Wild horses are often maligned for being a nuisance or destructive to the lands they graze. And following changes made by Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT) to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act two years ago, they may be rounded up for slaughter. Wild horses 10-years-of-age and older or not adopted after three tries are sent to auction, where they will likely fall into the hands of a slaughterhouse “killer-buyer.”

However, these magnificent creatures are actually a vital part of many ecosystems in the United States and abroad. The wild horse, a reintroduced native species, maintain lands by keeping vegetation in check. Without the animals’ presence, many areas would become impenetrable and overgrown. Accomplished horse photographer Bob Langrish generously donated this cover image for the Fall 2006 AWI Quarterly. Passage of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act is needed to make sure our horses, both wild and domestic, are protected. (see stories pages 4-5).
news from capitol hill

AWI Quarterly

News from Capitol Hill

More than 92,000 US horses last year endured this horrific cruelty in transport and slaughter at the three foreign-owned plants.

While the brutal facts about horse slaughter won over the House of Representatives, the bill must now go to the Senate and the battle will not be easy. The time remaining in this session of Congress is running out, and legislators such as Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT), whose infamous rider removed protections for wild horses in late 2004, will do all they can to prevent the AHSPA’s passage. Pressure for passage of the legislation must be intensified.

Compassionate celebrities and public figures such as actress Bo Derek and Texas oilman T. Boone Pickens have spearheaded the bill on behalf of the horses by speaking out and meeting with Members of Congress. “We must open the people’s eyes about this appalling practice that is so often hidden from the public,” Bo said while lobbying Capitol Hill with SAPL. “As exhibited by the over 500 equine associations, rescue groups and leaders, banning the practice of horse slaughter is the only way to ensure our beloved horses will receive the protection they deserve.”

Sequence of Events

Aug. 25: Hearing before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee
Aug. 27: Hearing before the House Agriculture Committee
Aug. 27: hauler cited for cruelty to animals in Texarkana
Sept. 7: House of Representatives passes H.R. 503
Sept. 28: Packed horse trailer overturns in Missouri

Photos: 1) The scene of the Missouri accident was gruesome. (Humane Society of Missouri)
2) Abused horses being transported to Texas were allowed to do a brief rejig after their driver was charged with animal cruelty. (Owen White/MITX)
3) The majority of the horses found in Texarkana were stallions, and should never be housed together due to the potential for fighting. (USDA)

Transport Cruelty Charges Bolster Anti-Horse Slaughter Fight

I n a tragic twist, while representatives of the horse slaughter industry testified before Congress on Aug. 27, an incident involving a truck packed with horses in appalling conditions belied their statements. Thirteen of the 19 horses crammed into the trailer were stallions—an apparent violation of transport regulations. The Mississippi vehicle blew two tires en route to the Beltex horse slaughter plant in Fort Worth, Tex., and driver Bryan Morgan pulled into a Texarkana tire shop for repairs. Soon after, GCR Tires employee Greg Fett called 911 to report the animals’ poor state.

Twenty citations for animal cruelty were initially written by local police, though the driver was still allowed to take the horses on to the slaughterhouse. Morgan, who was later revealed to be under the legal age to operate a commercial vehicle and without proper insurance, was eventually charged with five counts of cruelty in transport under Arkansas state law. A bond in the amount of $1,125 has been set. Should he fail to pay the bond, trial will commence on Oct. 31 of this year. In addition to assisting in Morgan’s prosecution, the Society for Animal Protective Legislation has filed a formal complaint with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) against Robbie Solomon, the owner/shippers of the horses, for violating several federal regulations regarding the commercial transportation of horses to slaughter.

Only a month later, a double-decker trailer transporting 43 horses to the Cavel horse slaughter plant in DeKalb, Ill. overturned while passing through Missouri. Seven horses were killed and nine had to be euthanized; 27 were rescued alive and are fortunately being held and cared for at the Humane Society of Missouri’s Longmeadow Rescue Ranch and other facilities. The driver of the vehicle was taken into custody because of outstanding warrants. These two situations dramatically illustrate the brutality of the horse slaughter industry; we are now pressing Senators to stop this suffering by passing the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

1) Please contact your Senators as soon as possible, urging their co-sponsorship of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act and a vote on the legislation in the current session of Congress. Although a vote in the Senate will not occur before the November election, you are entitled to know where your Senators stand NOW.
2) If your Representative voted in favor of H.R. 503, please contact him or her to say thank you for protecting America’s horses. You can locate this information on the Compassion Index (www.compassionindex.org) under “Issues” or by contacting us. Letters should be addressed to:

The Honorable (Name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable (Name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

One Step Closer:
The US House of Representatives Makes a Key Move to Stop Horse Slaughter

S ept. 7 was a landmark day for America’s horses. In perhaps the biggest legislative move of the decade to protect animals, the House of Representatives voted in favor of H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (AHSPA), to end the slaughter of horses for human consumption and the domestic and international transport of live horses or horseflesh for the same purpose. Just before the vote, opponents from the horse slaughter industry, with the lead of former Representative Charlie Stenholm (D-TX), tried to introduce numerous “poison pill” amendments and lobbied Members of Congress aggressively on the issue.

Two of these bad amendments were rejected before the 263 to 146 vote for the AHSPA. Thanks to tremendous grassroots pressure and effective floor debates by bill sponsors Representative John Sweeney (R-NY), Representative John Spratt (D-SC), Representative Ed Whitfield (R-KY) and Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV), the House was able to see past the rhetoric presented by those looking to make a quick profit at the expense of the welfare of thousands of horses. More than 92,000 US horses last year endured this...
Teaching Kids Kindness and Compassion

In this day of multimedia, television and video games, the act of reading to a child can provide immeasurable benefits. Books with messages of compassion for animals can spark the inherent interest in animals all children seem to possess. Yet while Winnie the Pooh and Clifford the Big Red Dog will always be popular, there are innumerable lesser-known books that promote caring, respect and empathy for animals and the environment. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, other relative, teacher or friend, here is a sampling of the Animal Welfare Institute’s favorite books for teaching younger children the importance of being kind to animals.

Children are often afraid of bats, but after reading *Stellaluna*, they will learn these small mammals are interesting and adaptive. *Stellaluna* is separated from her mother after an owl attack, eventually landing in a bird’s nest. She learns to be just like the other birds, until one day she is reunited with her family. This book teaches children about bat behavior, from eating fruit to sleeping upside down and flying at night.

*A Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg

Ferdinand is a gentle bull who likes to sit quietly in the shade and smell the flowers. One day, he sits on a bumblebee and becomes alarmed, bucking around. Men who want to demonstrate their bravado come to take him away to the bullfights, thinking he is the fiercest bull in all of Madrid—but when Ferdinand enters the ring, he just sits down. When the kind bull refuses to fight, the foolish men must take him home. This book shows children the absurdity of being cruel to animals for entertainment purposes.

*A Tom Mouse* by Ursula K. LeGuin

In this story illustrated with beautiful watercolors, a young girl goes on a picnic by the river with her mother and her brother Rob. The mother shows her children the importance of being kind to animals by speaking up to an irresponsible fisherman. The trio also sees a swan, who looks at the girl as if she is a friend. That night, the girl dreams that the swan comes to her. Together, they fly all around the world. In the morning, her mother mysteriously finds a feather on the girl’s clothes. Later that summer, the family goes back to the river and finds that the swan and her mate have six babies.

*They Came from the Bronx—How the Buffalo Were Saved from Extinction* by Neil Waldman

By 1899, the once vast herds of American bison, commonly known as buffalo, had nearly disappeared because of overhunting by white men. *They Came from the Bronx* contrasts the story of a Native American grandmother telling her grandson about the importance of the bison to native culture and the tragic tale of their annihilation. The story of individuals who reintroduced captive bison to Oklahoma as the first step toward restoring wild bison to the western United States is told as well. This book is a must-read for anyone who cares about these remarkable animals.

*A Stellaluna* by Janelle Cannon

This glimpse into the future provides a boy named Walter with a shocking look at what may happen to our world if we do not start protecting our environment. After a journey to see mountains of garbage, a clear-cut forest, choking pollution, excessive development, depletion of our wildlife, and a smog-filled Grand Canyon, Walter is transformed from a considerate litterbug to a committed conservationist. This is a great story for getting children to care about our environment.

*A The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf

In this story illustrated with beautiful watercolors, a young girl goes on a picnic by the river with her mother and her brother Rob. The mother shows her children the importance of being kind to animals by speaking up to an irresponsible fisherman. The trio also sees a swan, who looks at the girl as if she is a friend. That night, the girl dreams that the swan comes to her. Together, they fly all around the world. In the morning, her mother mysteriously finds a feather on the girl’s clothes. Later that summer, the family goes back to the river and finds that the swan and her mate have six babies.

*A Just a Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg

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*A The Swan* by Virginia Mayo

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Fisherman/WSPA milking sessions they endure. Bears have access to slightly larger separate cages or sterile refrigerator to be “milked” for their bile. Only a few “lucky” into small cages only slightly larger than an average forced to spend days, weeks, months or even years stuffed many farm bears—who can weigh up to 440 pounds—are become bile production machines. Though conditions vary, to worse, as their pens are replaced with steel cages and they become bile production machines. At only 2 to 3 months of age, cubs born on bear farms are taken from their mothers to spend their first few years of life in barren facilities, where they are forced to perform demeaning tricks to entertain farm visitors and customers. By the time they are 3, their lives turn from bad to worse, as their pens are replaced with steel cages and they become bile production machines. Though conditions vary, many farm bears—who can weigh up to 440 pounds—are forced to spend days, weeks, months or even years stuffed into small cages only slightly larger than an average refrigerator to be “milked” for their bile. Only a few “lucky” bears have access to slightly larger separate cages or sterile concrete and steel cages outdoors, in between the daily extraction process causes severe physical pain. Bears tremble, kick, bite, gnash their teeth, shake their heads, hit their cages and moan during and after the process.

In China, bile is extracted through the surgical implantation of a catheter or the creation of a tissue fistula from the abdominal wall to the gall bladder. The making of a fistula, which the Chinese government claims is humane, requires a rod be inserted into the gall bladder multiple times daily to access the bile. Because veterinarians are not employed by most farms, the surgical procedures are conducted by technicians or farm workers, often in unhygienic conditions, using equipment that is not sterile. The result is festering wounds, severe inflammation and infection, septicaemia, peritonitis, formation of huge gallstones, internal abscesses, abdominal hernias—and in all cases, suffering. Not surprisingly, 60 to 80 percent of bears die during or shortly after their initial surgery. Those who survive rarely live longer than 10 years—less than half of their normal life span. Bears who do not succumb to infection or disease are eventually slaughtered for their paws, teeth and other parts. Even some live bears may have their paws cut off when farm customers desire fresh bear paws.

Bears are used by some practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine to treat swelling, inflammation, pain, fever, and liver and eye disorders. Sold in liquid, crystallized and powdered forms and manufactured into a number of medicinal and non-medicinal products, bear bile is more in demand than ever. It has increased in China from 500 kilos per year in the 1980s to 4000 kilos today. With current production exceeding 7000 kilos per year, new products like tonics, shampoos and even wine have been created to use up the surplus. Though the trade in bears and bear products, including bile, is prohibited by the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) documented that nearly 60 percent of 694 Traditional Chinese Medicine shops visited in Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Australia, Canada and the United States were illegally selling contraband bear products.

Part One: The Bear Bile Trade

As the world’s athletes prepare for the 2008 Olympics, over 7,000 bears (mostly Asiatic black bears) continue to endure physical and psychological abuse to satisfy China’s demand for bear bile. With current production exceeding 7000 kilos per year, new products, including bile, is prohibited by the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) documented that nearly 60 percent of 694 Traditional Chinese Medicine shops visited in Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Australia, Canada and the United States were illegally selling contraband bear products.

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Trade, Trophies and Trust: What’s Wrong With CITES

At the Los Angeles International Airport in July, a man from Japan was arrested for attempting to illegally smuggle Queen Alexandra’s birdwing butterflies—one of the largest butterfly species in the world—into the United States. In Singapore in 2002, customs agents discovered a 20 foot long cargo container filled with 13,000 pounds of illegal elephant ivory. And in the United Arab Emirates, more than one-half of the monkeys illegally smuggled from Pakistan in water tankers with false bottoms arrive dead. Whether the trade is in skins, butterflies—one of the largest butterfly species in the world—into the United States. In Singapore in 2002, animals, our world’s wildlife is under threat from a illegally smuggle Queen Alexandra’s birdwing trade applications for all CITES-listed species. At present, the public is only informed of applications received (cont’d)

What do the Chinese, American trophy hunters, hunger, corruption and economic instability have in common? They are all causes of the decimation of Zimbabwe’s wildlife heritage. Under the corrupt rule of President Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe’s economy has been in a free fall, resulting in skyrocketing unemployment rates and increased hunger. Combined with the forceful takeover of farms, wildlife conservancies and game ranches, bushmeat hunting, poaching and trophy hunting are quickly eradicating the country’s wildlife populations. Many Zimbabweans have turned to bushmeat poaching to feed their hungry families, and the Mugabe government has initiated its own campaign to allow police and defense forces to alleviate hunger by killing wildlife. The government attributes the increase in hunger in part to drought, but according to Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force Chairman Johnny Rodriguez, the record rainfalls in 2006 suggest the current hunger problem is occurring due to other causes. To make matters worse, in 2005, the government instructed national park rangers to shoot 10 elephants for a barbecue in honor of the country’s 25 years of independence and started allowing national park officials to kill wildlife as part of their rations. It now permits wildlife to be killed to feed its military forces. Bushmeat and commercial poachers operate throughout the country with virtually no restriction. An audit by Zimbabwean officials revealed that poaching was rampant partly because of a lack of rangers to patrol and enforce wildlife laws. In addition, because of Mugabe’s land seizure program, only 14 game ranches and 84 wildlife conservancies still exist. Poachers emptied a ranch in Matabeleland of its 6,000 animals, including many of its 50 endangered black rhinos. Rangers who want to enforce Zimbabwe’s wildlife laws are not able to engage in anti-poaching patrols due to a lack of fuel. In July, despite these difficulties, rangers were able to arrest 245 fish and wildlife poachers—though it is unclear if the arrests, given the severity of the problem and the lack of sufficient criminal penalties, will significantly reduce poaching in the country.

Zimbabwe’s national parks are also in disrepair, with no funds to operate pumps to provide groundwater to wildlife, which has forced elephants and other animals to find habitat and flee poachers by crossing into Zambia. But most are not so fortunate. As a result of a controversial decision by CITES member countries in 1997, Zimbabwe was authorized to sell ivory from its ivory stockpiles. Sadly, this has led to an increase in elephant poaching in Zimbabwe and neighboring countries to fulfill China’s demand for ivory. Indeed, during the first seven months of 2006, Chinese dealers purchased 30 tons of ivory tusks, representing 2,250 elephants from Zimbabwe’s Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. This compelled the government to “temporarily” prohibit ivory sales or trading (cont’d)
for species listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Consequently, most people are unaware of the vast amount of wildlife trade—including the trade in live wildlife and sport-hunted trophies—of CITES-protected species that the FWS approves every year. According to trade data compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Center, in 2004, the United States reported over 1,600 import permits issued for an unknown number of animals representing more than 100 species, including bottlenose dolphins, jaguars, African and Asian elephants and lilac-crowned and red-spectacled Amazon parrots. For the same year, the United States also reported 270 import permits issued for the sport-hunting trophies of an unknown number of Appendix I, II and III animals of over 110 species and subspecies, such as hamadryas baboons, gray wolves, grizzly bears, polar bears, caracals, African lions, leopards, African elephants, hippopotami, argali sheep and Nile crocodiles.

Illegal trade is second only to habitat destruction as a threat to the survival of wildlife around the world. Legal wildlife trade also contributes to these threats due to the aforementioned problems with the CITES process and the increasing demand for imperiled wildlife. As even the FWS concedes, this can create a market for protected wildlife that, if not met through legal trade, results in increased illegal trade. Some believe making wildlife valuable by allowing trade is the only means to save these animals. Illegal trade is second only to habitat destruction as a threat to the survival of wildlife around the world. Legal wildlife trade also contributes to these threats due to the aforementioned problems with the CITES process and the increasing demand for imperiled wildlife. As even the FWS concedes, this can create a market for protected wildlife that, if not met through legal trade, results in increased illegal trade. Some believe making wildlife valuable by allowing trade is the only means to save these animals. Preliminary data compiled by AWI suggests that this claim is erroneous. Indeed, for those Appendix II mammal species for which World Conservation Union population trend data is available, the majority of species have a downward trend suggesting that whatever value is allegedly generated through trade does not correspond to increased species protection. Within the country. While poachers continue to decimate Zimbabwe’s wildlife, many of Mugabe’s followers ignore national and international wildlife laws by allowing sport hunters to operate virtually without restriction on game ranches and other lands throughout the country.

Many of these government insiders ignore arbitrary hunting quotas, allow hunters to kill animals (including endangered species) inside protected wildlife areas, hunt using fake permits, and fail to keep track of wounded wildlife. These government insiders-turned-hunt ranch operators reportedly often reap significant profits from such operations—most of which ends up in private bank accounts, while a pittance goes to the local populations. Despite a US government declaration of Zimbabwe as “an outpost of tyranny” and its imposition of economic sanctions against at least 128 of Mugabe’s relatives and cronies, Americans make up 80 to 90 percent of the hunters who visit the country. Though clearly concerned about the corruption within Zimbabwe, the US government has ignored the significant sums of money being spent by American trophy hunters. In Doing so, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is contributing to the destruction of Zimbabwe’s wildlife heritage.

Responding to the Effects of Oiled Wildlife

I
n early August, the tanker Solar I sank off the coast of Guimaras Island in the Philippines. The outflow of 50,000 gallons of oil engulfed over 125 miles of the once pristine coastline with a thick sludge, damaging more than 1,000 acres of mangrove forests and seaweed plantations, according to Guimaras Governor Joaquin Navia. Not only has this been deemed the worst oil spill in the Philippines history, but environmentalists have also called the tanker now resting on the seabed a “ticking time bomb.” Conservationists’ frustration and concern has mounted as time passes without a decision as to how to raise the tanker, currently sitting beneath almost 3,000 feet of water and containing 450,000 gallons of still-leaking oil. As the Philippines waits for the CITES present from experts, former Environment Secretary Angel Alcala fears “some species of fish, shells and birds may disappear from the area due to the destruction of the mangroves and coral that serve as their spawning and feeding grounds.” It may take up to three decades for the coral reefs and mangrove forests to recover in full. Approximately 3 billion gallons of oil are used every day across the globe, creating hazardous conditions for wildlife when spills and pollution occur. Careless and accidental oil spills from tankers and barges account for only 0.5 percent of the oil entering our oceans each year, but they still account for “most of the world’s largest oil spills,” according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Since 1960, these large oil spills have occurred in the waters of 112 nations. The Gulf of Mexico, the coast of the northeastern United States and the Mediterranean Sea are considered the top three “hotspots” for spills by Oil Spill Intelligence Report analysts. Environmental and economic effects are immediate, enormous and long-term to the areas they devastate. Nearby residents may lose their livelihoods when fishing and tourists industries are destroyed or closed. And inevitably, marine mammals and birds are harmed in myriad ways. Oiled birds may perish from being completely or only partially covered with oil. Pollution to the habitats of the animals who survive the initial impact can include contamination of food sources and of nesting and dwelling sites, reduction of the number of breeding animals and plants that provide future food stocks, and a lessening of their breeding success. Fortunately, a handful of organizations in the United States are capable of responding to wildlife involved in large-scale oil spills. Founded in 1976 after a major spill in the Delaware River, Newark, Del.’s Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research operates an Oil Spill Response program with a dedicated staff trained to respond to spills crises around the world. Tri-State’s methodology emphasizes the need for a collaborative effort among responsible parties, state and federal wildlife professionals, regulatory agencies, concerned citizens and peers. To learn more, please visit Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research’s website at www.tristatebird.org. On the West Coast, the International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) was founded in 1971 after the collision of two oil tankers under the Golden Gate Bridge. This unfortunate accident released 900,000 gallons of crude oil into the San Francisco Bay, killing over 6,500 birds—despite devoted volunteer efforts. Today, with locations in Cordelia and San Pedro, Calif., IBRRC continues its mission of responding to wildlife injured or threatened by oil spills. For more information, visit the IBRRC website at www.ibrrc.org.
Ringling Eliminates Tigers from Show

For the first time in 35 years, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus has modified a touring unit, and one of the biggest changes is its elimination of an act featuring tigers. The company denies they were removed as a concession to campaigns to end the use of exotic animals in entertainment—and we know better than to believe it was done out of concern for the animals themselves. Instead, Ringling reports its action was an effort to appeal more to its core audience, which consists mainly of women and children. Ironically, it is because of this target demographic that the company hired female tiger trainer Sara Houck in 2000.

And what about the elephants? Ringling unfortunately has no plans to remove them from its shows and claims they are its largest attraction. At the same time, the elephants are again plagued by tuberculosis. A male housed at a Ringling facility in Florida tested positive in September. He joins another elephant already under quarantine.

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In related news, our lawsuit against Ringling for its mistreatment of Asian elephants remains in the discovery phase, with an expected trial date sometime late next year. In the meantime, we are confident that the trend toward circus entertainment will continue to be a source of concern to animal activists and their allies.

Caught in a War Zone

LEBANON Located near a Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut’s southern suburbs, an animal shelter run by Beirut for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (BETA) was partly destroyed by a missile, just days after violence erupted in the country in mid-July. Its 113 dogs and 100 cats quickly became traumatized by the constant shellings, and volunteers visiting the shelter risked their lives twice a day in order to care for them. Within two weeks, the animals were all safely moved to an abandoned farm east of the capital. Yet perhaps tens of thousands of companion animals are still facing a similar fate.

In related news, the US Embassy in Beirut has announced plans to purchase the amount of wind power generated by its own facilities in order to offset its carbon footprint.

The Wind Dilemma

UNITED STATES One environmental group is putting its electric bill where its mouth is. Audubon New York, the state’s largest bird conservation organization, recently announced plans to purchase the amount of wind power necessary to compensate for 100 percent of the energy used in its offices. The group picked a favorable site in Nebraska that impacts birds and other wildlife minimally, avoiding migration routes and densely forested areas. Given the destructiveness of fossil fuel-based power and the immediacy of global warming, we commend Audubon for its decision to help the environment and prevent the unnecessary harm to birds and other wildlife.

Disrupting the Balance of the Sea

Three scientists first learned about “whale falls” in the 1980s and have since made hundreds of dives in a tiny submarine designed to collect data. They say a whole community of organisms can thrive for up to a century by sucking the fats and sulfides from one whale skeleton. But with this knowledge comes a realization: two centuries of commercial whaling have taken a tremendous toll on the ocean floor.

Dead whales in the ocean are like fallen trees in the forest. Just as decomposing wood turns into a powder to nourish plant nutrients in the soil, the sediment that falls from a whale’s carcass turns the sea floor into a rich environment ideal for clams, mussels, enzymes, bacteria, worms and other mysterious deep sea scavengers.

At the Deep-Sea Biology Symposium held in England this summer, marine biologist Craig Smith told conference attendees that commercial whaling has reduced the number of whale carcasses by up to 95 percent, and many species of sea scavengers who would have been feeding on these skeletons are most likely extinct or going extinct in areas where intense whaling has persisted. “The possibility that whaling has caused species extinctions at the remote deep-sea floor gives me new appreciation for the scale of human impacts on the ocean,” Smith said.

Shahtoosh Shawls Seized

THAILAND In July, Thai police authorities seized three luxury stores in downtown Bangkok, confiscating over 250 shahtoosh shawls made from the fur of endangered Tibetan antelopes called chiru. A single shahtoosh requires killing three to five antelopes and commands very high prices on the black market. Credit in the successful sting operation has been given to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-Wildlife Enforcement Network, a new integrated network of law enforcement agencies spanning many nations. According to the trade monitoring network TRAFFIC, the investigation “reflects a bold shift in strategy in battling syndicates decimating Asia’s wild animals and plants.”

Cats and dogs rescued from the war-torn city, since the US Embassy in Beirut has announced plans to purchase the amount of wind power generated by its own facilities in order to offset its carbon footprint.

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Mangabeys Saved from Lethal Research

UNITED STATES The Yerkes Primate Research Center in Atlanta, Ga. has withdrawn an amendment to its application for a permit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to kill endangered mangabeys as part of its ongoing AIDS-related experiments. The amendment sought approval to kill 50 of the animals. However, under the ESA, research facilities cannot engage in such activities unless they benefit the species in the wild. Yerkes, in its attempt to secure the amendment, offered to provide money toward a primate conservation project in the wild. The Animal Welfare Institute and other animal advocacy groups represented by the law firm Meyer Glitzenstein & Crystal submitted comments in opposition to these lethal experiments. Primatologist Jane Goodall and 18 fellow scientists also sent a letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, warning that allowing lethal research on endangered species in exchange for monetary contributions would “open the floodgates” for similar research in the future, to the detriment of imperiled species.

William Moy Statten Russell (1925-2006)

UNITED KINGDOM Bill Russell, an esteemed leader in promoting alternatives to the use of animals in research, died on July 27. With his colleague Rex L. Burch, he introduced the concept of the “3Rs” in the groundbreaking 1959 book, The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique. Its guidelines found their way into the biomedical research establishment very gradually, but they are now recognized as both humane and as the essential ingredients of sound scientific methodology. Russell was a valued colleague and his work will remain an inspiration for students, researchers and scientists who regard animals in research laboratories as sentient beings who deserve to be treated with utmost care.

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At the Deep-Sea Biology Symposium held in England this summer, marine biologist Craig Smith told conference attendees that commercial whaling has reduced the number of whale carcasses by up to 95 percent, and many species of sea scavengers who would have been feeding on these skeletons are most likely extinct or going extinct in areas where intense whaling has persisted. “The possibility that whaling has caused species extinctions at the remote deep-sea floor gives me new appreciation for the scale of human impacts on the ocean,” Smith said.

Shahtoosh Shawls Seized

THAILAND In July, Thai police authorities seized three luxury stores in downtown Bangkok, confiscating over 250 shahtoosh shawls made from the fur of endangered Tibetan antelopes called chiru. A single shahtoosh requires killing three to five antelopes and commands very high prices on the black market. Credit in the successful sting operation has been given to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-Wildlife Enforcement Network, a new integrated network of law enforcement agencies spanning many nations. According to the trade monitoring network TRAFFIC, the investigation “reflects a bold shift in strategy in battling syndicates decimating Asia’s wild animals and plants.”

Caught in a War Zone

LEBANON Located near a Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut’s southern suburbs, an animal shelter run by Beirut for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (BETA) was partly destroyed by a missile, just days after violence erupted in the country in mid-July. Its 113 dogs and 100 cats quickly became traumatized by the constant shellings, and volunteers visiting the shelter risked their lives twice a day in order to care for them. Within two weeks, the animals were all safely moved to an abandoned farm east of the capital. Yet perhaps tens of thousands of companion animals are still facing a similar fate.

Mangabeys Saved from Lethal Research

UNITED STATES The Yerkes Primate Research Center in Atlanta, Ga. has withdrawn an amendment to its application for a permit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to kill endangered mangabeys as part of its ongoing AIDS-related experiments. The amendment sought approval to kill 50 of the animals. However, under the ESA, research facilities cannot engage in such activities unless they benefit the species in the wild. Yerkes, in its attempt to secure the amendment, offered to provide money toward a primate conservation project in the wild. The Animal Welfare Institute and other animal advocacy groups represented by the law firm Meyer Glitzenstein & Crystal submitted comments in opposition to these lethal experiments. Primatologist Jane Goodall and 18 fellow scientists also sent a letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, warning that allowing lethal research on endangered species in exchange for monetary contributions would “open the floodgates” for similar research in the future, to the detriment of imperiled species.

William Moy Statten Russell (1925-2006)

UNITED KINGDOM Bill Russell, an esteemed leader in promoting alternatives to the use of animals in research, died on July 27. With his colleague Rex L. Burch, he introduced the concept of the “3Rs” in the groundbreaking 1959 book, The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique. Its guidelines found their way into the biomedical research establishment very gradually, but they are now recognized as both humane and as the essential ingredients of sound scientific methodology. Russell was a valued colleague and his work will remain an inspiration for students, researchers and scientists who regard animals in research laboratories as sentient beings who deserve to be treated with utmost care.

The Wind Dilemma

UNITED STATES One environmental group is putting its electric bill where its mouth is. Audubon New York, the state’s largest bird conservation organization, recently announced plans to purchase the amount of wind power necessary to compensate for 100 percent of the energy used in its offices. The group picked a favorable site in Nebraska that impacts birds and other wildlife minimally, avoiding migration routes and densely forested areas. Given the destructiveness of fossil fuel-based power and the immediacy of global warming, we commend Audubon for its decision to help the environment and prevent the unnecessary harm to birds and other wildlife.
The New Serfdom

The statistics tell the story. In 1950, 95 percent of American farmers had at least a few chickens; rare was the farm on which you could not buy eggs. Today, barely over 2 percent of farms raise chickens commercially. In the overwhelming majority of these cases, those raising the chickens do not own them—the chickens are owned, processed and marketed by corporations. The corporations supply the feed the chickens eat and supervise every phase of production. Farmers are no more than cogs in an assembly line.

The contracts themselves are stunningly one-sided. The integrator arrogates to itself the right to arbitrarily amend or terminate. Payment is made according to a set formula based on pounds of meat delivered minus company financed “inputs.” But the integrator performs the calculations, and the books are closed to inspection. The grower has no recourse and accept “compulsory arbitration” in disputes with the company.

The economic results of such contracts are about as one would expect. Industry moguls like Don Tyson and “Bo” Pilgrim have grown fabulously rich, sometimes enjoying annual returns of over 50 percent. The average returns are far lower, but still very attractive by traditional standards. For example, the 10-year average annual return of the Standard and Poor’s 500 index was only 20 percent during the same period—yet Poultry-Wilmar—and Pilgrim’s Pilgrim have been far more successful. The annual returns for these two companies have been around 50 percent, far exceeding anything most investors would expect. Industry moguls like Don Tyson and “Bo” Pilgrim have grown fabulously rich, sometimes enjoying annual returns of over 50 percent. The average returns are far lower, but still very attractive by traditional standards. For example, the 10-year average annual return of the Standard and Poor’s 500 index was only 20 percent during the same period—yet Poultry-Wilmar—and Pilgrim’s Pilgrim have been far more successful. The annual returns for these two companies have been around 50 percent, far exceeding anything most investors would expect.

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How do men like Frank Perdue and Don Tyson gain control so rapidly and act with such ruthlessness in power? They have a partner—a silent partner, but one of enormous power: the US government.

Corporate chicken is cheap and plentiful, but the real costs of industrialized animal production are staggering. It has brought mass cruelty to farm animals, on a scale and to a degree unique in human history. It led to the elimination of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of independent farmers. And it has created such absurd economic distortions that the state of Iowa—in the heart of the nation’s “breadbasket”—imports 80 percent of the food its citizens eat.

Animals in confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) now generate 500 million tons of feces a year, three times more than America’s human population. Unlike human sewage that receives primary, secondary and tertiary treatment, this feces is left untreated. Some is strewn on the ground; some is lified and stored in field “lagoons” that blanket entire rural counties with nauseating stench. Agricultural runoff has created bights in Chesapeake and similar bights in Puerto Rico that blanket entire rural counties with nauseating stench.

No one, it seems, managed it more efficiently than those slave-tilled plantations of the New World to the present day. There is no way, absent federal loans and loan guarantees, to turn such ruthless impunity? They have a partner, but one of enormous power: the US government. At some time, the demand for organic food now exceeds supply. The giant fast food franchisers, scenting the wind, are pressuring their corporate suppliers to reform.

But for all these encouraging signs, the pervasive corruption that lubricated the corporate takeover to begin with is unresolved. All three branches of the federal government are infected; honest officials and judges are as Prometheus on his rock. Local victories are often drowned in state legislatures, reeking with corporate influence. Companies such as Smithfield and Cargill have shifted the main thrust of their takeovers to Europe and the third world. The system remains rigid in their favor, and there is no sign of general retreat.

The iron rule of agribusiness economics is to force others, ultimately the public, to pay much of the real costs. To achieve this, it is necessary to control the political and administrative processes. This is the sine qua non of Big Ag. It always was, through centuries of European feudalism, to the East India Company and the slave-tilled plantations of the New World to the present day.

No one, it seems, managed it more efficiently than those who industrialized meat production in the United States. A prolonged and revealing bit of megalomania, Tyson runs a “cancer cluster” in Prairie Grove, Ark., in the state’s “chicken belt,” is caused by arsenic from chicken litter. Whether this lawsuit will open the lid on an enormous scandal or be suppressed remains to be seen.

The course of meat processing should surprise no one who knows something of its earlier history or has even read The Jungle. But both factory farming and the contract system we must now confront began with domestic fowl—the earliest, most widely distributed, most benignly husbanded of farm animals. How can seemingly beneficial developments, beginning with the invention in 1900 of the electric hatchery by Granville Woods, the self-taught genius known as the “Black Edison,” have combined to such malignant result? A comprehensive history has yet to be written.

But our forbearers, with their sterner view of human nature, would hardly have been surprised. About slave owners, of whom those who now control Big Ag are surely spiritual descendents, Abraham Lincoln said this: “It is the same spirit that you work and toil and earn bread, and I’ll eat it.” No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

The generations before us could hardly have imagined the nature and magnitude of the planet’s reaction to industrial civilization, converging like a vast, fleering nimbus from all the future. But Lincoln, returning, would grasp at once that the Jeffersonian vision of a “nation of virtuous and independent farmers” that seemed to have found its substrate with the Homestead Act of 1862 has been subverted—and the “same tyrannical principle” is again enthroned.
Hawaiian Marine Life Needs Effective, Not Selective, Stewardship

P

romising “140,000 square miles of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands to receive our nation’s highest form of marine environmental protection,” President Bush announced on June 15 the establishment of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Monument. If properly enforced, this will provide a safeguard for the flora and fauna of the vast area for future generations. But the good news is tempered by notable exclusions in the small print, including an exemption for “all activities and exercises of the Armed Forces.” The timing of the monument announcement coincided with the seventh meeting of the United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea in New York, at which there was a discussion of ocean noise from all sources—including military sonar. Notably, the United States tried unsuccessfully to have the issue removed from the report of the meeting.

Key to the effectiveness of the monument is the money allotted for its management. Shortly after the Presidential proclamation, the Senate Appropriations Committee set aside $6.1 million for management and research in this area under the stewardship of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). A few weeks later, the House passed its appropriations bill and proposed the slashing of the 2007 NOAA budget by a whopping $500 million. The move was inconsistent with the recommendations of both the US Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission, the chairs of which issued a joint letter expressing their concern about the proposed funding cuts.

The irony of the monument’s military exemption was not lost on those paying close attention to Navy’s biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises that took place around the more populated Hawaiian Islands in July. RIMPAC exercises two years ago led to the live stranding of over 150 melon headed whales in Hanalei Bay, Kauai, most likely caused by the Navy’s sonar use, according to NOAA Fisheries. This year, the Navy applied for a permit for its deadly sonar use. NOAA Fisheries issued an inappropriate “incidental harassment authorization,” with some added (though still insufficient) mitigations.

The Navy should have applied for an “incidental take authorization,” since active sonar use has the potential for serious injury or mortality that could not be negated through mitigations. The added mitigations imposed by NOAA Fisheries included requiring a minute reduction in the level of the sonar when animals were spotted close to the source vessels. Yet the source levels would still have been many thousands of times greater than those that have caused mortality in previous cases, even if observers had been able to spot the diving animals and react in time. Active sonar use during the RIMPAC exercises was almost halted, until a settlement on a temporary restraining order was reached, and the Navy proceeded with nominal extra precautions—none of which assured the safety of marine animals. 🐧

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Please help us continue our fight by telling President Bush and the governor of Hawaii that the monument’s announced protections must address all human-induced threats and be properly enforced, and ask that protections be given to the other Hawaiian Islands as well.

President Bush
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Governor Linda Lingle
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
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