

Opening Remarks – Twenty-Seventh Vertebrate Pest Conference

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On behalf of the Vertebrate Pest Council, I would like to welcome you to the 27th Vertebrate Pest Conference in Newport Beach, California. We are back on the mainland after a one-Conference hiatus to Hawaii. One of the things I enjoy the most about the Vertebrate Pest Conference is that it affords us with the opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues both locally and from various pockets of the globe. As of this morning, we have 285 individuals registered for at least one day of the conference. We again are well represented by our colleagues from abroad with 22 foreign attendees, representing individuals from Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, and Singapore. Many thanks to you all for making the commitment to attend this Conference. I hope that all Conference attendees are able to take advantage of this opportunity to reconnect with colleagues and friends throughout the duration of your stay here in Newport Beach.

As for me, my name is Roger Baldwin, and I am a Cooperative Extension Specialist within the Department of Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology at the University of California, Davis. The focus of my program is, appropriately, Human-Wildlife Conflict. I also happen to be the chairperson of this year's Conference, so I guess I have to take the blame for anything that goes wrong! Of course, all of this would not be possible without assistance from the Vertebrate Pest Council. The Council is comprised of 26 Active and 5 Lifetime but inactive members who represent various Universities, Federal and State Agencies, and private industry. Many of the Council members have taken on active roles in this year's Conference. The most difficult task is Program Chair. Stella McMillin took the lead on this and did a great job in putting our program together. She received valuable assistance from Marc Kenyon and Dirk Van Vuren as well. Taking care of local accommodations is another large task, one which Charlie Crabb navigated with his usual efficiency. Other valuable roles led by Council members included: Commercial Exhibits: Ashley Freeman; Posters and Student Awards: Kathleen Fagerstone; Field Trip: Niamh Quinn; Continuing Education: Ed Duarte, David Kratville, and Michelle Dennis; and Publicity: Mike Taber. I would also like to thank Judy Letterman and her staff from the Pesticide Applicator's Professional Association (PAPA) for helping out with registration, as well as the staff at the Fairmont for their assistance with accommodations for the Conference this year. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Robert (Bob) Timm for his continuing role as Editor of the *Proceedings* from the Conference. The *Proceedings* are a highly respected source of information on vertebrate pest management, in large part due to Bob's efforts to put together a top-notch publication. If you run into any of

these exhausted and undercompensated individuals at any point during the Conference, please feel free to give them a well-deserved pat on the back; they earned it!

The Conference has already kicked off an exciting opening with the field trip yesterday. We have heard excellent feedback from the 67 individuals who attended the field trip. Management topics included on the field trip covered everything from rodents, to birds, to large mammals. As for the program, we feel that we have an exciting list of presenters and topics for you this year. We will get kick-started shortly with Dr. Valerius Geist providing our Keynote Address that is sure to be captivating. We have three symposia topics this year. Wednesday, we will have a full-day session devoted to Urban Coyote Management, which is a hot topic in this part of the U.S. Bob Timm deserves special thanks for putting this symposium together. We will also be videotaping speakers for this symposium this year to provide additional educational opportunities for interested parties down the road. Other symposia topics include a focus on wild pig and bird management topics. Many other excellent topics will be covered during concurrent sessions including, but certainly not limited to, rodent management, how to manage wildlife disease concerns, and estimating economic impacts of vertebrate pest species. In total, we have 85 oral presentations and 9 poster presentations lined up for the Conference, which I believe is among the largest group of presentations we have had in our 54-year history. Of these, we are pleased to announce that we have 12 student presenters at this year's Conference, with 9 eligible for travel awards from the Vertebrate Pest Council to support their attendance at this Conference.

Because of these great speakers and topics, we are able to provide 21 units of Continuing Education credit from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation and 7.25 Continuing Education units from California Department of Public Health for the Vector Control category for those individuals attending the entire Conference. This should hopefully be a big benefit for those of you looking to renew your licenses. Be sure to sign in with PAPA to get your units.

I should also point out that we have a great group of Commercial Exhibits for you to check out at some point during the Conference. As you have likely noticed, the Commercial Exhibits are located in the foyer outside the meeting rooms this year. The Posters are also found in this same area. We will be hosting two socials this year; one from 5:30-7:00 this evening and the other from 6:00-7:30 tomorrow evening. The socials will be hosted in the foyer to provide you an opportunity to mingle with the commercial exhibitors and poster presenters.

Lastly, I would like to provide a special acknowledgement for four Sponsors for this year's Conference. Bird Barrier/OvoControl by Innolytics and the National Wildlife Control Operators Association (NWCOA) have provided silver-level sponsorships, while Liphatech and EcoClear Products are gold-level sponsors of Wednesday's refreshment breaks. Please be sure to thank them for their sponsorship if you see them at some point during the Conference.

With that, I will close my remarks and introduce our Keynote Speaker for this year's Conference, Dr. Valerius Geist. Dr. Geist is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary. He is a specialist on the biology, behavior, and social dynamics of large North American mammals. Born in the Ukraine when it was part of the USSR and raised in Germany and Austria, he now resides on Vancouver Island, B.C., Canada. He is the author and/or editor of 17 books and has written 7 documentary films. His work has been published in a variety of outlets including *Nature*, *Ethology*, *Behaviour*, *Evolution*, *Outdoor Life*, and *Field and Stream*, as well as *The New Canadian Encyclopedia*, and *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Dr. Geist will discuss the habituation of wildlife and how this creates a need for management at the urban-wildland interface in North America.