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THE ROLE OF THE NUISANCE WILDLIFE CONTROL PRACTITIONER IN URBAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT: Private sector involvement in nuisance wildlife control has evolved from primarily part-time trappers to full-time firms with their own professional organization, the National Urban Wildlife Management Organization (NUWMA). The private sector plays a key role in urban wildlife management by providing an effective service in addressing human/wildlife conflicts. This role can be improved and expanded by enabling nuisance control practitioners to provide accurate information on wildlife biology, damage prevention, and even wildlife habitat promotion. Both government agencies and private organizations, such as NUWMA, can facilitate this by developing appropriate training, regulations, licensing procedures, standards of ethics, and continuing education programs.

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Within the past fifteen years, there has been rapid growth in the role of the private sector in nuisance wildlife control and wildlife damage management. The scale of this development was largely unanticipated, even by those involved. Many individuals and firms started almost accidentally, and stories abound about these beginnings. A fur trapper, chimney sweep, or pest control operator was asked to take care of a wild animal problem. Pest control operators and chimney sweeps usually did not have the equipment or skills for dealing with the animals. Fur trappers often arrived at well-manicured suburban homes in trucks and clothes displaying the sights and smells of the rural trapline.

From these often awkward beginnings, a new industry evolved involving serious part-time and full-time businesses, multiple-office, and franchising firms. Nuisance wildlife control operators (NWCO's) come from a diversity of backgrounds, including wildlife biologist, pest control operators, fur trappers, and wildlife rehabilitators. Florida's Todd Harwick became the nation's best known NWCO with the account of his capture of a 22' python on the television show "Rescue: 911." A new magazine, ADC, which is oriented toward the private sector, began distribution this year.

In January 1992, the National Urban Wildlife Management Association (NUWMA) was incorporated as a professional organization for NWCO's. Currently, the organization has over 230 members from 37 states, the District of Columbia, the province of Ontario, and the country of New Zealand. State affiliates have been organized in Ohio and New York State. The Ohio affiliate has 58 members from a possible total of 270 permit holders in the state. The New York State organization has about 45 members from a potential "market"

of almost 1000 permit holders. Activities by NUWMA include access to liability insurance appropriate for NWCO's, working to update government regulations concerning NWCO activities, and conducting continuing education workshops.

The private sector plays a key role in urban wildlife management by providing an effective service in addressing human/wildlife conflicts. Going beyond the providing of information and advice, we do the field work and have direct contact with the public. This role can be improved and expanded by enabling nuisance control practitioners to provide accurate information on wildlife biology, damage prevention, and even suitable wildlife habitat promotion. Both government agencies and private organizations, such as NUWMA, can facilitate this by developing appropriate training, regulations, licensing procedures, standards of ethics, and continuing education programs. An integrated approach is needed which recognizes the values of wildlife in the metropolitan environment and takes steps to reduce the damage wildlife can cause.

NUWMA wishes to receive your feedback on the roles NWCO's could have in urban wildlife conservation and wildlife damage management. Specifically, how can NWCO's be enabled to provide accurate information on wildlife biology, damage prevention, and wildlife conservation? What regulations, licensing procedures, and standards of ethics need to be developed? Is there a need for the development of training and continuing education programs? Can NWCO's have a role in wildlife research? Please address your comments to NUWMA, 2801 Benson Mill Road, Sparks, Maryland 21152, or telephone (313) 453-8274.