn Sheep Management Plan, which again includes augmenting existing populations of the native species and creating new herds.

In other action Tuesday, the board approved Utah's upland game hunting rules for 2013-14. New rules include band-tailed pigeon hunting across the state; it had previously been allowed in only 13 counties. Hunters will only be allowed two pigeons, down from five, this year. The mourning and white-winged dove limit remains 10, but hunters can have up to three 30 in possession.

Hunters accustomed to a Sept. 1 opening of Utah's upland game season for mourning dove, band-tailed pigeon, forest grouse, cottontail rabbit, snowshoe

hare and sandhill crane need to be aware that there is a different opening date this year.

State law allows hunting on Sunday in Utah, but not for the opening of a hunt. Because Sept. 1 is a Sunday this year, hunters will have to wait until Sept. 2 to pursue those species.

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Article link: <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/56411324-78/utah-mountain-goats-plan.html.csp>

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## 7. States Strive for Balance Between Tiger Conservation and Tourism

By JEN SWANSON  
June 4, 2013, 3:29 am

MUMBAI— In July last year, the Indian Supreme Court banned tourism in the core areas of 41 tiger reserves in an attempt to protect the 1,700 tigers in the country. Three months later, the court reversed its decision but told the state-managed reserves to abide by new guidelines drafted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Since then, the guidelines, which call for restricting tourism to 20 percent of the parks' core areas and limit construction in the tigers' primary habitat, have created confusion among states over how to interpret the ministry's vague mandates. Much is at stake in these interpretations, as one Ranthambhore tigress can generate some \$130 million in direct tourism revenue in her adult life, according to one estimate.

"Some states have not changed much — they have carried on what they were doing earlier," said Krishna Kumar Singh, a founding member of the Ecotourism Society of India, a nonprofit organization that promotes environmentally responsible tourism. "Some states have implemented these guidelines in a way that has restricted tourism to quite an extent." The interpretation of the rules might even vary within different state parks, he said.

“When you look at it from the outside, you say, well, is it to control tourism and for the wildlife and the environment, or is it to kill tourism?” Mr. Singh said. “People are now wondering whether they can survive this kind of drop in business.”

Madhya Pradesh, once known as India’s “tiger state” before losing that title to Karnataka after the most recent tiger census, has been one of the states most adversely affected by the new rules. Much of the problem, according to Mr. Singh, is that most Madhya Pradesh parks lack the local mechanisms, namely the Local Advisory Committees, required by the guidelines to implement and monitor the policy.

“The committee was to decide the area that should be open for tourists, and the number of jeeps that were allowed to visit the parks each day,” said Mr. Singh. Most state reserves still lack a fully functioning advisory committee, he said, if one exists at all.

“A lot was left on this committee to decide,” said Mr. Singh. “If that committee is not in place, then obviously that decision falls on the director, and the director is taking an ad hoc decision on that.”

At Bandhavgarh National Park, one of Madhya Pradesh’s most popular reserves, questionable implementation of the new policy is evident. The number of safaris has been cut by 50 percent. In addition, the smaller quota has been further divided between the morning and afternoon safaris, which makes it even more difficult for tourists to visit. Mr. Singh estimated that the swift reduction of safaris has caused tourism to drop 50 percent statewide.

The ministry’s guidelines on tiger tourism have brought about some necessary changes, like limiting the number of jeeps that can enter the forest areas, said Phillip Davis, founder of Tiger Awareness, a British nongovernmental organization that has supported Indian nongovernmental organizations working in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and the Sunderbans since 1998. “We need to respect wildlife, though from a distance and not crowding on top of it,” he said in an e-mail.

But one of the main problems with the guidelines is that they assume tourism is a threat to tigers, said Joanna Van Gruisen, a wildlife photographer who runs Sarai at Toria, an eco-lodge near Panna National Park, in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

Ms. Van Gruisen, a British national who has lived in India for 30 years, and most wildlife conservationists argue that not only does tourism deter poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking, it creates new jobs for locals living in and around the parks.

Instead of asking how the industry could be reorganized to better benefit the wildlife, Ms. Van Gruisen said, the government has mistakenly approached wildlife tourism as a threat. "The only industry that has any regulations is tourism," she said.

She quickly added that she is fine with efforts to reform the industry, but she would like to see more regulations on polluting and environmentally dangerous businesses that pose a greater threat to wildlife. "Why should it be only tourism that is regulated, and not your cement factory or your petrol pump?" she asked.

That idea – that the focus should be on the wildlife and the environment rather than on reducing tourism figures – was at the center of an Ecotourism Society of India conference in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, where one of the chief topics was to brainstorm ways to shift traditional tiger tourism toward a more environmentally friendly approach.

"We were trying to figure out as to what should be the shifts, as well as what should be the issues of eco-tourism that need to be addressed now," said Mr. Singh, defining ecotourism as a sustainable approach that balances wildlife and forest conservation with the needs of the community and tourism industry.

The two-day conference in April drew speakers from South Africa, Kenya, Australia and other countries that have embraced eco-tourism. The second day looked at India's legal landscape, industry accountability and responsibility to the community, as well as different ways to foster best practices within an Indian context. The event closed with a three-hour panel discussion with the chief secretary of Madhya Pradesh, R. Parasuram who, according to Mr. Singh, was "keen to take this forward."

"Ecotourism advocates small scale, less impacting, conservation friendly tourism and emphasizes on educating visitors and ensuring the flow of benefits to the local communities," said Suhas Kumar, the additional principal chief conservator for wildlife at the Indian Forest Service in Madhya Pradesh, in an e-mail.

Mr. Kumar, who also gave a presentation at the conference, said the central government's new guidelines reflect these goals and noted that more park authorities are open to eco-tourism as the movement gains traction abroad.

The next steps will be to create policy suggestions for the state or central governments based on feedback from the lively discussions in Bhopal. "There's going to be some challenging of the guidelines whether in the court or in the ministry itself," said Mr. Singh. "Even the Madhya Pradesh forest department realizes that the rules and regulations that have come into place are not right. They need to be looked at again."

He said the government fully expected the tourism industry to challenge some of its interventions to see if a more balanced system can be brought in, and many government officials have already pledged their support.

"The dialogue has started, but we still have a long ways to go," he said.

Article link: <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/04/states-strive-for-balance-between-tiger-conservation-and-tourism/>

##

## 8. Report: Birth control better for wild horses than BLM roundups

By Brian Maffly | The Salt Lake Tribune

First Published Jun 05 2013 01:41 pm • Last Updated Jun 06 2013 07:42 am

**Agency spends millions keeping horses off the range, but program lacks scientific rigor, panel says.**

A panel of independent experts is calling on the Bureau of Land Management to bring better science and more birth control to its beleaguered wild horse and burro program, which has removed thousands of animals from Utah and other Western states' rangelands in recent years.

The National Academy of Science's National Research Council on Wednesday released a 451-page report that finds "business as usual" will be hard on both free-ranging equids and taxpayers, who foot the staggering bill of corralling and caring for 50,000 animals in long-term holding facilities. Rounding up horses could be doing more harm than good, but BLM's scientific methods lack the rigor to determine whether roundups are necessary or effective, the 14-member panel concluded.

"If populations density were to increase to the point that there was not enough forage available, it could result in fewer pregnancies and lower young-to-female ratios and survival rates," the report states. "Decreased competition for forage through removals may instead allow population growth, which then drives the need to remove more animals."

In a news release, BLM officials say they welcomed the report's findings and recommendations, but did not address its criticisms.

"Our agency is committed to protecting and managing these iconic animals for current and future generations," Deputy Director Neil Kornze said. "The BLM shares the committee's view that although no quick or easy fixes exist to this

pressing issue, investments in science-based management approaches, exploring additional opportunities for population control, and increased transparency could lead to a more cost-effective program that manages wild horses and burros with greater public confidence."

These animals may not be legally hunted and they face no pressure from predators, which have been eradicated from the range long ago. The best way to control their numbers is through contraception and chemical vasectomies, concludes the new report titled "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward."

Currently, wild horses populations grow by 15 percent to 20 percent a year, effectively doubling every four years.

"No one wants to see more horses in long-term holding," said committee chair Guy Palmer of Washington State University. "If horse populations just continue to grow, regardless of how much rangeland is allocated to them, two things are assured to happen. The rangeland is actually destroyed for use by other wild animals, and eventually the horses themselves will become ill and unthrifty due to inadequate feed and access to water."

How many horses are out there may be anyone's guess. BLM says 37,300, but its counting procedure does not yield reliable numbers. The agency could be underestimating populations on its 102 horse management areas by 10 percent to 50 percent, the report said.

BLM also does an inadequate job of assessing the availability of forage — estimates used to determine how many horses a unit can support — and the effectiveness of its management practices.

But the scientific panel sympathized with the agency, which has to balance the conflicting perspectives of ranchers and animal-welfare advocates, while trying to meet its obligations to both maintain genetically healthy free-ranging horse herds and protect federally owned rangelands.

Horse advocates called the report a "scathing rebuke" of BLM policies, which they say are inhumane and unfairly restrict where horses and burros may roam.

"This is a turning point for the decades-long fight to protect America's mustangs," said Neda DeMayo, president of Return to Freedom, one of more than 50 advocacy groups in the American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign.

"The report delivers a strong case for an immediate halt to the roundup and removal of wild horses from the range, an increase in wild horse and population levels and implementation of in-the-wild management using available fertility control options," said Suzanne Roy, the coalition's director.

About half the BLM's horse program's \$80 million budget goes to long-term storage of animals, while just 4 percent goes to on-the-range management.

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## 9. Migration no longer best strategy for Yellowstone elk, study finds

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(Phys.org) —Migratory elk are coming back from Yellowstone National Park with fewer calves due to drought and increased numbers of big predators—two landscape-level changes that are reducing the benefits of migration with broader implications for conservation of migratory animals, according to a new study published in the journal *Ecology*.

The new study by the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit—a joint program involving U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department—describes a long-term decline in the number of calves produced annually by the Clarks Fork herd, a population of about 4,000 elk whose migrants travel annually between winter ranges near Cody and summer ranges within Yellowstone National Park.

Migratory elk experienced a 19 percent depression in rates of pregnancy over the four years of the study and a 70 percent decline in calf production over 21 years of monitoring by the Game and Fish Department, while the elk that did not migrate, known as resident elk, in the same herd experienced high pregnancy and calf production and are expanding their numbers and range into private lands outside of the park.

"This is one of North America's wildest and best-protected landscapes, where elk and other ungulates still retain their long-distance seasonal migrations—and yet, it is the migratory elk that are struggling while their resident counterparts thrive in the foothills," says Arthur Middleton, who led this work as a UW doctoral student and is now a postdoctoral fellow at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

A key finding of the study was that only 70 percent of migratory elk were pregnant, compared to 90 percent of residents—a rate more typical of Rocky Mountain elk. The study shows that the hotter and drier summer conditions of the last two decades, coincident with the long-term drought widely affecting the West, have reduced the duration of the spring period when tender new grasses are available to elk. This makes it harder for female migratory elk to find the forage they need to both nurse a calf and breed. Though elk typically bear a calf every year, migratory elk that nursed a calf had only a 23 percent chance of becoming pregnant again in the following year.

Another likely cause of the declining calf numbers among migrants was predation. Migrants share their range with four times as many grizzly bears and wolves than resident elk, and both predators are well known to prey on young elk calves. Resident elk get a break from high levels of predation, in part, because when predators kill livestock on the resident range, they are often lethally removed by wildlife managers and ranchers.

"A lower pregnancy rate reduces the number of calves that are born in the first place. Predation seems to reduce the number of migratory calves that survive the first few months of life," says Matthew Kauffman, a research wildlife biologist with the USGS and assistant professor at UW. Kauffman explains that resident elk numbers are growing in the foothills not because migrants are choosing to stay behind, but rather because irrigated fields and lower predator numbers are allowing residents to raise more calves to adulthood.

Globally, wildlife migration is a dwindling phenomenon. Research and management often focus on conspicuous barriers like fences, roads and other kinds of development that can physically impede migration corridors. While those are important, this study suggests that even in a landscape as well-protected as the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, subtler changes in predator management and forage quality on the seasonal ranges of migratory animals also will play an important role.

Migration is conventionally understood as a strategy to gain better forage quality while also reducing exposure to denning predators but, in this case, it seems those benefits are instead being realized by the residents.

The study's authors note that their work does not predict that migratory elk will disappear, but rather that there could be a long-term shift under way in the relative abundance of migratory versus resident elk in the system. The study also highlights the perils of characterizing Yellowstone wolf reintroduction as a "natural experiment." Other key factors have changed since wolves were reintroduced, including growth in grizzly bear numbers and recurrent long-term drought associated with reduced snowpack and hotter summers. The authors caution that such factors should be taken into account in the effort to understand ongoing ecological changes in Yellowstone.

Middleton also points out that this work highlights the complex challenges facing regional wildlife managers and other stakeholders as they continue to adapt to the reintroduction and recovery of large carnivores, and severe drought that some studies suggest is linked to longer-term climate change.

"Most immediately, these trends have meant lost hunting opportunity in the backcountry areas frequented by migratory elk, and increasing crop damage and forage competition with domestic livestock in the front-country areas where resident elk are expanding," he says.

This work was a collaboration among the USGS's Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with cooperation from Yellowstone National Park and other agencies. Primary funders include the Game and Fish Department, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board, the Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition and USGS, among others.

The study is featured in a Forum section of Ecology, with a series of commentaries from other ecologists who study wildlife migration and predator-prey interactions.

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Provided by University of Wyoming

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