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Opening Remarks — A Retrospective Look at the Vertebrate Pest Conference

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Good morning, everyone. My name is Paul Gorenzel and I am the chairperson for this conference. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Visalia and the 21st Vertebrate Pest Conference, or "VPC" as we call it. Like every other chairperson who opened this conference (except for the 1st chairperson), I looked back through the past proceedings to see what others said in their opening remarks. I saw a common theme. Almost every past chair mentioned some or all of the objectives of this conference. What those objectives boil down to is education in the subject area of wildlife damage management and the promotion of research on problems and solutions related to WDM. That is what this conference is about.

In these opening remarks, I would like to do something different and take a retrospective look at the VPC over the past 42 years, keeping that objective of education in mind.

ATTENDANCE

First, regarding attendance—how many people have attended this conference and hopefully walked away with new knowledge? This conference started in 1962. Records were not complete for the 1st conference, but by the 2nd conference in 1964, attendance was over 200 people (Table

1). Attendance peaked at about 480 people in 1982 and since then has ranged between 300 and 400 people. Altogether, total attendance has been at least 6,400 people.

Foreign Participation

In the beginning, there was no or little attendance by people from outside the United States (Table 1). Starting in the mid-1970s, the VPC became a truly international conference. In 1980, there were attendees from 20 different foreign countries. Over the years, attendees have traveled from 46 different countries to attend the VPC to get some education, and to educate the rest of us.

Breaking this down further, residents of Canada have attended 17 conferences, residents from the UK 16 conferences, followed by New Zealand, Australia, France, Germany, and Mexico (Figure 1). Attendees representing these countries have come to >50% of the VPCs. Of more importance, attendees from 46 countries have come to this conference from practically every region of the world. The diversity of these places, the knowledge, the experiences, the different types of vertebrate pest problems, and solutions brought here by foreign attendees is truly amazing and provides us with a tremendous educational opportunity.

Table 1. Location of the conference, attendance, representation by foreign countries, and number of papers published in the proceedings at the Vertebrate Pest Conference from 1962 through 2002.

Year	Location	Attendance	No. Foreign Countries	No. Papers*
1962	Sacramento	na	0	23
1964	Anaheim	225	0	23
1967	San Francisco	265	1	29
1970	W. Sacramento	275	3	39
1972	Fresno	239	5	35
1974	Anaheim	236	12	47
1976	Monterey	278	10	43
1978	Sacramento	436	12	47
1980	Fresno	347	20	43
1982	Monterey	479	15	46
1984	Sacramento	409	15	43
1986	San Diego	372	15	61
1988	Monterey	401	12	63
1990	Sacramento	359	13	78
1992	Newport Beach	327	11	86
1994	Santa Clara	318	13	64
1996	Rohnert Park	340	9	53
1998	Costa Mesa	409	7	77
2000	San Diego	383	15	75
2002	Reno	337	8	71
Totals:		6,435	NA	1,046

*excludes opening and closing remarks

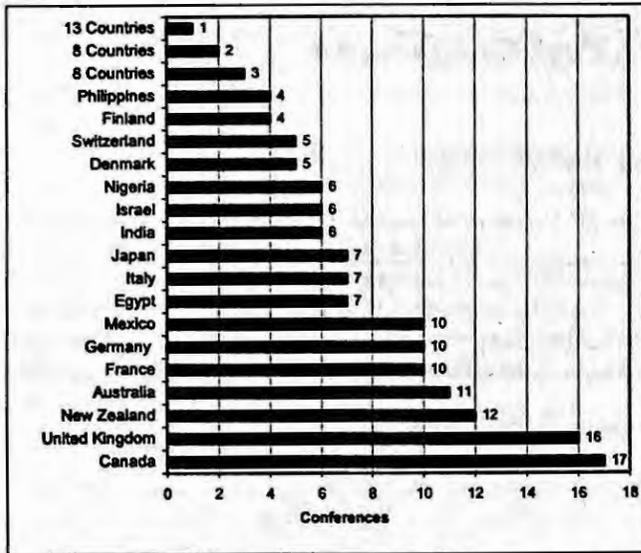


Figure 1. Number of Vertebrate Pest Conferences from 1962 through 2002 which people from individual foreign countries have attended.

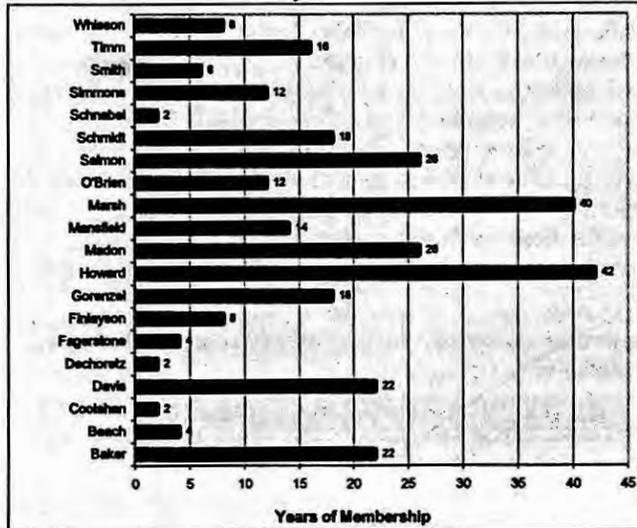


Figure 2. Years of membership in the Vertebrate Pest Council by members who helped organize the 2004 Vertebrate Pest Conference.

PAPERS IN PROCEEDINGS

The proceedings and the papers in them represent one of the educational products of this conference. In the early years, the conference was a 2-day affair; there were no concurrent sessions, and the number of papers was low (Table 1). From 1970 through 1984 there typically were about 40 or so papers in each proceedings, probably the result of the VPC expanding to 3 days. A noticeable increase in the number of papers started in 1986 with 61 papers, in part due to the implementation of concurrent sessions, and that higher level of 60 to 80+ papers has held through today. But beyond the growth in the structure of the conference, I think the increased number of papers reflects the growth in the stature and importance of wildlife damage management within the larger subject area of wildlife management.

All told, over 1,000 papers have been published in the proceedings and they are used throughout the world as a source of information on all aspects of wildlife damage management.

VERTEBRATE PEST COUNCIL

I wanted to comment on the people who make up the Vertebrate Pest Council. The conferences, the proceedings, and the alternate year workshops, they are the educational products of the VPC. They happen because a team of dedicated individuals volunteer their time and effort. Twenty Council members worked to organize this conference. Figure 2 illustrates one of the key elements for the continued existence and success of the VPC, that being a trend of long-term membership in the Council. More than 50% of the members have been with the Council for ≥ 10 years. In particular, I have to point out the long-term membership of Howdy Howard with 42 years and Rex Marsh with 40 years of participation. There probably aren't many people in this room who can claim to be a member of any organization and actively involved for that length of time. It is quite an accomplishment.

Finally, I want to thank all of the Council members for their work on this conference. I very much appreciate your contributions. And to all of you in the audience, thank you for being here. You too are an important part of this conference.

With that little history lesson, I will turn it over to Program Co-Chair Duane Schnabel and we will begin the next chapter of the VPC.