

**Issue Paper on Predator Management**  
**The Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society**  
**March 2003**

The Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society is concerned with recent and increasing emphasis on encouraging mammalian predator removal to potentially enhance duck nesting success and recruitment in the Mississippi Flyway. In our current professional environment, which promotes ecosystem management and associated ecological processes, any long-term and broad geographical benefits resulting from such economically costly, labor intensive, and socially challenged actions are questionable when compared with habitat-based programs. Therefore, The Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society hereby endorses the resolution addressing predator removal unanimously proposed by the Technical Section of the Mississippi Flyway Council on 21 February 2003. This resolution is as follows:

**POSITION STATEMENT:** The Mississippi Flyway Council (MFC) does not support the practice of predator removal as a viable management practice to improve waterfowl recruitment over the long-term or over large geographic areas. The MFC believes that the highest conservation priorities for improving waterfowl recruitment are the landscape-scale wetland and grassland habitat restoration strategies advocated by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Maintaining waterfowl breeding habitat is the highest priority for the long-term welfare of waterfowl populations in North America.

**JUSTIFICATION:** Numerous methods have been tried or suggested to reduce the effects of predation on nesting ducks. Management approaches typically fall into 3 general categories: 1) restoration and protection of habitats critical to nesting ducks, 2) isolation of nests from predators, and 3) removal of predators by lethal methods. Research has shown that intensive predator removal can improve waterfowl nest success, especially in a landscape of intensive agriculture and limited waterfowl habitat. However, sustaining high nest success means annually removing animals, with all the attendant costs and potential controversy. Furthermore, in an era of limited resources, expending funds on predator removal necessarily competes with landscape habitat programs, the emphasis of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. While predator removal should be recognized as one of a suite of management tools available to wildlife managers to be applied on a localized basis, the MFC Technical Section believes improving waterfowl recruitment is better accomplished through the primary strategy of large-scale wetland and grassland habitat restoration strategies embraced by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Maintaining waterfowl breeding habitat is paramount to the long-term welfare of waterfowl populations.

Mammalian predator removal for waterfowl management purposes should only be considered acceptable as a local management practice when:

- waterfowl habitat needs cannot be met;
- predation is demonstrated as a significant problem for waterfowl recruitment;
- there is a high probability of increasing recruitment; and
- other management options are not likely to be successful.

This resolution was developed from input from the states and provinces of the Mississippi Flyway Technical Section at the request of the Flyway Council.