



Subject: East Bay Regional Parks 2018-2020 feral cat removals (January 1, 2018 – October 31, 2020)

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Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Wildlife
Services

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In 2018 - 2020, the Wildlife Service's Division (WS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), implemented a predator management program for the protection of federally listed threatened and endangered wildlife including the endangered California Ridgway's rail (*Rallus obsoletus obsoletus*) (formerly known as the California clapper rail (*Rallus longirostis obsoletus*)), California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*), salt marsh harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys raviventris raviventris*), the threatened western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nervosus*), and the protection of visitors to East Bay Regional Park District lands. Non-native feral cats (*Felis catus*) were a target species for this project. This work was conducted by USDA-APHIS/WS under agreement with East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD). This report covers work done by WS as per agreement between WS and EBRPD.

Predator management activities to reduce feral cat impacts to Federally and State listed species were conducted at the following locations: Hayward Shoreline Regional Park. Predator removal was conducted by USDA Wildlife Services Biologists and Specialists. WS conducted 515 site visits totaling 2289 hours. (see Table 1 for more detail).

A variety of removal techniques were utilized to control predatory species which impacted or had the potential to impact nesting success or were a potential threat to visitor safety. Cage trapping and shooting were utilized.

Site visits and trapping began on January 8, 2018 and continued through October 31, 2020 (Work is ongoing, but at this time, data is only available through October 31, 2020). Cage traps were set for a total of 1968 trap/nights (Table 1). A trap/night is defined as one trap being open for one night. When mammalian traps were open and active, they were inspected daily by a WS Specialist (WSS). Uncovered, 10x12x32 inch single door Tomahawk cage traps were used. Cat food was the primary bait used to lure mammalian predators into traps. Wildlife Services' employees utilized spotlight surveys and reported animal sightings from EBRPD staff and others in determining which areas to trap. WS specialist used their best judgment and knowledge in determining appropriate and effective placement of equipment.

Cats were euthanized by shooting or by injection of sodium pentobarbital; and disposed of according to WS directives, and all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Lethal doses of sodium pentobarbital were administered using a

syringe or syringe pole. The injections were placed in the intraperitoneal cavity. The typical dosage rate is 1 cc for every 10 pounds of body weight. The effects of sodium pentobarbital are rapid unconsciousness, followed by a reduction of respiration and central nervous system activity, and ending with cardiac arrest. When injected into the heart, the results are almost instantaneous. Sodium pentobarbital is a schedule II-controlled substance whose use is monitored by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Use of sodium pentobarbital by WS employees is restricted to those that have received training and are certified in its use.

The firearm used for euthanasia was a Ruger Model M77/22 chambered for .22 Long Rifle rimfire with an AWC internal sound suppressor. The ammunition used was CCI Subsonic segmented hollow point cartridges. Lethal shots were administered to target animals in cages with an emphasis on shot placement for a safe, quick, humane kill. Use of firearms by WS employees is restricted to those that have received training and are certified in firearms use. WS used a variety of firearms including: .22LR bolt rifle with an internal sound suppressor, pump and semi-automatic 12-gauge shotguns, and a .204 caliber centerfire bolt action rifle with external sound suppressor.

Recommendations for future management of predators on EBRPD lands:

1. Train volunteers to identify predator sign and have them report their observations. Volunteers spend many hours on park lands conducting clean ups, assisting with wildlife observations, and performing maintenance tasks. These activities are conducted on several park properties. Reliable information and observations from volunteers would be valuable in allowing WS to target predators in a more efficient manner.
2. Modify fencing, signage, and other structures on site to eliminate perching. This can be done by placing spikes/ wires on posts and along crossbars, netting on/around buildings.
3. Install and maintain predator fencing. On some properties, fencing could be used to assist efforts to reduce predator issues. Proper fencing could reduce the movement of predators to and from the location as well as hinder movement onsite.
4. Reduce or modify non-native vegetation within the sites that serve as cover for predators. Many animals use the vegetation for shelter. It also provides foraging opportunities for predators
5. Continue to implement and enforce policies prohibiting the feeding of wildlife and feral animals.
6. Discourage release of feral cats and unwanted pets on EBRPD lands. WS personnel have observed and trapped numerous domestic animals in the past
7. Cover holes and vents in and under buildings and structures. Keep closed all doors that are not in use. Some sightings are accompanied by reports of animals in buildings or using spaces under buildings. This applies to all buildings, whether occupied or abandoned.
8. All dumpsters and garbage receptacles should be securely closed when not in use. This source of food can be as reliable as feeding stations.
9. Continue mammalian predator management at the current level of intensity or higher. Due to the location and characteristics of EBRPD lands being

on an urban interface, it is very attractive to the target species. It provides a safe habitat, rich in food sources and shelter, leading to an artificially high carrying capacity. This can lead to problems on adjacent properties, or in the parks themselves. A high population density can lead to an increase in disease and other health issues. Skunks and raccoons are known vectors and carriers of diseases and parasites that can affect humans, (i.e. rabies, raccoon roundworm, fleas, and ticks). There is the possibility of other human-animal interactions such as animal bites, skunks spraying, etc. For additional information on wildlife related diseases, contact the WS Disease Biologist at (916) 979-2675 or the Central District Supervisor at (209) 579-2891.

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Table 1. Number hours and trap nights for each year.

Year	Hours	Site visits	Trap nights
2018	904	211	870
2019	727	168	480
2020 (through 10/31/2020)	658	136	618
Total	2289	515	1968

Table 2. Number of feral cats captured/removed by year.

Year	# of feral cats removed
2018	7
2019	2
2020 (through 10/31/2020)	2
Total	11

Table 3. Control methods by year.

Year	Removal method		Totals
	Cage	Shooting	
2018	7	-	7
2019	2	-	2
2020 (through 10/31/2020)	1	1	2
Totals	10	1	11

Literature cited and references

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