

Cholera shrinking bird population

HASTINGS (AP) - Dry conditions are shrinking South-Central Nebraska wetlands, leading to a significant outbreak of deadly avian cholera.

The highly contagious disease is already hitting hard with migratory geese populations in the region, according to Jon Kauffeld, project leader of the Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Land Management Office in Kearney.

The bacteria is thriving this year in the Rainwater Basin because the birds have fewer wet areas in which to gather. "Cholera is a disease that thrives on concentration," Kauffeld said. "The vast majority of the Rainwater Basin is dryer than it's ever been. Consequently the birds are extremely concentrated in the areas that do have water."

With birds "shoulder to shoulder" the chance of transmission is heightened, he said. The closeness of the birds and the poor water quality from defecation and splashing can easily spread the disease.

"In bright, clear water the life of the cholera bacteria is reduced and it only lives for a short time period," he said. "As the water is dirtied and darkened

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JON KAUFFELD
project leader

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The basin's wetlands and marshes cover more than 4,200 square miles in 16 Nebraska counties. Millions of geese and other birds use the basin as a stop during their annual migration north.

The disease has the potential to be a significant threat, particularly to snow geese that have reached record numbers this year, Kauffeld said.

Fish and wildlife officials have vi-

sually inspected areas from roads. They report a significant number of carcasses, he said.

Eagles also are an indication of the disease's devastation, he said.

"I saw 41 eagles at the Spring Wing Ding in Clay Center on Saturday," he said. "When you see that many eagles you know there's a lot of carcasses out there. You could call them the cleanup crew."

Officials won't know the extent of the mortality until they finish removing carcasses from area marshes. The carcasses are burned to isolate the bacteria, Kauffeld said.

Biologists began picking up dead birds Tuesday at Mallard Haven north of Shickley. Next stops are areas near Harvard, Edgar, Clay Center and Funk.

"I don't want to speculate on how many there are until we get out there," Kauffeld said.

How much the disease progresses depends on population numbers, he said.

"With the large numbers of birds in the area it will progress quickly, killing many," he said. "As the geese move on and thin out, the disease will lessen and so will the kill."

Black educators back integration in Omaha

OMAHA (AP) — Black educators have declared their support for integrated education for students in Omaha Public Schools.

Concerned and Caring Educators, a 100-member group of black administrators and supervisors, issued a statement outlining reasons for continuing the district's integration plan, which hinges on buses carrying thousands of black and white children across town each school day.

The group's main reason was to prepare OPS children to live in a multicultural society that went beyond state and national boundaries.

Omaha began integrating its schools under court order in 1976. Eight years later, a federal judge ruled that the district had done everything reasonable to remedy past

discrimination.

The district remains obligated to operate schools free of discrimination, but some school board members and others are asking how that is best done.

Board member Kathleen McCallister proposed ending mandatory busing for integration last year. She has since said she wanted to study integration to see if it met student needs.

The Nebraska Taxpayers Association, an anti-tax group, and the citizens group Triple One Parents Union have said mandatory and voluntary busing should end so students can attend neighborhood schools.

The district is spending \$5.5 million this year to bus 8,324 students as part of its integration plan.

Roskens keeps moving

OMAHA (AP) — Former University of Nebraska President Ronald Roskens has been named to the Omaha-Douglas County Public Building Commission.

The committee said in a news release Thursday that Roskens was appointed to fill the unexpired term of retiring commission chairman Tom Moore. The appointment was made in a unanimous vote by the commission. Roskens' term will end in June 1999.

Roskens was named NU president in 1977 after five years as chancellor of the Omaha campus. He headed the NU system for 13 years, then served as administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development under President George Bush.

Roskens has also served as president of Action International Inc., an organization that works with a group of former heads of state or government.

Law & Order

A LOOK AT CRIME ON CAMPUS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

WOUNDED DOG

A cocker spaniel is in stable condition after suffering an attack Wednesday with a bow and arrow. Amanda Ullman, owner of Hooch, was getting the dog some water when she heard him whine and bark. When she found him, he had been shot with an arrow, according to police reports.

Ullman removed the arrow,

which had entered Hooch's hip and had come out on the other side of his body.

Hooch, 7 (in people years), was taken to the veterinarian, where he was awaiting surgery Thursday.

The crime was classified as vandalism because there was damage done to a person's property. Lincoln police have made no arrests.

— Chad Lorenz



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