Maine Rabies Management Program

By Libby Kemp, Rabies Biologist, USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services

Rabies Background

Rabies is one of the oldest recorded diseases; yet today it remains a significant management challenge for public health officials. Over the past 30 years, rabies management has grown in complexity in the United States as a result of wild animals replacing domestic dogs as the primary reservoir for the disease. Addressing this significant public health problem requires expertise from a variety of sources, including public health, wildlife, and agriculture agencies.

In the United States, more than 90 percent of reported rabies cases have involved wild animals. There are several different strains of the rabies virus found in the United States and each strain is spread mainly by one wildlife species. All strains are capable of infecting warm-blooded mammals, including humans. Raccoons and skunks spread most of the reported rabies cases in the United States but, bats, foxes, and coyotes are also transmitter's of the virus.

People are almost always exposed to rabies through the bite of an infected animal. People may also be exposed if saliva from an infected animal gets into an open wound, eyes, nose, or mouth. Fortunately, there is a safe, effective, post-exposure treatment for rabies. However, left untreated, rabies is fatal.

Protect Yourself From Rabies

• Do not touch or pick up wild animals or stray domestic animals.
• Properly vaccinate all family pets against rabies.
• Report strangely acting animals, especially stray dogs, to your local animal control office or, if the animal is wild, to State wildlife officials.
• Remove trash and secure garbage cans. Do not leave pet food outside.
• Keep family pets indoors at night. During the day, do not let them roam.

If You Are Bitten

• Wash the bite with soap and water for 5 minutes.
• Try to capture the animal only if you can do it without receiving additional bites.
• Immediately report the bite to your doctor and your local health officer.

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This May, the Penobscot Indian Nation hosted the annual National Native American Fish & Wildlife Society (NAFWS) Conference in Bar Harbor, Maine. This year’s conference was attended by over 40 tribes and many state and federal agencies. It was a great opportunity for the HBMI Natural Resources Department to meet new contacts and re-establish working relationships.

One morning Cara Ellis and Sue Young attended a sunrise service on Cadillac Mountain led by Penobscot Elder, Arnie Neptune. It was a cold and windy morning but it was well attended despite the very early hour. The sun made a brief, spectacular appearance before retreating to the clouds to start the day.

Workshops at the conference were varied and covered a wide variety of topics. Subjects such as Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration, Integrated Resource Management Planning, Introduction to Fish Health, Development of the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan, NAFWS and USDA APHIS Chronic Wasting Disease Update, Habitat Restoration Techniques, Avian Influenza Update and Overview, Tularemania on Marth’s Vineyard, Funding Opportunities for Habitat Conservation, Aquatic Nuisance Species, Assessing the Damage to Tribal Resources, GIS/GPS Training, National Conservation Leadership Institute Presentation Regarding Tribal Participation, Penobscot River Restoration Project, Conservation of Freshwater Mussels and Water Quality, Stewards of our Tribal Fisheries, National Fish Habitat Action Plan, Brown Ash Panel and Presentation, US Fish and Wildlife Service Tribal Grant Program, Liaison Updates were included in this 3 day event. While the workshop sessions were going on, tribal police, game wardens and conservation officers took part in the National Shoot Competition, and trainings including Night Hunting Enforcement Techniques, Wildlife Crime Scene Investigation and Tribal partnerships and the History of the Maine Warden Service.

In addition to the daily workshops and activities, the Penobscot Nation Hosted a traditional feast on Indian Island and the Society held its annual auction. Auction items included everything from jewelry, baskets to guided turkey hunting trips in South Dakota. Prior to announcing the winner of a raffle held to support the NAFWS Environmental Youth Practicum, Sally Carufel-Williams, coordinator of the practicum, said that Ryan had attended the youth practicum and has now returned to work in the tribe’s natural resources department.

For more information about NAFWS check out their website www.nafws.org

**National NAFWS Conference**

**Participating Tribes**

Penobscot Indian Nation  •  Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa  •  Aroostook Band of Micmacs  •  Bay Mills Indian Commission  •  Chickaloon Nation  •  Chippewa Cree  •  Colville Tribes  •  Confederated Salish and Kootenai  •  Council Athabascan  •  Crow Tribe  •  Natural Resources Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation  •  Houston Band of Maliseet Indians  •  Jicarilla  •  Lac Du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians  •  Little River Band of Odawa Indians  •  Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa  •  Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin  •  Mobjegan  •  Narragansett Indian Tribe  •  Native Village at Eyaat  •  Navajo Fish & Wildlife Net Perce Tribe of Idaho  •  Ogala Sioux  •  Oneida Indian Nation  •  Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin  •  Passamaquoddy Indian Tribe  •  Poarch Band of Creek Indians  •  Pueblo de Tesuque  • Quileute Tribe  •  Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community  •  Sauk-Suhtai Tribe  •  Santa Clara Pueblo  •  Seminole Tribe of Florida  •  Shoshone  •  Southern Ute Indian Tribe  •  Spokane Tribe  •  Squaxin  •  St. Regis Mohawk  •  Standing Rock Game Farm & Parks  •  Squamish Fish & Wildlife Commission  •  Thre Affiliated Tribes Fish & Wildlife  •  Tuscarora United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota  •  Ute Tribe  •  Walker River Paiute  •  Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah  •  Wyandotte Nation  •  Yakama Nation  •  Yakonk Sioux  •  Tribe Anishnabe  •  Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

**Wild Babies**

This time of year the woods and fields are full of new life. Trees and flowers are in full bloom and many birds and animals are welcoming their young. Young moose and deer are testing their wobbly legs, baby ducks are taking their first swim. Many young animals have no smell of their own and are sometimes stashed in a safe place while their parents go off to feed.

Unfortunately, many times, well intentioned people find the young and assume they have been abandoned by their parents. They take the young home to raise and try them. Wildlife rehabilitators are often bombarded with these young as it quickly becomes apparent that they cannot care for these animals.

If you come across a young animal alone in the woods, please leave it there. There is a very good chance that the parent is nearby. If you still think the animal has been abandoned, do not disturb it, go away and come back in a few hours. If the baby is still there and there are no signs of the parents, telephone a local game warden or wildlife rehabilitator. They are trained to assess and handle the situation for the safety and well-being of the animal. In Maine, as in many other states, it is illegal to possess wild animals without the proper licenses and permits. Please see the attached brochure for more information.

**Fish for Good Health**

Now that summer is here and there is fresh fish all around, it’s a good time to remember how good fish is for you.

Fish is a great source of Omega 3 oils, also known as “brain food” for babies in the womb and for babies that are nursing. Omega 3 oils also work to the Omega 3 oils, fish are a good source of iron, protein and zinc while being naturally low in saturated fat. Please leave it there. There is a very good chance that the parent is nearby. If you still think the animal has been abandoned, do not disturb it, go away and come back in a few hours. If the baby is still there and there are no signs of the parents, telephone a local game warden or wildlife rehabilitator. They are trained to assess and handle the situation for the safety and well-being of the animal. In Maine, as in many other states, it is illegal to possess wild animals without the proper licenses and permits. Please see the attached brochure for more information.

For more detailed fish consumption guidelines along with information regarding buying, cooking and storing fish, please refer to the enclosed brochure from the Maine CDC (formerly the Maine Bureau of Health). Although these guidelines are set for the state of Maine, this brochure contains useful information for wherever you live.
Celebrate the Meduxnekeag

Water, where would we be without water? And boy was there water on Saturday June 3 but rain did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of those who attended.

Sponsored by the Organization for Watershed Living (OWL) and the Meduxnekeag Watershed Coalition (of which the tribe is a member) the day was chock full of events. The day began with a sunrise service led by Maliseet Elders Ervieve Polchin, on the new Gateway Crossing Bridge in Houlton. Volunteers then spread out to pick up trash along the banks of the river. There were also a number of pollution prevention activities and an informational session held at Cary Library.

People were also asked to join Angie Reed, former HBMI Water Resources Specialist, at the Highland Avenue Boat Launch to take a closer look at the insects that live in the river. The presence or absence of certain insects is one of the things we use to help indicate the quality of the water in the river.

Cara Ellis and the Water Resources team, Ryan Greenlaw, Danielle Howe and Justin Kobylarz were also on hand to present information about the importance of culverts in the watershed and looked for volunteers to help survey the many culverts in the area.

One of the goals of this event was to help people learn more about the Meduxnekeag River Watershed and to help people learn to appreciate and protect this valuable resource.

No, we’re not talking recipes, we’re talking projects we’ve begun in the third year of our Tribal Wildlife Grant funded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Another project under the TWG is establishing American chestnut trees on tribal land. Chestnuts were once an extremally important tree in eastern forests; about 1 out of every 4 trees in the forest was a chestnut. They were an important food source for wildlife and Native Americans and chestnut wood was highly desirable for making furniture. A disease from China was accidentally introduced to North American forests and virtually wiped out the American chestnut. Work is currently underway to develop disease resistance in American chestnuts by breeding them with Chinese chestnuts (a species that is resistant to the disease).

Last fall we purchased Chestnut seedlings and nuts from the American Chestnut Foundation. We are using two different approaches to plant these trees. For the nuts, we simply dug a small hole in the ground and planted the nuts directly into the holes. Planting sites were flagged with wire flags and will be monitored regularly. Resource Summer Technicians Misty Polchies and Alex London will be caring for these trees this summer.

Before

After

Apples & Chestnuts - A Tribal Wildlife Grant Update by David Lombard, Forestry/Environmental Specialist

Recently a local landowner had to pay for this ad to be run in the local newspaper as part of their penalty for not having the proper permits before working on their property.

Sometimes your project may seem not big enough to be worth all the hassle of getting a permit before you start, but making a simple telephone call can save you a world of trouble not to mention some cold hard cash. Take the time to get all the proper permits before beginning any project on your property. Aside from protecting yourself from financial penalties you’ll be doing your part to protect the environment.

Don’t Let This Happen To You!

At the Highland Avenue Boat Launch to take a closer look at the insects that live in the river.

Apples & Chestnuts - A Tribal Wildlife Grant Update by David Lombard, Forestry/Environmental Specialist

Clockwise from left - Summer Techs Alex London and Misty Polchies preparing to plant chestnut trees, chestnut seedlings awaiting transplant, almost done.
Maine Rabies Management Program continued

Table 1. Confirmed positive rabies cases in Maine, 1994-2005 (MHETL 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Positive rabies cases</th>
<th>Positive raccoons</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,387</td>
<td>739 (53%)</td>
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Maine ORV program is part of an international cooperative effort that includes Maine and New Brunswick, Canada.

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Wildlife Services’ (WS) staff measure the success of the program by live trapping and collecting blood samples from more than 100 raccoons in the ORV zone. This work is conducted four weeks after the vaccines are distributed giving the raccoons a chance to ingest them. The blood samples show if the captured raccoons have developed an antibody response to the racies vaccine. In addition to the ORV program, WS provides enhanced rabies surveillance in northern Maine. This is achieved by collecting sick or strange acting raccoons or other wildlife that have not had contact with humans or domestic animals. The areas of interest are: north of Bangor, eastern Hancock and Washington Counties, and along the borders of Maine and Canada. By testing these animals we increase our understanding of where raccoons is present and where it may go in the vast unpopulated areas of northern and eastern Maine. Results from the 2005 ORV event are pending.

Rabies Surveillance

Today, we have an opportunity to limit the spread of rabies through wildlife vaccination programs, public education about rabies and wildlife, and by limiting the movement of wildlife which could carry the disease. Your support is a critical component to the success of the racoon management program in Maine. Please report sick-acting wildlife in areas of northern Maine and submit these specimens by contacting Wildlife Services at 1-866-4-USDA-WS.

For more information contact our website at www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/rabies

Meet the Summer Techs

Left to right, Natural Resources Techs Misty Polchies and Alex London, Water Resources Techs Justin Kobylarz and Danielle Howe

WANTED

for rabies testing

USDA, Wildlife Services Rabies Management Program is monitoring raccoons and skunks for rabies in northern Maine.

Raccoons and skunks that:
- Are found dead or euthanized
- Found north of Bangor and northern coastal Maine
- Have NOT had contact with a human or domestic animal
- Are sick or acting strange (i.e., aggression, loss of fear to humans, porcupine quills in face, excessively salivating, walking in circles, lethargic, paralyzed)
- Please DO NOT TOUCH THE ANIMAL, if there has been contact (bite, scratch, etc.) please call the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention 1-800-821-5821.

If you have an animal to be tested for rabies or questions, please call:

USDA’s Wildlife Services
1-866-4-USDA-WS
or
(207) 622-8263