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## Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference

**Title**

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**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6b16g3rm>

**Journal**

Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference, 24(24)

**ISSN**

0507-6773

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**Publication Date**

2010

**DOI**

10.5070/V424110464

# Opening Remarks – Twenty-Fourth Vertebrate Pest Conference

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Proc. 24<sup>th</sup> Vertebr. Pest Conf. (R. M. Timm and K. A. Fagerstone, Eds.)  
Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. 2010. p. 1.

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Good morning. My name is Kathleen Fagerstone. I am with the USDA APHIS Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Research Center, and I am serving as the chair for the Vertebrate Pest Council. I am very pleased to welcome you to the Holiday Inn at Capitol Plaza, which is hosting the 24<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference.

For those of you who have not attended previous Vertebrate Pest Conferences, I would like to provide a short history of the Conference. It was started in 1962 and continues as a venue for sharing knowledge and experience among those working in the area of wildlife-human interactions and conflicts. The Conference is organized by the Vertebrate Pest Council, which also organizes training workshops in California during alternate years.

I would like to have Council members please stand and be recognized at this time. There are a few of the Council members who put in extraordinary efforts this year to make this Conference a reality: Victoria Hornbaker was in charge of the arrangements for the Conference and worked with the hotel to make this event happen. Terry Salmon put together an excellent program and also serves as the Council Business Manager. Paul Gorenzel arranged the field trip that occurred yesterday, which I am sure all of the participants thoroughly enjoyed. Rex Baker was in charge of obtaining continuing education credits for those of you who have signed up. John O'Brien arranged for the commercial exhibits. Roger Baldwin was responsible for the poster session and for student recruitment and awards. Dirk VanVuren did an excellent job of coordinating publicity for the Conference. Lastly, I thank Amber Shrum, who worked long hours to make sure that the registration process worked easily.

As of this morning, we have a total of 247 people registered for the Conference, of which 28 are from countries outside the United States. I ask those of you from outside the U.S. to please stand, so we can thank you for traveling so far to participate in the Conference. I hope everyone takes that opportunity to meet each of our foreign visitors and exchange ideas. It is wonderful to see the level of attendance from overseas; I think this reflects the fact that wildlife damage management has become a major scientific discipline within wildlife biology throughout the world.

We have 11 commercial exhibitors present this year. Their displays will be located in the Balboa Room. I hope you take the time to talk to them and look at their products. Tonight we will be having hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar in that room, so you will have time to interact with each other and with the exhibitors. In addition to the commercial exhibits, we have 9 posters that will be set up during the meeting.

I am pleased to announce that the Council awarded scholarships to 14 students to allow them to attend this Conference. These students will be presenting 4 posters and 10 oral presentations during the meeting, and we hope you will welcome them. We will have a special poster session on Wednesday evening from 5:15 to 7:15 PM where you can visit with all of the poster presenters.

For those of you who are seeking continuing education credits, you will need to sign up each day to receive those. California is offering a total of 21.5 Continuing Education credits for the talks on this year's program.

We have an excellent Conference program for you. The plenary session this morning will be in this room. Then, we will break into 2 concurrent sessions for the rest of the Conference. A special all-day symposium will be held tomorrow on "Field Rodenticide Uses".

With that, I would like to introduce our keynote speaker. Tony Peacock is the Chief Executive of the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre based at the University of Canberra in The Australian Capital Territory. The IA CRC brings together 41 participating universities, companies, government departments and not-for-profit agencies to collaborate on applied vertebrate pest research and development. Six of the participating organizations are outside of Australia. Tony is a strong advocate for raising public awareness of vertebrate pest issues. I think you will enjoy his talk.

Please enjoy the Conference.