

HUMAN-WILDLIFE INTERACTIONS

FROM THE
PRESIDENT



B.B. Hollingsworth, Jr.
PRESIDENT

As the scope and intensity of human-wildlife interactions increase, it is a great honor for me to serve as president of the Boone and Crockett Club. Certainly my early exposure to the outdoors and years of service in the Club have made my presidency an experience of the utmost personal meaning. But as I think about the various landscapes—ecological, socioeconomic, political—affecting our Club’s activities, the increasing frequency of our interactions with wildlife in these arenas makes it a truly exciting time to lead the Club.

One alarmingly familiar example of human-wildlife interactions is the occurrence and spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD). In the Winter 2016 issue of *Fair Chase*, we learned from Michael Miller and John Fischer about the history, biology, and ecology of CWD. As a result of both natural and anthropogenic factors, CWD is present in captive and/or free-ranging

cervids in 24 U.S. states, three Canadian provinces, South Korea, and Norway. In the last issue of *Fair Chase*, Miller and Fischer delved deeper into the CWD story. We learned about the reasons why it can be difficult to detect and monitor CWD in wild cervid populations. We are reminded about the importance of using specific knowledge of CWD biology and ecology to design effective surveillance programs. We also learned about the socioeconomic and statistical aspects of CWD detection and monitoring. No CWD management program can be truly successful unless it aligns with stakeholder values and expectations in a statistically sound manner that promotes reliable data collection over space and time. Together, these articles (and those to come) provide us with critical information on CWD and insights to address this conservation challenge. As we work together to contain CWD prions and infected animals, we must remember two

important themes well-articulated by Miller and Fischer: 1) CWD-affected populations are likely not sustainable in the long term; and 2) it is prudent to minimize human exposure to infected animals.

Moving from prions to populations, we are routinely involved in other human-wildlife interactions behind the steering wheel. As humans construct roads to facilitate transportation, we increasingly cross wildlife movement corridors. Highways and interstate freeways fragment wildlife habitats, disconnect wildlife populations, and threaten human and wildlife safety in many ecosystems across the globe. Every year, 500 human fatalities occur as a result of animal-vehicle collisions in the United States and Europe, not to mention the thousands of animals that are annually killed or injured during these collisions. Collisions involving cervids are particularly common, given their large body size and frequent spatial overlaps

between movement corridors and human-constructed roads. I have noticed in the last few decades the increasing frequency of human-wildlife interactions on our roadways. I often drive on Highway 9 connecting Denver with my home in northwest Colorado. The risk of a collision is high, and it is always a tense drive; but no more, as this year will mark the completion of wildlife crossings that have already greatly reduced wildlife collisions.

Overpasses and underpasses represent a strategy for enhancing the connectivity of wildlife movement corridors while minimizing animal-vehicle collisions. They have been proven to reduce the number of collisions between vehicles and elk and mule deer



Read part one and two of the Chronic Wasting Disease series in the Winter 2016 and Spring 2017 issues of *Fair Chase*.

Find out more about the Club’s 15-year involvement with Chronic Wasting Disease on page 48.



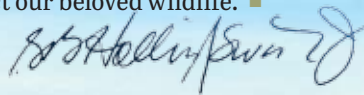
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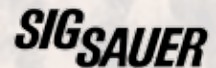
while decreasing habitat fragmentation and increasing connectivity. Despite the initial monetary costs associated with overpass and underpass construction, the various benefits of these structures—human safety, vehicle protection, habitat connectivity, wildlife abundance—often make them cost-effective in the long term.

We live in a world where interactions between humans and wildlife are increasing in magnitude and diversity. From deer at road crossings, to bears at campsites, to turkeys in our backyards, wildlife are omnipresent in our lives. But our interactions with wildlife do not always occur at a familiar, visually recognizable scale. The emergence of CWD as

a threat to cervids teaches us that human-wildlife interactions span the gamut from prions to populations. Amidst the growing interconnectedness we share with wildlife around us, our role as a Club becomes ever more important. As hunters, wildlife conservationists, wildlife advocates, and public servants, the increasing frequency of human-wildlife interactions is an opportunity for our Club to make a difference in broader swaths of society. At this exciting time, I am fortunate to be part of a Club that invests so much time and treasure to pursue and protect our beloved wildlife. ■




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