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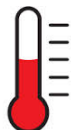
Reports from the Field - Open Access

Newsletter



April 2014

Big News on the JWD Endowment

Dave Jessup and Joe Gaydos

The effort to endow the cost of producing the *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* (JWD), and providing it online to the 140 nations with the lowest per capita GDP, the parts of the world where wildlife health and conservation face some of the greatest threats, has just taken a huge step forward. WDA's goal has been to raise \$2.5 million as an endowment to fund this in perpetuity by 2020. Since 2012 WDA members and other donors have generously given, and income from various WDA activities has generated a total of just over \$200,000. Now WDA Council has voted to clearly separate the JWD endowment funds from assets WDA uses to fund other awards and general operation, and to move just over \$1 million in WDA invested assets into the endowment fund. This means the JWD Endowment Fund will soon have \$1.25 million and be half way to the goal set for 2020. This is huge! If WDA and its members 'stay the course' and continue as we have over the last 2 years we will make our endowment goal of \$2.5 million by 2020.

Some new and creative ways you can help WDA achieve its endowment goal are:

Donate stocks, bonds or mutual funds. We have a \$9100 donation now that needs a match to make it available to WDA. If you have assets that have accumulated value and are now likely to be a bit of a tax liability, here is your chance to take a write off.

Donate your clunker, or any old vehicle <http://wildlifedisease-cardonations.org/> The WDA endowment gets 80% of the net value of any vehicle donated after towing fees.

Make Amazon purchases using the WDA Amazon Smile, <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/36-6098737> you get the same prices and services, and the JWD endowment will receive .5% of the purchase value.

Bid on items in the upcoming WDA electronic native arts and crafts auction – [please click here to see the preliminary item catalog](#)

Consider a leaving a legacy by way of your will, a bequest, or trust donation (see the 'Why I Give' article below)

Why I Give

Kay G. Mehren

I admit it, I'm a wildlife vet wannabee. Can you imagine a time when the first Cap-Chur rifle was a prototype, and there were no safe immobilizing drugs for intramuscular (IM) administration? I was lucky enough to be able to do target practice with the prototype Cap-Chur rifle while in a year-long co-op program at the San Diego Zoo in 1958-59, and gained plenty of experience with lassoes, nets, and hands-on capture and handling of various species.

By the time I did my internship at the San Diego Zoo in 1969-70, etorphine, xylazine, and phencyclidine (shudder!) were becoming available. The fields of wildlife medicine and zoo animal medicine opened up, and a few pioneer wildlife veterinarians were able to demonstrate to their

agencies that they could make significant contributions in the field, as well as in the necropsy room and laboratory.

Which all goes to say that I've been able to watch, with great pleasure, the evolution of WDA from a small, elite group to a large and diverse global organization whose members have access to –and effectively use- educational opportunities, amazing resources, and technology that were barely dreamed of “back then.” I always look forward to the WDA conferences because there is such a feeling of *esprit de corps*, of enthusiasm and willingness to share ideas, research, and experiences, both in presentations and informally.

Between conferences, the *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* is my go-to for keeping apprised of new developments in wildlife disease. The journal has grown and improved over time, just as the WDA has, and offers remarkable value. The *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* is intellectually and emotionally important to me, and I am pleased to be able to make an annual donation toward establishing the endowment for its continuation at an affordable price.

Don't miss your opportunity to vote in the 2014 WDA elections!

This is your opportunity to help shape the leadership of WDA as well as learn more about your colleagues as you read their bios. Eligible members with valid email addresses on file should have already received email notifications with a URL linking to the online ballot. Eligible voters without a valid email address on file will receive a paper ballot in the mail. Please note that you must renew your WDA membership for 2014 to be eligible to vote. If you have any questions regarding the status of your membership or voting procedures, please contact Jason Snell in Customer Service at WDA@AllenPress.com or call toll free in the USA at (800) 627-0326 Ext 403.

Candidates:

For Council Member at Large - Frances Gulland, Karrie Rose, Marie Pierre Ryser, Patrice Klein

For Secretary – Carlos Das Neves, Krysten Schuler

For Treasurer – Laurie Beaten

For Student Member for Council – José de Jesús Sotomayor, Maria Spriggs, Michelle Verant, Taya Ford

Wildlife Health Information Sharing Partnership – Event Reporting System (WHISPers)

Jonathan Sleeman



The USGS National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) is introducing a new online database for reporting wildlife health events that will be an easy and efficient way for wildlife professionals across North America to share disease event information, such as outbreak onset and ending date, general location, species involved, numbers involved, diagnoses, and laboratory and contact names. It is a partner-driven, Web-based system for tracking basic information about historic and ongoing wildlife mortality and morbidity events. The primary goal of the system is to provide natural resource partners and the public with timely, accurate situational awareness regarding these events. The system also serves as a searchable archive of historic mortality and morbidity event data. Initially, the NWHC will populate this database with the wildlife mortality data the NWHC has maintained for several years (see http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/quarterly_reports/index.jsp); after the initial rollout, other wildlife professionals will be able to enter data that can be viewed by others. A prototype of the reporting system was demonstrated at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Fish and Wildlife Health Committee meeting in September 2013 and a Webex demonstration was given to partners to gather additional feedback. Frequently Asked Questions are available at http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/other/WHISPers_FAQ.pdf Contact: Jonathan Sleeman, 608-270-2401, jsleeman@usgs.gov.

Illinois Student Chapter of the Wildlife Disease Association

Ashley Barthel



Students at the University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine are pleased to announce that they have started a chapter of the WDA! With help from their advisor Dr. Matthew Allender, the executive board is ready to bring together the veterinary community, researchers, and health professionals passionate about wildlife health and disease. They have two speakers already lined up: Dr. Joseph Merritt of the Illinois Natural History Survey discussing White Nose Syndrome in bats and Dr. Matthew Allender speaking about *Ranavirus* in chelonians. They are looking forward to bringing more speakers, wet labs, and opportunities to their 44 members to expand their knowledge on wildlife related topics. For more information, please contact Ashley Barthel,

Nordic Section Report

Carlos Gonçalo das Neves



Outbreak of Salmonella Enteritidis in hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) on Gotland, Sweden

During the fall of 2013, rehabilitation facilities on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea submitted numerous hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) that had died or had been euthanized to the National Veterinary Institute for examination. A total of 10 animals were diagnosed with sepsis caused by *Salmonella* Enteritidis and this bacterium was cultured from the intestine of five additional animals.

Although spread of *S. Enteritidis* during rehabilitation may have occurred in some cases, other animals were determined to be carrying *S. Enteritidis* already upon arrival to rehabilitation centers. Hedgehogs have been reported to be carriers of various *Salmonella* strains in other countries and hedgehogs were the probable source of *Salmonella* Typhimurium DT1 infections in children in southern Sweden in 1999-2007. Very little is known about the role of hedgehogs in the epidemiology of *S. Enteritidis* in Sweden. Further studies to evaluate the presence of *S. Enteritidis* in the general hedgehog population and to subtype and compare isolates from hedgehogs with those from other species are on-going.

Outbreak of acute pasteurellosis in free-ranging Fallow deer (*Dama dama*) in Sweden

In late summer of 2013 an estimated number of 30 fallow deer (*Dama dama*) were found dead in two areas in central-Sweden with dense local populations of wild fallow deer. The deaths occurred over a few weeks and primarily adult males in good body condition were affected. Five deer carcasses and organs from additional three animals were submitted to the National Veterinary Institute (SVA) for examination. Evidence of acute septicemia was observed in all carcasses. *Pasteurella multocida* was isolated from the lungs of seven out of eight animals and from the spleen of four of seven animals tested, consistent with the diagnosis of acute pasteurellosis. This disease is occasionally reported in farmed deer and in wild ruminants but mortality of this magnitude has not previously been documented in wild fallow deer in Sweden. Further studies to evaluate the underlying cause of the outbreak are on-going.

Publicizing WDA among Latin America Wildlife Researchers

José Luiz Catão-Dias



The Latin America WDA Section was established in 2011 with 25 members. Over the past 2 years, efforts to increase regional representation lead to 64 regular members in 2013. In order to maintain this growing trend and engage new members in 2014 we are disseminating the WDA's mission and benefits of membership in Latin America countries. For this purpose, Dr. Alexander Genoy-Puerto, our Section Secretary, recently promoted a series of meetings with Colombian undergraduate and graduate students, faculty members, researchers, and professionals from the Veterinary Schools at La Salle, National and San Martin Universities. During these meetings, Alexander presented on the WDA's internal organization and regional Sections, Latin American participation at the annual conferences, student's Section and the Journal of Wildlife Diseases. In particular, attendees were invited to join WDA and to actively participate for the success of the next WDA - Latin America biennial meeting, which will take place in Colombia in 2015.

USGS National Wildlife Health Center Quarterly Mortality Report

Written and compiled by the U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center Field Investigations Team members: Anne Ballmann, LeAnn White, Barb Bodenstern, and Jennifer Buckner



West Nile virus at the Great Salt Lake

Diagnostic evaluations of eared grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) and bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) carcasses submitted to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) from the Great Salt Lake area confirmed West Nile virus (WNV) as the cause of death. These diagnoses were based on pathological findings, molecular testing (RT-PCR), and isolation of viable virus from most tissues. These findings were consistent with the confirmation of WNV in a bald eagle from the same event by the Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Extensive testing ruled out many other causes of death. Carcasses were negative for exposure to lead and organophosphate compounds; RT-PCR screening tests were negative for avian influenza and avian paramyxovirus-1 (Newcastle Disease virus); and no pathogenic bacteria such as *Pasteurella multocida* (causative agent of avian cholera) were isolated. To our knowledge,

this is the first report of WNV in eared grebes and the largest single raptor mortality event attributed to WNV in the United States.

The event was first reported by the UDWR when sick and dead eared grebes were observed in a northern section of the Great Salt Lake (GSL) in mid-November 2013. Most birds were found dead or dying with clinical signs of drooping heads, lethargy, and inability to dive. At that time, an estimated 2 million grebes were arriving during fall migration and were potentially at risk. UDWR estimates that up to 1 percent of the grebe population had died (~15,000-20,000) during this mortality event. It is unclear if the entire 15,000-20,000 grebe mortality was due to WNV, and additional diagnostic evaluations on both eared grebes and bald eagles carcasses are in progress. The last significant eared grebe mortality event on the GSL was caused by avian cholera (*Pasteurella multocida*) and occurred during winter 2010 when an estimated 10,000 birds died. Grebes typically migrate from the GSL as food sources (brine shrimp) diminish, and travel to the west coast of the United States to spend the remainder of winter in coastal bays and estuaries of California, the Salton Sea of California, and the Gulf of California in Mexico.

In early December, the UDWR again contacted the NWHC to report morbidity and mortality in bald eagles occurring in proximity to the GSL. The first bald eagle was brought to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah on December 1, 2013. Clinical signs in eagles, some since diagnosed with WNV, included head tremors, paralysis of the wings and legs, formation of plaques at the back of the throat, and progressive seizures. To date, 69 bald eagles have been found sick or dead in multiple counties in Utah (primarily Box Elder, Davis, Salt Lake, Utah, and Weber counties). The GSL is a major overwintering site for bald eagles, estimated at 750 to 1,250 birds annually. For more information, view the Wildlife Health Bulletin on this topic:

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/wildlife_health_bulletins/index.jsp

Avian cholera in seabirds in Alaska

Large numbers of sick and dead seabirds were observed washing ashore along the northern coast of Saint Lawrence Island, Alaska in late November 2013. Citizens of Gambell and Savoonga, two tribal villages approximately 40 miles apart on this remote 100-mile long island in the Bering Sea, reported the event immediately to the University of Alaska's Marine Advisory Program stationed in Nome. Villagers were able to collect some specimens from the initial die-off, including a thick-billed murre (*Uria lomvia*), a Northern fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), and a crested auklet (*Aethia cristatella*), which were sent to the National Wildlife Health Center for diagnostic evaluation.

Avian cholera (*Pasteurella multocida*) was diagnosed based on bacterial cultures of liver and characteristic lesions in all bird specimens submitted. Testing for avian influenza was negative. Prior to this event, avian cholera had not been reported in Alaska. The closest avian cholera outbreak reported in recent history involved snow geese (*Chen caerulescens*) on Banks Island, Northwest Territories, Canada. The closest avian cholera outbreak involving seabirds was reported in common eiders (*Somateria mollissima*) and occurred on East Bay Island, Nunavut, Canada.

Affected birds were observed swimming in circles with heads laid over their backs, "throwing one wing in the air," and subsequently dying. The weather in this area at the time was unseasonably mild with many recent southerly storms and freeze/thaw cycles. Average temperatures were in the mid 40's and the sea remained ice-free, whereas sea ice would normally be formed by October. Native communities on Saint Lawrence Island rely almost exclusively on the subsistence harvest of many marine species, including birds, for food. Many seabirds use this area of the Bering Sea as a staging area during migration and it is an overwintering area for eiders, including the world's population of spectacled eider (*Somateria fischeri*). For more information, view the Wildlife Health Bulletin on this topic:

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/wildlife_health_bulletins/index.jsp

White-nose syndrome winter 2013/2014 summary

White-nose syndrome (WNS) has been confirmed in cave-hibernating bats in one new state (Arkansas) thus far during the 2013/2014 winter season. This represents a continued expansion of *Pseudogymnoascus* (formerly *Geomyces*) *destructans* distribution on the landscape. No evidence exists of geographic barriers preventing its spread. Since it was first recognized near Albany, New York in 2007, WNS has now been confirmed in 23 states and 5 Canadian provinces. Several additional counties in Missouri had confirmed cases of WNS as well as suspected cases this winter based on visible signs suggesting that the disease is now endemic throughout Missouri. Sites in several northeastern states—where WNS has been present the longest—continue to be occupied by bats although in much lower numbers than before the disease struck and evidence of bat mortality at the hibernaculum is beginning to be reported in several recently affected Southern states. Winter hibernacula survey data are being reviewed by state and federal management agencies to better understand the ongoing impacts of WNS on bat populations in affected regions. Recent phylogenetic analyses have demonstrated the WNS fungus is more closely related to the genus *Pseudogymnoascus* rather than *Geomyces*. Thus, the fungus has been reclassified as *P. destructans*. For the latest WNS updates, consult NWHC Wildlife Health Bulletins at:

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/wildlife_health_bulletins/index.jsp.

View the [current NWHC bat submission guidelines](#)

Leading causes of avian mortality in the United States during 2013

During 2013, 137 avian morbidity and mortality events were investigated by or reported to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC). More than 63,000 birds were estimated to be affected during these events. There were more epizootic events reported from the Pacific flyway (56) than any other flyway in 2013 (Mississippi [32], Central [26], Atlantic [23]). The estimated avian mortality was also higher in the Pacific flyway (46,361 birds) than any other flyway (Mississippi [8,790], Central [6,171], Atlantic [1,757]).

Based on carcasses examined, infectious disease was responsible for 83% (52,275/63,079) of avian deaths reported to NWHC during 2013. Avian botulism (types C and E) was associated with 11,433 bird mortalities and was the cause of more epizootic events (24/138) than any other cause of death during 2013. Over 60% (7,000/11,433) of the mortality attributed to botulism occurred during a single event in northern California involving mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), whiteface ibis (*Plegadis chihi*), green-winged teal (*Anas carolinensis*), northern pintails (*Anas acuta*), and western grebes (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). Although West Nile virus was responsible for the largest number of avian mortalities (20,160) during 2013, the majority of mortality associated with this disease occurred at a single event in Utah that involved primarily eared grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*). Avian cholera was the third leading cause of death and caused the third highest number of avian epizootic events (17) during 2013. Although various waterfowl including redhead (*Aythya Americana*), canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*) and ruddy ducks (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) were affected during these events, the highest mortality due to avian cholera occurred in eared grebes and snow geese (*Chen caerulescens*). There also continued to be several avian morbidity and mortality events associated with human activities, including several hundred deaths attributed to lead poisoning (species included trumpeter swans [*Cygnus buccinator*] and Canada geese [*Branta Canadensis*]), 516 deaths due to pesticides, insecticides, and other toxicants (primarily Eurasian collared doves [*Streptopelia decaocto*], European starlings [*Sturnus vulgaris*], and red-winged blackbirds [*Agelaius phoeniceus*]), and 34 deaths (primarily sandhill cranes [*Grus Canadensis*]) due to electrocution following a weather event (dense fog).

The Quarterly Wildlife Mortality Report is available at:
http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/quarterly_reports/index.jsp.

Last announcement - Student Small Travel Grants Program

Flo Tseng

The Student Activities Committee of the WDA would like to announce the Student Small Travel Grants Program. The purpose of this fund is to provide small travel scholarships (\$500-\$600) to individual WDA student members who plan to attend the annual WDA conference, especially to those who may not be eligible to apply for the competitive WDA student awards. Students who reside near the conference location are NOT eligible to apply for this travel grant, as funds are intended to offset travel and lodging fees. A total of \$2,500 is available this year for this program and will be disbursed at the annual conference upon confirmation of student conference registration.

The application form can be found on the WDA website. Deadline for submission of the application form and a letter of support is April 11, 2014. Applications should be sent to Dr. Flo Tseng at WDASudentTravel@gmail.com. All student applicants will receive a notice of successful receipt of their application. Notification of awards will be made by June 8, 2014 (one week prior to the deadline for early conference registration).

