

## Conference Review – Twenty-Ninth Vertebrate Pest Conference

Roger A. Baldwin, *Council Chair-elect*

Department of Wildlife, Fish, & Conservation Biology, University of California-Davis

Proceedings, 29<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference (D. M. Woods, Ed.)

Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis, 2020. Pp. 1-2.

The 29<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference (VPC) was a big success. We were particularly fortunate to have been able to host this Conference in person, as it was one of the last conferences held before the Covid-19 global pandemic shut down the world. This was the first time the VPC has been held in Santa Barbara. The location and weather were spectacular, and the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort served as an excellent venue for the Conference. We'll look forward to heading back to Santa Barbara for a future VPC.

The Conference was well attended, with a total of 253 attendees spread out over the 4 days of the Conference. As has typically been the case, the VPC drew a geographically diverse crowd, with attendees from at least 10 countries spread across 4 continents. We had a strong national showing as well, with 26 U.S. states and territories represented.

As always, we started the week with a field trip. Stella McMillin and Niamh Quinn did an excellent job of organizing the field trip to Anacapa Island, where 78 participants enjoyed a short boat ride that provided many opportunities to observe and learn about a variety of sea animals. Once we arrived on Anacapa, we were treated to a guided tour of the island, with a special emphasis placed on the management of vertebrate pests to protect the island's native wildlife. Annie Little of the National Park Service, Gregg Howald of Island Conservation, Jennifer Boyce of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Christie Boser of The Nature Conservancy helped design this field trip and served as guides for the island tours. Their assistance was greatly appreciated!

The Vertebrate Pest Council was pleased to again award the Walter E. "Howdy" Howard Lifetime Achievement Award to two very deserving professionals. This year's recipients were Kathleen A. Fagerstone and James E. (Jim) Miller. Both had highly meritorious careers, and they played integral roles in the vertebrate pest management profession. We encourage you to find out more about their accomplishments on page viii of this *Proceedings*.

The keynote address for the 29<sup>th</sup> VPC was provided by Gregg Howald of Island Conservation. He offered reflections on global conservation of islands over the last 25 years, and highlighted successes and areas where continued improvement is needed in the island conservation discipline. His presentation was both interesting and insightful and served as a great start to the Conference. Plenary speakers covered a diverse set of topics that set the stage for our two symposia for the Conference: 1) Island

Invaders and 2) Predator Management. We thank Aaron Shiels and Niamh Quinn for helping to organize these symposia. Additional topics covered during the Conference included: Bird Management, General Pest Management, Rodent Management and Disease, and Vertebrate Pesticides and Repellents. All told, we had 3 days of concurrent sessions, yielding a total of 77 oral presentations. The program was bolstered by 9 poster presentations, for which a special poster session was offered on Wednesday evening to highlight this research. The Vertebrate Pest Council continued to place a special emphasis on student participation in the Conference, with 11 students providing either poster or oral presentations. To help encourage student attendance, we offered a substantially discounted rate for attendance, and we distributed >\$3,000 in financial support to help defray their attendance costs. We hope these students become regular attendees at future Conferences.

Commercial exhibitors are always an integral portion of the VPC. Exhibitors for the 29<sup>th</sup> VPC included the Automatic Trap Company, The Berryman Institute, Liphatech, Inc., Motomco Ltd., the National Wildlife Control Operators Association, the National Wildlife Control Training Program, RCO International, Senestech, Tomahawk Live Trap Co., and VM Products. Their participation was greatly appreciated. We especially thank Liphatech, Inc., as they were an important sponsor of the Conference.

A Conference of this magnitude requires considerable assistance from a broad swath of folks. Much of the assistance was provided by members of the Vertebrate Pest Council. Stella McMillin, Niamh Quinn, and Greg Hacker deserve special recognition as Conference Chair, Program Chair, and Chair for Local Arrangements, respectively. These positions come with a lot of stress and require a considerable time commitment to make sure the Conference goes off without a hitch. Denise Woods and Robert Timm also deserve special mention for their role in editing and publishing this 29<sup>th</sup> *Proceedings*. Our collection of *Proceedings* papers, beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference (1962), continues to be a valued resource in the vertebrate pest management discipline, and these papers are now available as open-access publications at [https://escholarship.org/uc/vertebrate\\_pest\\_conference](https://escholarship.org/uc/vertebrate_pest_conference). Many other tasks were carried out by numerous volunteers to help make the VPC a success. Their assistance was greatly appreciated!

The Vertebrate Pest Council would also like to recognize Target Specialty Products for their role in overseeing registration for the Conference, as well as their

assistance with all aspects related to applying for and administering California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) continuing education (CE) credits. We were pleased to receive approval for 20.5 hours of CDPR CE credits and 5.25 hours of CDPH CE credits for the entire Conference, thereby fulfilling our goal of providing quality education on the management of vertebrate pests in a variety of landscapes and situations. Lastly, we would

like to thank the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce for providing financial assistance for the Conference, as well as providing general information on local sites and restaurant options.

Again, thanks to all for making the 29<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference a success. We are anxiously looking forward to the 30<sup>th</sup> VPC to be held in Reno, Nevada at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino on March 7-10, 2022.