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**Mt. St. Helens Aftermath: Hummingbirds Vanish, Bluebirds, Swallows Starve**  
 Marlene Fritz  
 Assistant Agricultural Editor

Moscow—Hours before Mount St. Helens erupted, all but a handful of the 150 hummingbirds fed by a Koo-kia couple disappeared. Only about a third of them have returned to the home of Don and Ruth McCombs.

Nobody knows where they went, or why, but some animal experts think the birds may have been acting on a cue from the environment.

In heavily ashed area outside the immediate vicinity of the volcano, many non-game birds died, a UI veterinary scientist reported this week, but none from ash inhalation. What killed them said Bruce H. Stauber was starvation the result of catastrophic losses of insects to the ash-fall.

Stauber made his remarks Tuesday, July 8 at the Conference of the Aftermath of Mt. St. Helens, sponsored in Pullman by WSU.

Stauber said that non-game birds like bluebirds and swallows eat continually. Without food, they weaken and die within 24 hours.

He said it is difficult to estimate how many of these birds died because the thick tree and grass cover present at this time of year makes it hard to count them. He noted that erratic weather complicates estimates even further, making it difficult to distinguish the effects of ash on bird populations from the consequences of unfavorable weather.

Adult game birds can feed on grain so none of them appear to have starved because of the ash, Stauber said. But their young dependent on insects, have not been so fortunate.

According to Stauber, Washington state game experts estimate that reproduction of game birds in heavily ashed areas have been cut by 40 to 50 percent the result of reductions in both nesting and survival.

He said many birds deserted their nests and young when the ash clouds drifted over. One possible cause is that the birds mistook the darkening skies for a naturally occurring dusk. Since they generally search for food at dusk, they flew off, became confused, and, by the time light returned, their landmarks and nests had changed so dramatically that they could no longer find their ways back.

According to Stauber, if insect populations resurge, many game birds will re-nest. But he said pheasants, quail and partridges may suffer losses due to the destruction of much of the grasshopper population.

Large game animals apparently have been unaffected by the ashfall, Stauber said, with the production and survival of their young occurring at normal rates. He suggested that these animals are coping well because their lungs are able to cleanse themselves of ash dust and because rains cleaned much of the ash from the leaves on which they

feed. Saving many young animals was the fact that they were nursing when the ash fell, Stauber said.

One possible ash-related health effect noted in domestic cats may be occurring among cats in the wild, Stauber said. Tarry or black stools could indicate animals that lick ash from their coats suffer abrasive action and bleeding in their intestinal tracts.

Stauber said that within 240 sq. miles of the volcano, 67,000 game animals and several hundred thousand non-game animals died because of shock waves and superheated gases.

**Controlled Hunt Applicants Could Total 130,000**

A record of 130,000 applications could go through the screening that determines those eligible for the Department of Fish and Game's computerized drawing for controlled hunt permits this year.

Data processing manager Claude Clapsaddle says his estimate, if it holds up, will top the 1979 total by some 15,000 applications.

Last year, the department received 115,206 applications of which 105,036 were eligible for the drawing. Several thousand cards annually fail to make the eligible list because they are improperly completed, Clapsaddle says.

This year's total of eligible applicants will be announced when all of the cards have cleared the editing process, he adds.

The drawing is scheduled for August 1, with 14,463 permits available the most since 1973. There will be 8,175 permits for deer, 3,995 for elk, 1,910 antelope, 111 mountain goat, 140 moose and 102 bighorn sheep permits.

**Early Chukar Season Opens August 1**

Those who fancy chukar partridge hunting while they float the Middle Fork and Main Salmon rivers will again have their traditional early season this year, from August 1st through September 14.

Department of Fish and Game regulations set the hunt area along the Main Salmon within one-half mile of the river from the mouth of Sheep Creek upstream to the mouth of Horse Creek.

On the Middle Fork, chukar hunting is legal within one-half mile of the stream from its mouth upstream to the mouth of Indian Creek.

Hunters are allowed to use a shotgun, rifle or pistol, including an air rifle or air pistol. The daily bag limit is eight chukar—possession limit, 16.

The special season, primarily designed for those who float the rivers, allows harvest of a chukar population in a roadless area.

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