

# Why we need predator control

Last issue, HUNTER'S ALERT told you about a federal government agency called Wildlife Services. They do predator control, **something NDOW refuses to do.** The person calling the shots in NDOW must have been absent from biology class in high school. He failed to learn that coyotes were put on this earth to control rodents such as mice and rabbits, not eat the newborn fawn deer and antelope or domestic calves and lambs. **NDOW must like the carnage on the defenseless newborn animals and their slow death because they have done nothing to prevent it.** Here are more events that Wildlife Services performs and after seeing what is happening out in the wild, we will see why predator control is necessary. *From Wildlife Services Bulletin, 2002*

On April 5, 2002 the Elko flight crew aerial hunted the lambing grounds and removed an additional six coyotes during this flight. Each coyote removed from this allotment at this time of year will prevent the loss of hundreds of lambs over the coming lambing season.

A proactive aerial hunt in Antelope Valley yielded two coyotes from a key lambing ground. Aerial wildlife specialist Billy Taylor reports sighting several sage grouse strutting sites at this location. In the past, W.S. Taylor has reported finding signs of sage grouse nests, chicks and adults killed by predators. No doubt predator control efforts in the area has helped predator losses of these birds.

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, while aerial hunting a band of several thousand sheep that were being sheared, the Elko flight crew spotted a ewe with blood on its head and neck. At first the aerial crew was uncertain whether the blood was due to a shearing cut or a predator attack, and circled the area to get a better look at the bleeding ewe. When the aircraft flew past the ewe the second time a coyote was spotted near the injured sheep. The coyote was removed. It was later confirmed by the sheep herder that the blood was from a wound inflicted by the coyote. The sheep later died from these wounds. On 4/08/02, the Elko flight crew hunted this same area again and

again a bloody ewe was spotted. This time the ewe had considerably more blood on and about her neck, but she was still up and walking around. Again, the aircrew located a coyote near the injured sheep and removed it. This sheep, although alive when spotted, later died from the wounds to her neck. Both sheep were due to give birth to twin lambs within days and were valued at \$500. No more losses or injuries occurred to these sheep for the remainder of the week

On 4/12/02, two Elko District allotments were again aerial hunted by the Elko flight crew and 3 coyotes were shot on this flight. Thousands of lambs will be born here in the coming weeks and aerial hunting at this time, will have a major impact on lamb survival. Lamb losses due to coyote predation is the highest cause of mortality in range lambing sheep operations.

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, WS John Peter received a call from a local sheep producer who reported that coyotes were killing his sheep near Denio. WS Peter investigated the report of killed sheep and found that two lambs and two ewes had been killed by coyotes in a canyon that was part of the lambing grounds. WS Peter noted that the coyotes had eaten most of the meat off of small lambs and had only eaten the udders of the two adult ewes.

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, a rancher in the Winnemucca area reported that ravens had torn open the orifices of three lambs and had pecked out the eyes of a newborn calf, all died of their injuries.

Ravens have been responsible for the predation of 9 lambs to date on a band of sheep in the Ruth area east of Ely. Two of those kills were verified by District Supervisor Kevin Lansford. Eyes and tongues have been targeted first by the ravens killing the lambs before they have had a chance to even get up and about.

On 5/7/02, in another lambing area near Battle Mountain sheep herders reported to WS Daren Miller that 3 lambs had been killed by ravens. WS Miller was able to confirm 2 of the 3 losses as raven damage

injuries inflicted to both lambs. (each lamb had its eyes picked out).

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, local cattle rancher from the Paradise Valley area reported that ravens were responsible for the death of one newborn calf.

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, WS Pilot Jack Hodnett on contract from Oregon and gunner removed four coyotes from the Vya Antelope Unit near Sheldon Antelope Refuge. WS Ben Miller located two of the coyotes from the ground and directed the plane in the direction of the howling coyotes. One of the coyotes taken had a small antelope fawn in its mouth prior to being removed.

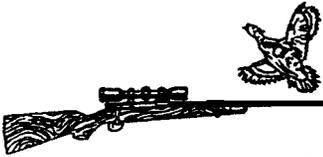
On July 2, a sheep producer near Wadsworth reported that immediately after turning out a band of sheep, that coyotes had killed 5 lambs. On July 3, the sheep producer reported that a large mountain lion was seen by the herder attacking and mauling one adult ewe. WS Spencer also discovered one dead lamb nearby and determined that it had been killed by a coyote.

On July 8, an Austin area sheep producer reported that 10 lambs had been killed by coyotes.

WS Ben Miller has completed the assigned wildlife damage management work on Vya Sage Grouse Unit and the Vya Antelope Unit. The antelope fawning success on the unit measured 52 fawns per 100 does during aerial observations. In 1999, antelope fawning success was well below the 33 fawns per 100 doe level that is needed to maintain the current population of the antelope unit.

WS Chris Simms has completed wildlife damage management work on the Jackpot Sharp-tail Grouse Unit. Research has shown that nest depredations can limit sharp-tail grouse recruitment, population growth and sustainability. And one of the nest raiders, the raven, has increased in abundance and distribution throughout the inter-mountain west. In some parts of the west, the raven population has increased

*Continued on page 11.*



## NDOW Doubts Predator Control works??

When it comes to predator control, NDOW prefers to do nothing or to make excuses. Whichever one they use, they excel at both. In the Las Vegas Review Journal (July 31, 2002) NDOW's Conservation Education Bureau Chief Kelly Clark said **"If hunters had been allowed to take more deer, then we would not have had this mortality this spring. We need to reduce numbers in order to have habitat that's strong and keep the herd viable."** Can you believe this ridiculous statement? With what few deer we have left, let's kill more? In addition, the article stated that studies in other western states have shown that reduction in the number of predators doesn't necessarily translate into increases in numbers of big game animals. HUNTER'S ALERT would like you to read the following article from Peterson's HUNTING (Sept. 1999) and see who you believe.

How Lions Depress Deer Numbers  
Research sheds light on lion/deer  
predation  
By Walter E. Howard

Whenever deer populations are reduced (due to drought, disease outbreaks, fire or unfavorable habitat alterations by people) mountain lions can significantly magnify deer declines and delay their recovery.

Most people are aware of how important mountain lions and other predators are in preventing deer populations from erupting. Also, it is well known that if deer numbers are not checked by predators or hunters the ensuing overpopulation of deer will then overbrowse and overgraze vegetation, as is happening today in many parts of the U.S. where both hunting and lions are absent.

Those who do not accept these facts often claim that the reason for deer population decline is not because of lion predation, even though lions may be present. Instead, they claim such reductions in deer are the consequence of short-term effects of either drought, disease outbreaks or fire. These factors, of course, sometimes have a more devastating effect on deer populations than lions. But when deer numbers drop, due

to weather and /or disease, for example, predators can be important in magnifying the deer declines. Also, lions can significantly delay the recovery of depressed deer herds.

Ranchers, deer hunters and other outdoorsmen have witnessed instances where mountain lions have greatly decreased the number of deer in a specific region. It seems clear that on a regional basis mountain lions can have a substantial effect on the density of local deer herds, especially following drought, fire disease outbreak or in an unnatural habitat made less favorable to deer either by logging, extended periods of fire suppression, road building, human settlement, livestock grazing or other disturbances. Vernon C. Bleich and Becky Pierce of the California Department of Fish and Game found in their ongoing study of radio-collared deer and mountain lions along the eastern scarp of the Sierra Nevada that between 1985 and 1991, the population of deer declined from about 5,200 to roughly 1,000. Investigators anticipated a decline due to the effects of drought. However, I suspect mountain lions were also an important contributing factor.

After four years of studying the role of mountain lions on deer mortality, Pierce found that in an especially severe winter, some lions killed one deer every 1.8 days, although one per week is probably more common. So far, Bleich and Pierce have found that 51 percent of the deer mortalities were due to mountain lions; 22 percent were from coyote kills; 14 percent from road kills; seven percent from hunting and six percent were from other factors. This deer population is now showing signs of recovery.

Look at the outcry there would be if hunters instead of lions had accounted for 51 percent of the deer mortality. In the Kings Canyon area of California, deer declined in the 1980's from about 19,000 to around 1,500 due to many factors, including predation. In this area, mountain lions were found to be responsible for 49 percent of the fawns killed by predators, and lion predation was thought to have

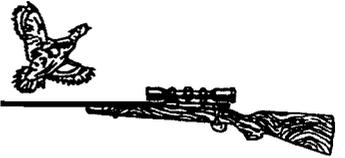
been important in preventing the recovery of the deer population. Other studies on how lions can affect deer numbers in Washington showed that mountain lions can reduce the number of black-tailed deer available to hunters. There is strong implication that mountain lion predation may be limiting small populations of California bighorn sheep, and it has been shown that the growth of a wild horse population was limited by lion predation.

By reviewing the history of predator control in Kiabab National Forest, one scientific researcher showed that control of mountain lions and wolves in 1906-1923, and again in 1940-1963, when coyotes were the target animal although many lions were also taken, resulted in a high density of deer and forage destruction. Researchers further found that when the Kiabab lion population was controlled by sport hunting in 1978-1980, deer numbers went up, but weather and a limited livestock reduction may have contributed to this increase in deer numbers.

According to Canadian lion experts Daryll M. Herbert and Dan Lay, 98 percent of the lion attacks on humans on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, occur on the western side of the island, which is sparsely populated by people and has dense vegetation making hunting difficult. But on the populated east side of the island, where there are very few human attacks by lions, they concluded that it was hunting and chasing lions with hounds that decreased attacks on people in that part of Vancouver Island.

It has been shown that in some human-modified or otherwise altered environments made less favorable to deer, that mountain lions can greatly reduce deer numbers. This is especially apt to occur when the deer have suffered from drought, fire, disease or other factors that have reduced the carrying capacity for deer.

Many questions still remain regarding the population biology of mountain lions and their effect on deer numbers. If we have  
*Continued on page 11.*



## ATTENTION SPORTSMEN!! In Assembly District 35

If you want hunting and fishing to get better, you need to put Marcia de Braga out to pasture. Any legislative wildlife bill that originates in the assembly must go to the Natural Resources Committee. She is the chairperson of that committee. Last session, Assembly Bill 494 would have done two things. First, it would take Nevada Division of Wildlife (NDOW) from under the jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resource. This department has seven state agencies and there is not a person who can properly manage seven state agencies. NDOW is a state agency that is in desperate need of some supervision. To correct this, A.B. 494 would have put NDOW under the governor and the Wildlife Commission.

The other part of the bill would have allowed the Wildlife Commission to

### *Why we need...*

*Continued from page 9.*

500% to 7,600% from 1968 to 1992 (Bellman 1992). With this huge unnatural increase in the raven population one must wonder what negative impact it must have on all nesting bird populations. WS' own data has confirmed that raven damage complaints have increased considerably for livestock. Following the wildlife damage management activities provided by WS, the researchers monitoring of sharp-tail grouses' nesting success have reported that nesting success was the highest it has been on the unit with a 75% nesting success rate. Other nesting birds (sage grouse) likely also benefit from raven removal during the nesting period. A video camera system was used to watch nesting grouse on their nests and inside and outside the Sharp-tail grouse Unit. **The researchers concluded that nesting success for sage grouse outside the raven removal unit was 66% while nesting success within the unit was 100%.**

On July 8, WS Taylor investigated a killed lamb which had only its liver consumed. WS Taylor noted the killed lamb had scratch marks down its side and small bite marks around the head and upper neck indicating the killer was a bobcat.

approve NDOW's budget. Sportsmen fund 95 per cent of NDOW's \$21 million budget. No one monitors NDOW's expenditures. During the last legislative session, AB494 was scheduled to be heard in her committee. HUNTER'S ALERT phoned Carson City on Monday to be certain that the bill would be heard. And indeed it was scheduled for a Friday hearing. Sportsmen arranged to leave their work and purchased airline tickets to testify in favor of the bill. A call was made on Wednesday and she had pulled it off the calendar.

She represents rural counties. However, she ignored the many sportsmen in those counties. When she refused to hear this bill, she went against her own constituents. Twenty six assemblymen and women and three senators co-sponsored AB494. She played judge and jury on this very important bill for sportsmen by refusing to allow the bill to be heard in committee. Apparently she approves of the loss of our game and the mismanagement within NDOW. This bill will be submitted again in the next legislative session. But if she is there, rest assured she will be hurting the sportsmen once again in the state of Nevada. Now you know why it's time to put her out to pasture and vote for Pete

### *NDOW doubts...*

*Continued from page 10.* learned anything from past predator/prey research it is that there are no simple answers. Nevertheless, since responsible wildlife management can respond to wildlife's needs more rationally than nature, it should be obvious why hunting or some other human-initiated mortality factor is urgently needed to help nature keep both mountain lions and deer in balance in human-modified environments.

**Wildlife conservationists have witnessed instances where mountain lions have greatly decreased deer numbers in regionalized areas.**

**Research in California shows that lions may kill a deer every other day when hunting a herd that is already otherwise depressed.**

Goicoechea. It is best for the natural resource and hunters and fishermen in our state.

## Truth about air operations

Finally, someone in NDOW has the guts to stand up and say our air operations are being diminished. According to Dave Rice, NDOW biologists have finally admitted what HUNTER'S ALERT has been saying for years.

*Hunting & Fishing*

*By Dave Rice*

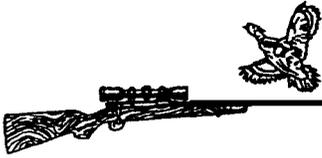
*Excerpts from Reno Gazette-Journal  
Wednesday, September 11, 2002*

I was completely surprised to learn from Stiver that aerial, chukar surveys conducted annually for the past 27 years were dropped this year which is a real loss to hunters. In past years, 11 survey sites were flown and the number of birds that flushed were counted. Stiver says these surveys were a very good and reliable indication of bird densities over a large area, resulting in his annual hunting forecast of what degree of success (poor, fair, good or excellent) hunters could expect throughout much of northern Nevada.

Chukar hunters found this survey extremely useful and waited anxiously for it to become available. I am told the reason it was discontinued is purely financial, a decision not made by Stiver, but by the Chief of Game and approved by the administrator. It was their decision that the budget of "air operations" as it is known, needed to be cut and the chukar surveys got the axe. What a shame.

### **A good idea...but it won't happen.**

Every year the Board of Regents does a performance evaluation on school presidents. How about every year doing a performance evaluation on the administrator of NDOW? The Wildlife commissioners need to realize that the best thing you can do for the future is to look back to the past.



## More predator news that NDOW won't believe

Below are excerpts from the November, 1998 Field & Stream Magazine:

### THE STORY THE MAP TOLD WAS PLAIN TO SEE: WHERE THE BIG CATS THRIVED, DEER DID NOT

By John Barsness

Recently I sat through an all-day meeting where a series of speakers explained the wonders they'd discovered in the wild world. After lunch we were all nodding off when a senior biologist from the game department of a Western state woke us up. "Here's a map of deer distribution, according to our latest surveys." A slide on the screen behind him showed dense red dots in areas with lots of deer. "Here's a map of mountain lion distribution." The same map, but the red dots now formed a negative of the first map.

"Let me show you that a few more times." He clicked the controls and the two maps alternated on the screen: Where lots of lions lived, deer did not.

"Now I went to high school, and college, and graduate school. In the scientific community, these maps don't prove anything. But I can figure them out." Later, in a private conversation, he said more. "Don't ever mention my name in print, because I'm three years from retirement and I want that pension. Many of my state's high-population lion areas are where lots of cattle graze public land. Lions rally like to eat calves, so lions can get by in cattle country even when deer populations drop. Normally, when deer go downhill, lion populations follow in a couple of years. But with cattle to fall back on, lion numbers don't drop much, so some are always there to whack away at the few deer that are left."

I nodded. "But you've never said this, and never will."

"Oh, hell, no. If I did, I'd get shot at from four directions at once: ranchers, hunters, lion lovers, and my own boss.".... Let me suggest a simple explanation for why so many wildlife biologists refuse to believe that coyotes, mountain lions, and wolves eat lots of deer: The biologists were educated when predators were almost extinct...

Until very recently, the predator-prey studies taught in wildlife biology departments were done between World War I and 1970. By 1920 all but a few wolves had been eradicated from the lower 48. From the early days of the

century into the early 1970's, government trappers constantly hammered coyotes. Mountain lions had bounties on their hides.

So "modern" wildlife biology, the child of Aldo Leopold, studied predators and prey when the predators had almost disappeared. Many reports covered only one field season; a "long-term" study lasted as long as it took a doctoral candidate to graduate. The logical conclusion was that predators don't affect game populations much. And that is still the bias-and these days, the politically correct line-that most state game departments support.

Jack Atcheson Sr., the well-known Butte, Montana hunter, says predator math is easy for anybody but game department biologists. "I ask if a mountain lion kills a deer a week. The biologist says, 'Yeah, right around there.' So, I say, the average lion kills about fifty deer a year. The biologist agrees. Then I ask how many mountain lions we have in Montana. The biologist says, 'Oh, several thousand.' "So I say, let's make the arithmetic easy and call it 2,000 lions. At 50 deer per lion, 2,000 lions eat 100,000 deer a year. And the biologist says, 'Oh, no, it can't be that many!'"

For the origins of the politically correct view of predators, let us look backward 30 years to the end of the predator-whacking era. Many biologists and most of the American public believed that "benevolent" carnivores only killed as much prey as they could eat-the old, sick, and genetically defective, leaving lots of young, vigorous animals to reproduce. ...

Within the next decade several things happened. In 1972 President Nixon banned the poisoning of predators on public lands and in 1973 signed the Endangered Species Act. Coyote, wolf, and mountain lion populations started to rise.

By the late 1970's, when I was a wildlife biology student at the University of Montana, other views of predators began to emerge. One of my fellow students found that mountain lions, still mostly

limited to the high Rockies, didn't eat the old and sick in most winters, but instead preyed on mature elk and mule deer. Why? Because big bull elk and buck deer stayed in the high country while cow elk and doe deer migrated to the valleys. Another student found that yes, coyotes mostly ate mice-except during periodic crashes in the mouse population. Then they turned to mature, healthy whitetail deer, and did quite well, running them in relays until fresh coyotes dragged down the exhausted deer.

In California, where mountain lion hunting has been banned for years, lions are killing off desert bighorns so fast that the rare wild sheep are disappearing in some areas-after decades of efforts by hunting and conservation groups to reestablish desert bighorns in their historical range...

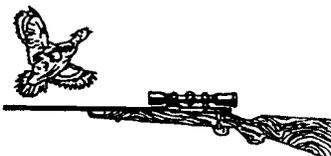
Several recent studies in the West and Alaska show that hunters take only a small fraction of the game killed by "natural" predators...

### *Presented to Clark County...*

*Continued from page 13.*

shooting lions and leaving them lay. As we all know, NDOW desperately needs money because of years of their mismanagement. With this proposal, hunters can bring the cat in, pay the fee and keep it and NDOW will pick up a few dollars to offset their mismanagement.

This proposal is a way to increase lion harvest without any additional expense to sportsmen or NDOW. There will still be seasons, dates and quotas to appease the anti's. We used to have over 250,000 deer in the state. There could be fewer than 100,000 now. It is time to correct this long overdue injustice to our deer herds. It is quite apparent that for many years the people calling the shots in NDOW are not concerned about bringing back our deer herds. As usual, it will be up to the sportsmen to see this is accomplished and now is the time to start.



## Deer, Predators, and Drought New research holds surprises

By Rory K. Aikens

Reprinted from *Arizona Wildlife News*  
July-August 2004

An ongoing research project on the 3-Bar Wildlife Area near Roosevelt Lake is helping biologists to better understand--and to an extent redefine--the predator-prey relationship.

**The study's findings so far indicate that predators may have a more significant impact on deer populations than biologists previously thought. The prevailing biological belief is that habitat conditions are the primary controlling factor for deer populations, not predation. The long-term deer study at the 3-Bar is punching holes in parts of biological theory, and others.**

Jim deVos, research chief for the Arizona Game and Fish Department, says the findings have many biologists scratching their heads. **Despite a prolonged drought, biologists are seeing deer densities within the predator-proof enclosures rivaling those in places like the prime whitetail country of the southeastern United States. Yet deer densities outside the 3-Bar enclosure have experienced significant declines during that same period.**

Professor Warren Ballard with Texas Tech, one of the principal researchers on the department's deer study, says, **"Deer numbers inside the enclosure are around 10-times higher than the surrounding country.** One of our challenges is determining all the factors of why that is so."

Professor Paul Krausman, a renowned

### *Nevada hunters....*

*Continued from page 2.*

of them are supposed to represent the sportsmen. **However, they have sold out the sportsmen.** It is time for hunters to take notice when the president of the NRA is pointing out failures in state fish and game agencies. Hunters need to let our legislators know in the next session exactly what is happening just like the

wildlife biologist with the University of Arizona, is also involved in the project.

**3-Bar is a unique outdoor lab** The 602-acre Walnut Canyon Enclosure in the 3-Bar Wildlife Area is located in the Tonto National Forest. The Walnut Canyon Enclosure is a fenced area of almost one-square mile that provides a unique outdoor wildlife laboratory for biologists.

This predator-proof enclosure has been used for more than 30 years to study mule deer declines and for other research as well. Two mule deer declines have been documented in the western United States since the 1960's. The exact reasons for declines are varied and often difficult to pinpoint.

**"The original 3-Bar mule deer study in the late 1970's found that fawn survival was 30 percent greater inside the enclosure than outside during a six-year wet period. The current 3-Bar study shows that despite one of the worst droughts in the past 700 to 1,000 years, fawn survival has remained high in this predator-proof enclosure", says deVos.**

**Outside the enclosure during the drought, fawn survival rates and mule deer populations have plunged to the lowest numbers in the past half-century.**

**During 2002, which was the driest year in Arizona's recorded history, the fawn-to-doe ratios within the enclosure were 100 fawns per 100 does. Outside the enclosure in Game Management Unit 22 the ratio was 18 fawns per 100 does. "The only significant difference between the two areas is the absence of predators in the 3-Bar enclosure," Ballard says.**

**Deer Capture helps research efforts**

A recent deer capture provided an opportunity to assess deer nutritional condition as part of the process to better understand the interaction between habitat quality, deer nutrition, predation, and fawn

survival.

Eight deer were captured inside the enclosure and seven deer in the habitat outside the enclosure. The captured deer were fitted with radio telemetry collars so biologists can track them and determine their habitat use. The radio collars will also send out a "mortality signal," so that biologists can determine the cause of death.

A student working on his doctoral thesis in wildlife biology at Texas Tech, Rugilio Carrera, is conducting a vegetative analysis to compare vegetation inside and outside the enclosure on a seasonal basis.

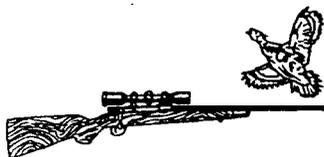
Carrera, an exchange student from Mexico, says one question he is trying to answer is whether the high density of mule deer within the enclosure is negatively impacting the vegetation.

A prevailing wildlife biological belief is that deer numbers can reach a density at which they will negatively impact the vegetation, such as on northern Arizona's Kaibab Plateau during the 1930's. A browse line as tall as a deer can reach and eat standing on its hind legs still can be discerned on the Kaibab today.

DeVos says a nonscientific appraisal of the 3-Bar habitat is that the deer are not impacting the vegetation. "Some of the top wildlife biologists in the field, such as Dave Brown, have looked at the habitat and not readily detected overuse by deer. The threshold of when deer densities impact habitat may be much higher than we ever believed possible, at least in this habitat type."

**Portable ultrasound used to assess deer nutrition**

Dr. Ole Alcumbrac, a wildlife veterinarian working with the department on the project, used portable ultrasound equipment during the deer capture-and-  
*Continued on page 4.*



## Deer, Predators, and Drought...

*Continued from page 3.*

release operation to determine the thickness of each deer's layer of fat. The ultrasound machine also allowed Alcumbrac and Scott Bender, a veterinarian with the Navajo Nation who was helping with the capture effort, to determine whether or not the does captured were pregnant. All but two of the does were pregnant, and most were carrying twins.

"The ultrasound equipment allows us to do a body fat assessment on live animals. In the past, we could collect such information only on dead deer, usually at check stations during the fall hunts. The new technology gives us real-time data on live deer," Alcumbrac says.

Carrera explains that vegetation quality and quantity data are being collected from the 3-Bar study site quarterly. Biologists are measuring vegetation inside and outside the enclosure to observe possible changes in habitat, quality on an annual and seasonal basis.

### Annual deer drive conducted

"Once a year, we conduct a deer survey where every animal is counted. Therefore, we know exactly how many deer are in the enclosure, including how many fawns, does, and bucks. We even know their ages," deVos says.

Deer are counted during a deer drive each fall using 60-100 Game and Fish Department employees, interns, and volunteers. "We form a long human line across the entire enclosure and walk from one end to the other. Each animal that passes through the line along the way is counted. Believe me, it's not an easy task because most of the enclosure has steep rocky terrain, with dense vegetation, including lots of Cholla cactus," says deVos.

### 3-Bar study challenges theories

The 3-Bar deer study findings challenge many accepted biological theories.

For instance, de Vos says, biologists have long believed that deer are "density" dependent, which means that once deer density ratios get high, deer experience a reduction in fecundity--the physical ability to reproduce. "That's not happening on the 3-bar. That tells us that density dependency may not be a valid theory or that the threshold for it is much higher than anyone thought."

Another generally accepted biological theory is that habitat conditions, not predation, control deer numbers. "That theory may be true when weather and habitat conditions are good, such as our study during the 1970's in the 3-Bar. **However, we have had a decade-long drought in 2002--the driest year in recorded history--yet deer numbers, densities, and reproduction have remained as high as during the wet years,**" de Vos says. **"The absence of predation is the only variable that has changed."**

*Rory K. Aikens is a public information officer in the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Phoenix office.*

Bold text added by editor for emphasis.

*Editor's Note:* This is one of the best studies HUNTER'S ALERT has ever printed. It leaves nothing to doubt about the effect predators have on mule deer. For fourteen years, HUNTER'S ALERT has stated that we have a serious predator problem and that is the main reason for the decline of our deer. For fourteen years, NDOW has used the following excuses for the decline: 1. Drought, 2. Wildfires, 3. Bad winters, 4. Juniper-Pinion pine, 5. Cheat grass, 6. Invasive weeds, 7. Number of high-speed highways, 8. Expansion of decadent shrubs, 9. Urbanization, and finally 10. The most recent, thousands of deer being killed on Nevada highways which is of course, a lie. These excuses now total ten. However, none of them include predators.

For all these years, the ignorant appointees of the governor on the Wildlife

Commission went along with all of NDOW's excuses. We have a nine-member Wildlife Commission of which five are supposed to represent sportsmen. They are not doing this. The leadership in Nevada Department of Wildlife, Terry Crawforth and the Wildlife Commissioners who set policy for NDOW should be replaced for their failure to do their job. If they had any sign of a conscience, they would all immediately resign for selling out the sportsmen and our deer herds. Being this uninformed on wildlife issues shows they never should have been appointed in the first place. **It's bad enough to be dumb when you are appointed** but they continue to be ignorant on wildlife issues years after being appointed! This proves a new way of appointing wildlife commissioners should also be in order.

## Did You Know?

Nevada Department of Wildlife has a sixteen page document on the use of force on sportsmen. It tells when they are allowed to shoot you and the rights of a game warden.

Here is what they call Deadly Force

- Lethal strikes with hands, elbows, knees, feet.
- Baton strikes to the head, neck, throat, clavicle, spine.
- Use of firearms.
- Other.

What the hell is "Other"? Napalm or nuclear force? Do you remember when the game warden was respected? He was invited to your camp for coffee, grub or a place to stay. My how times have changed and not for the betterment of sportsmen. It's too bad NDOW doesn't work this hard on bringing back our deer herds. A sixteen page document on implementing some serious predator control is certainly more beneficial to sportsmen than knowing when a game warden is allowed to kill you.