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Opening Remarks – Twentieth Vertebrate Pest Conference

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On behalf of the Vertebrate Pest Council, welcome to the Twentieth Vertebrate Pest Conference, the first of these conferences held outside of California. As I reviewed the history of these conferences beginning with the first one in Sacramento, California in 1962, I was amazed at the endurance, the productivity, and the impact of these meetings. This conference has been held every other year for 40 years. The commitment required to maintain this effort is astounding, especially when you consider the inevitable turnover in agency personnel, the funding required, and the philosophical shifts we have seen toward wildlife, the environment, and pesticide use over four decades. In 1962, the General Chairman of the conference, Professor Walter E. Howard, welcomed attendees with these words:

"We are here to get acquainted with each other and to listen to experts... tell us about the best methods of controlling troublesome and pestiferous birds, mammals and snakes, and to discuss related problems concerning diseases and pesticides."

Although we have modified some of our adjectives, and added social, economic, and policy components to our programs, forty years later we are still gathered to get acquainted with each other and to listen to experts.

Also at that 1962 conference, Professor Daniel Aldrich, Jr., Dean of Agriculture for the University of California, Berkeley, reviewed what was needed for the future. He stated that we needed to perform fundamental work on vertebrate population dynamics. He noted that we needed to know how much damage we may be doing with pest controls we now use. And he concluded *"We must encourage the best students, with native imagination, with scientific adventure and drive in them, to see vertebrate studies and the control of our vertebrate competition as a life work."*

There are some here today who have made this their life work, and others who are dedicated to accomplishing this goal. I thank all of you for your efforts.

Two years ago, welcoming you to the Nineteenth Vertebrate Pest Conference, conference Chair Terrell Salmon stated, "This conference... is devoted to better understanding of vertebrates, the situations where they cause problems, and how these can be addressed." This is the forty-year legacy of the Vertebrate Pest Conference: more knowledge, better comprehension, and a focused understanding on the biology and management of vertebrates that conflict with human interests.

I want to acknowledge and thank the many people who worked to put on this conference. Foremost are the program Co-Chairs, Terry Salmon and Rex Marsh. As you can see from the program, they have developed an outstanding mix of presentations for us to hear, and debate, over the next three days. The development of this program is what will make this a great conference, and I thank both Terry and Rex for their tireless efforts.

Equally vital in the development of this conference are the unsung heroes who have labored to bring you here today. Desley Whisson has coordinated the registration effort as Registration Chair, and has kept our web site functioning and up-to-date. Arrangements Chair Bob Timm has been focused on the many details that will keep the conference functioning from minute to minute, and his efforts began in 1999 with the selection of Reno as our conference site.

Many of you benefited yesterday from the efforts of our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Bob Beach and John O'Brien. They, along with their assistants and cooperators, put on a great show of Nevada hospitality.

Pierre Gadd and Charlie Smith brought us the vendors in the exhibit area. Terry Mansfield worked on publicizing the conference. Terry Salmon coordinated the continuing education effort. Kathy Fagerstone produced the collection of abstracts, a first for this conference. As Proceedings Editor, Bob Timm will be collecting manuscripts and working to deliver into your hands a complete Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference, Volume 20, within the next year. Finally, the Vertebrate Pest Council, which I have been privileged to chair over the past two years with the help of Chair-Elect Paul Gorenzel, is a collection of dedicated professionals, volunteers all, committed to developing forums such as this conference to "...tell us about the best methods of controlling troublesome and pestiferous birds, mammals and snakes." To these people, and all of our assistants and volunteers, I thank you.

We have developed this conference for you, the attendees. The events and consequences of September 11th are with us forever, and they affect us in many different ways. Yet, here we are, at the Twentieth Vertebrate Pest Conference, discussing rat baits and coyote management. We cannot forget, yet we must go forward. Our commitment here must be to do what we can to make the world a better place, a saner place, a safer place. I choose to dream that what we accomplish here

over the next three days will make a difference and that, in some way, no matter how small, it adds to our collective effort to make sure the events of September 11th never happen again.

Have a great conference. Enjoy yourselves in Reno. Be safe, eat well, watch your wallet, and meet lots of interesting people. As baseball manager Yogi Berra once said, "It ain't over till it's over." For now, let's get started!