



# Animal Welfare Institute: *Celebrating 75 Years of Advocacy*

1951-2026



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Animal Welfare  
Institute

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# From the CEO/Executive Director

When Christine Stevens founded AWI on July 10, 1951, she envisioned an organization that charted a middle ground between researchers who insisted on unfettered access to animals used in laboratories (irrespective of welfare concerns), and antivivisectionists who rallied to abolish animal experimentation entirely.

The focus of AWI's work soon expanded to address many other areas of unnecessary animal suffering, including stolen cats destined for student dissections, pigs hoisted and butchered while still conscious, whales hunted and harpooned to the point of extinction, wild horses poisoned at waterholes, and beavers with limbs crushed by steel-jaw leghold traps.

Ever the pragmatist, Christine prioritized battles where meaningful progress could be achieved, armed with indispensable data. Elegant and gracious, she was also fearless and relentless. With the support of her husband, real estate executive and theatrical producer Roger Stevens, Christine capitalized on the couple's extensive political and art world connections to persuade those in power and advocates on the ground to take action to prevent human-inflicted animal suffering. As *Harper's Magazine* declared in 1962, "Within the span of a decade, she has managed to establish herself as America's leading protagonist for animal protection in all its sensible forms."

AWI's resolute efforts helped shepherd the passage of dozens of vital laws that remain in force today, including the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, the Animal Welfare Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Wild Bird Conservation Act. Globally, AWI was instrumental in achieving a moratorium on commercial slaughter of whales and a ban on the commercial trade of ivory to protect elephants from poaching, among other accomplishments.

As you will read in this special issue honoring AWI's 75th anniversary, from our early days as a skeletal staff in the Stevens's home to the current organization of 35 employees based in our Capitol Hill office and throughout North America, AWI has made great strides across key campaigns while defending against persistent attacks to weaken animal protections. This publication captures only part of AWI's success story, however. We encourage you to visit the anniversary web page for an extended timeline of major events in AWI's history, along with video interviews of former and current AWI leaders and staff who have helped cement Christine's legacy. Additionally, AWI's website, [awionline.org](http://awionline.org), provides an overview of the organization's eight programs and areas of particular focus—from unraveling the link between family violence and animal cruelty, to ensuring transparency and accountability in meat and poultry labeling, to nurturing the next generation of compassionate citizens, and much more.

Christine once said to a colleague, "If we weren't here, can you imagine how bad things would be today?" Although we still face enormous challenges, AWI stands ready—with our members and supporters—to continue improving the lives of animals over the next 75 years and beyond.

Sincerely,

*Susan Millward*



# Christine Stevens:

## *A Lasting Legacy*

**A** writer for the *Christian Science Monitor* once dubbed AWI founder Christine Stevens the “Duchess of the Defenseless.” Others christened her the “Mother of the Animal Protection Movement” in America. Yet, despite her significant impact, Christine is not widely discussed in the annals of animal protection history.

Of course, she would have it no other way. For Christine, the animals and their needless suffering always took center stage. Averse to personal accolades, she described her lifelong calling as “volunteer work in the area of animal

protection.” While it’s true that she didn’t take a salary, it is still a comically self-effacing understatement for one of the 20th century’s most effective animal welfare advocates. On behalf of the disenfranchised, penniless, and voiceless, Christine triumphed time and again. Using measured, scientifically grounded advocacy, she improved the lives of animals across the globe.

Duchess of the defenseless, mother of a movement, dedicated (50+ years) “volunteer”... how Christine came to embody all these roles can be explained in part by a set

*Highlights from  
AWI’s Work  
Through the Years*

**March 10, 1918**

Christine Gesell Stevens born,  
St. Louis, MO

**July 10, 1951**

Christine founds Animal Welfare  
Institute, with initial headquarters  
in Empire State Building

# “Animals everywhere are better off because of the indomitable spirit of one woman.”

of personality traits that, on the surface, seem somewhat at odds: She was passionate yet reasoned, tranquil yet relentless, graceful yet intimidating. According to AWI board chair Caroline Griffin, who recently authored a paper on Christine's life, “This is a woman who carried herself like a prima ballerina but was tough as nails. She never sought the spotlight. She was singularly focused on moving the needle for animals.”

“There was a strength within her, this steel, this determination... this woman who would never give up,” Dr. Jane Goodall, the pioneering primatologist, said upon her longtime friend's death in 2002. “Animals everywhere are better off because of the indomitable spirit of one woman.”

## BEGINNINGS

Born on March 10, 1918, in St. Louis, Christine grew up with both an appreciation of science and a respect for

animals in research. Her father, Dr. Robert Gesell, chaired the University of Michigan's Department of Physiology from 1923 to 1954 and was a trailblazer in the application of humane principles to experimentation on animals.

Christine was a University of Michigan sophomore in 1937 when she met Roger Stevens. Roger worked for a real estate firm during this time. He would go on to become a hugely successful real estate entrepreneur and renowned theater producer on Broadway before serving as the founding chair of both the Kennedy Center and the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, DC. And Christine and Roger's marriage would be a 60-year partnership built on mutual admiration, humility, and philanthropy.

Following World War II, Christine and her father were appointed to the board of the Humane Society of Ann Arbor, which, in Christine's telling, was run by a cruel,



## December 1951

AWI publishes first *Information Report* newsletter

## 1954

AWI publishes first edition of *Comfortable Quarters for Laboratory Animals*

## 1955

AWI awards first Schweitzer Medal to laboratory veterinarian Dr. Robert Bay

corrupt veterinarian who tied wires around dogs' mouths to prevent them from barking and "euthanized" them by jamming strychnine into their hearts. Christine helped force him out, but, with the proliferation of state seizure laws, she feared that the society would soon be required to surrender animals to experimental laboratories.

In 1951, she founded AWI and set up office in the Empire State Building—which a consortium led by Roger had purchased earlier that year. At the time, only two federal laws to protect animals existed, both related to shipping. In the first *Information Report* (precursor to the *AWI Quarterly*), the organization announced its presence and purpose:

*The Animal Welfare Institute has been established by a group of persons interested in the humane treatment of all animals. It is particularly interested at present in the welfare of animals used in laboratories. This is one aspect of humane work that has received little practical attention in the United States.*



Christine presenting Schweitzer Medal to Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey.



Christine at the American Humane Association Convention.

From the beginning, AWI adopted a pragmatic approach focused on incremental wins. Rather than call for an end to medical research using animals, Christine emphasized enforceable standards and imminently achievable actions to ease needless suffering. "It was passion that was hyper-focused on getting things done for animals," said Gail Eisnitz, a former writer and investigator for AWI who is now chief investigator for the Humane Farming Association. "That's what drove her."

Fiercely polarized opposition camps in this arena, however, were not won over. The American Medical Association called AWI "humaniacs," while antivivisectionists criticized Christine as inexperienced and naive. Christine, however, intuited that lawmakers would come to embrace this approach. In 1955, she launched the Society for Animal Protective Legislation (SAPL)—the first US organization dedicated to the passage and promotion of animal welfare legislation—to work side by side with AWI.

### April 19, 1956

Christine founds Society for Animal Protective Legislation (SAPL)

### August 27, 1958

Humane Methods of Slaughter Act signed into law

### 1960

AWI publishes *Humane Biology Projects*

Explaining AWI's major strength, Christine told a *Harper's Magazine* writer in 1962, "Never exaggerate to get a person excited and never be wrong. You lose your usefulness." While other organizations showered lawmakers with swag, Christine equipped them with facts. AWI's authoritative reports and books on a variety of topics, including *Comfortable Quarters for Laboratory Animals* and *Factory Farming: The Experiment That Failed*, were handed out to practitioners, administrators, and members of Congress.

### MR. AND MRS. STEVENS GO TO WASHINGTON

In 1972, AWI moved its office from New York City to Washington, DC, arriving in town not only well heeled, but also well connected. "Christine was a magnet for everybody in Washington and Roger was, too," recalled the late Craig Van Note, a whale protection expert who worked with Christine on wildlife conservation campaigns. "They became the most powerful power couple in Washington."

Legislators on both sides of the aisle invited Christine to attend closed-door meetings on animal protection issues.

Roger encouraged her to appear at high-powered social functions to advance AWI's platform. In Washington, party giving was a form of power brokering. At one Stevens-hosted event, attendees were asked to come dressed as an animal who needed help. Christine wore a raccoon mask and a limp paw draped in black to raise awareness about cruel traps.

While Christine preferred to focus attention away from herself, she understood the power of celebrity. Singer Willie Nelson, actor Tony Curtis, and actress and model Bo Derek were enlisted as ambassadors against horse slaughter, for instance. Christine hobnobbed with the cultural and political elite, but also visited with fur trappers, slaughterhouse workers, and lab technicians. "She didn't give up on anybody," said Louise Wright, a former researcher for AWI. "She just figured they'd come around."

Running AWI was a family affair. Roger served as treasurer. Dr. Gesell helped shape AWI's mission as a member of its Advisory Committee until his untimely death in 1954. Christine and Roger's daughter, Christabel, assisted with strategy and spent a decade on AWI's board. The family



Left: Christine with President Lyndon B. Johnson. Right: Christine with New Jersey Gov. Jim Florio.

### February 4, 1966

*Life* publishes "Concentration Camps for Dogs" based on AWI research

### August 24, 1966

Laboratory Animal Welfare Act signed into law

### October 15, 1966

Endangered Species Preservation Act signed into law



atmosphere extended to the small, tight-knit staff (and all their dogs), who worked mostly in the basement of the Stevens's sprawling Georgetown manse. Surrounded by stacks of papers and books, Christine commanded the living room in a cream-colored recliner in front of the fireplace, an original Monet of the Rouen Cathedral dominating one wall near a collection of ceramic animals.

Upon arriving in the morning, staff would find their fearless leader in a white nightgown putting raisins on the railing for birds and squirrels. Once dressed for the day, she always looked elegant and polished, wearing her hair in a low bun. She worked constantly, late into the night, and had high expectations of her employees.

Wendy McNally joined AWI as a research associate in 1999 and now works for AWI's Humane Education Program. She fondly remembers her time at Christine's house (Roger had died the year before at the age of 87): "There was a feeling like you're in this really special place." Christine wrote everything in longhand, Wendy recalls, often scribbling notes to herself to document the day's activities (and the behavior of her cats). A talented artist, she also hand-designed thank you notes and holiday cards with animal-themed artwork and verse related to current AWI campaigns.



Daily staff lunches featured homemade, multicourse meals and an international roster of speakers, including lawmakers, scientists, and animal protection leaders. The founder of Bats Conservation International, Merlin Tuttle, used to tote a bat in a carrier, spoon-feeding banana to the fuzzy guest in the parlor. Cleo the beagle would bark until Christine dropped strands of spaghetti on the Oriental rug. During one lunch, Jennifer Lonsdale, cofounder of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), remembered having a literary discussion about Jane Austen with a colleague until Christine politely interrupted: "I think we're not talking about those poor animals enough."

Top: Christine and Roger at their home.  
Bottom: Christine with Jane Goodall.

"Christine was my mentor and inspiration and one of the most important influences in my life," Lonsdale said, explaining that both Christine and Roger persuaded EIA to

## 1968

AWI publishes first edition of *Animals and Their Legal Rights*

## December 9, 1970

Horse Protection Act signed into law

## December 24, 1970

Laboratory Animal Welfare Act amended to cover more animals in research, renamed Animal Welfare Act

# “The breadth of issues she worked on, the depth at which she worked on them, and the determination and success she had are without measure...”

expand its investigations on whaling, the wild bird trade, and ivory trafficking and arranged high-profile fundraisers for the organization, including a concert by Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. In time, Lonsdale and her EIA cofounders, Allan Thornton and Dave Currey, all received Schweitzer Medals from AWI for outstanding achievement in the advancement of animal welfare.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a famed physician and humanitarian internationally known for his reverence for life, was among Christine’s heroes, along with Rachel Carson, an AWI Advisory Committee member and Schweitzer medalist who wrote the landmark 1962 book *Silent Spring* about the environmental impact of DDT and other pesticides.

Early on, AWI was one of only a handful of animal protection groups that recognized a need to marry animal welfare and conservation messages, according to Chris Heyde, former deputy director of government and legal affairs for AWI and a 19-year veteran of the organization. “What good is protecting animals if you let the environment beneath them get devastated?” Christine’s testimony before a House subcommittee in 1976, unfortunately, still rings familiar: “We are living in the most dangerous era the world has yet seen for the extinction of species.”

## THE NEXT 75 YEARS

Christine led by example. There she was, marching in front of the White House in the pouring rain to save the whales. Confined to a wheelchair later in life, she still donned a turtle costume to protest free trade rules that prioritized market access over animal welfare. Until shortly before her death at the age of 84—ending more than a half century at the helm—Christine continued to approve editions of the

*AWI Quarterly* from her bed. “She was a person that really changed what happened in the world,” Thornton of EIA said.

“The breadth of issues she worked on, the depth at which she worked on them, and the determination and success she had are without measure,” added Cathy Liss, who worked alongside Christine for 20 years, led the organization herself for 20 more, and continues to serve on AWI’s board. “My hope for AWI in the next 75 years is to continue its critical work to reduce the suffering and senseless death of animals at the hands of people while providing animals with a life worth living. Hold fast to the hard-won progress made over the past 75 years. Keep striving for compassion toward all living things.”

AWI continues to embody Christine’s legacy by adopting a measured, yet unyielding, approach to defending the bedrock animal protection laws for which she fought so tenaciously. While enacting meaningful federal legislation remains one of its primary goals, AWI follows through by pushing for sound regulations and sufficient funding and staffing to fully enforce them. With programs focused on animals in laboratories, farmed animals, equines, terrestrial and marine wildlife, companion animals, government affairs, and humane education, AWI seeks protections for all animals through the lens of animal welfare.

“Even though times have changed, I think our dogged, practical approach is as powerful today as it was 75 years ago,” said AWI’s current executive director and CEO, Susan Millward, who joined AWI in 2003 and was appointed to lead the organization upon Cathy’s retirement at the end of 2022. “It’s not just about the quick victories. It’s being in it for the long haul, making sure that we stay on message and on mission to help animals.” 🐾

1971

Save the Whales campaign launched

1972

AWI moves headquarters to Washington, DC

October 21, 1972

Marine Mammal Protection Act signed into law

# Madeleine Bemelmans:

## Advocate for Animals and Muse for *Madeline* Books



Madeleine and Ludwig.

Madeleine Bemelmans used to say that, upon her death, she would like her bones to be fed to the family's dogs—just so she could remain useful. That was quintessential Madeleine, according to her daughter, Barbara Bemelmans, and youngest grandchild, John Bemelmans Marciano. A shrewd and devoted advocate for animals and their protections, she led AWI's sister organization, the Society for Animal Protective Legislation (SAPL), during an especially fruitful period that resulted in some of the most important animal welfare and conservation laws in our nation's history, including the Animal Welfare Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Endangered Species Act.

When Christine Stevens launched AWI in 1951, certain tax-exempt nonprofit organizations were largely prohibited from lobbying legislators. She knew she needed to get laws passed, so in 1955, she founded SAPL—the first US organization dedicated to working for animal welfare legislation. Before long, SAPL had developed an extraordinary reputation, and lawmakers began reaching out to request information about humane slaughter, endangered species, leghold traps, and more. “Almost every animal welfare law on the books is owing to SAPL's leadership,” said AWI board member Cathy Liss, who led AWI for two decades after Christine died.

Christine understood the secret to successful lobbying: Know your subject, know the staff, and be relentless (even when senators and committee chairs are darting in the men's room to avoid you). Like Christine, Madeleine was intelligent, unwavering in her commitment to reducing animal suffering, and shirked the spotlight—preferring to focus on the issues. As John tells it, when his grandmother was asked to appear on the classic game show *To Tell the Truth*, she tried to negotiate a plug for AWI and its vital work.

Madeleine greatly admired Christine's tenacity and, like Christine, would often work late into the night without pay, Barbara said. One evening, she and her mother spent four hours putting stamps on thousands of envelopes containing letters to AWI supporters before driving them to the post office at midnight. Madeleine visited labs around

### March 3, 1973

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) opened for signature

### December 28, 1973

Endangered Species Act signed into law

### January 25, 1974

*Wall Street Journal* reports on AWI's analysis of animal cruelty at US science fairs

the country with Christine to document welfare violations, met with lawmakers, chatted up potential advocates while riding the train, and appeared on talk radio to marshal support for the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act of 1966. She once rode in the back of a taxi carrying a captive bolt pistol on her way to Congress to speak about inhumane slaughter and demonstrate the benefits of alternative stunning methods.

### BECOMING MADELINE

Madeleine (*née* Freund) was born in 1911 in New York City. As an adult, she initially took orders as a nun but left the convent to study comparative literature. In 1935, she married author and illustrator Ludwig Bemelmans. Four years later, *Madeline*—the first in Ludwig’s immensely popular series of children’s books about a small but fearless Parisian schoolgirl—was published. He named the lead character after Madeleine (but dropped the second “e” to maximize rhyming potential).

In the third book in the series, *Madeline and the Bad Hat*, the heroine embodies her namesake’s dedication to animal welfare: Madeline admonishes neighbor boy Pepito (a prank-pulling “bad hat” in Madeline’s eyes) for mistreating animals—but not before rescuing him from the dire consequences of his misdeeds. Pepito reforms, releases a “menagerie” of neighborhood animals he had captured and cooped up in his room, and even becomes a vegetarian. (Madeleine said she herself became a vegetarian after locking eyes with a cow on a cattle car in France.)

Madeleine would speak up for animals, but was quiet and humble by nature. She rarely discussed her work accomplishments with her family yet consistently led by example. “She would rent a horse in Central Park on Sundays and let it graze instead of riding it,” said Barbara, who has devoted her own life to raising and caring for horses. Barbara claims Madeleine always took the side of the family Yorkshire terrier in arguments.

Madeleine was also multifaceted: She read seven languages, spoke three, edited a collection of her husband’s



Christine and friends at Bemelmans Bar in New York City, where Ludwig’s murals adorn the walls.

work, and developed with Barbara three Madeline-themed jigsaw puzzles and one board game. According to Barbara, she was ahead of her time in speaking out against the environmental consequence of overpopulation and plastic pollution, as well. “She was very much an intellectual and, to her, cruelty to animals was inherently wrong,” said John.

An accomplished author and illustrator in his own right, John decided years ago to carry his grandfather’s legacy forward with his own series of *Madeline* books. Fortunately, in this second act, the plucky Parisian’s concern for animals has not dimmed: In *Madeline and the Cats of Rome*, she finds homes for a multitude of stray cats. And a board book John created for very young children is simply titled *Madeline Loves Animals*. Madeleine certainly did—and did what she could to make their lives better.

The scope of lobbying restrictions on tax-exempt organizations was clarified over time, and SAPL was merged into AWI in 2003. Christine had died the year before, and Madeleine—retired by this time—would pass the following year at the age of 93. A little bit of her lives on in Madeline. Her other legacy, like Christine’s, is written in the landmark animal welfare laws these two dedicated, compassionate women helped bring to fruition. 🐾

### April 22, 1976

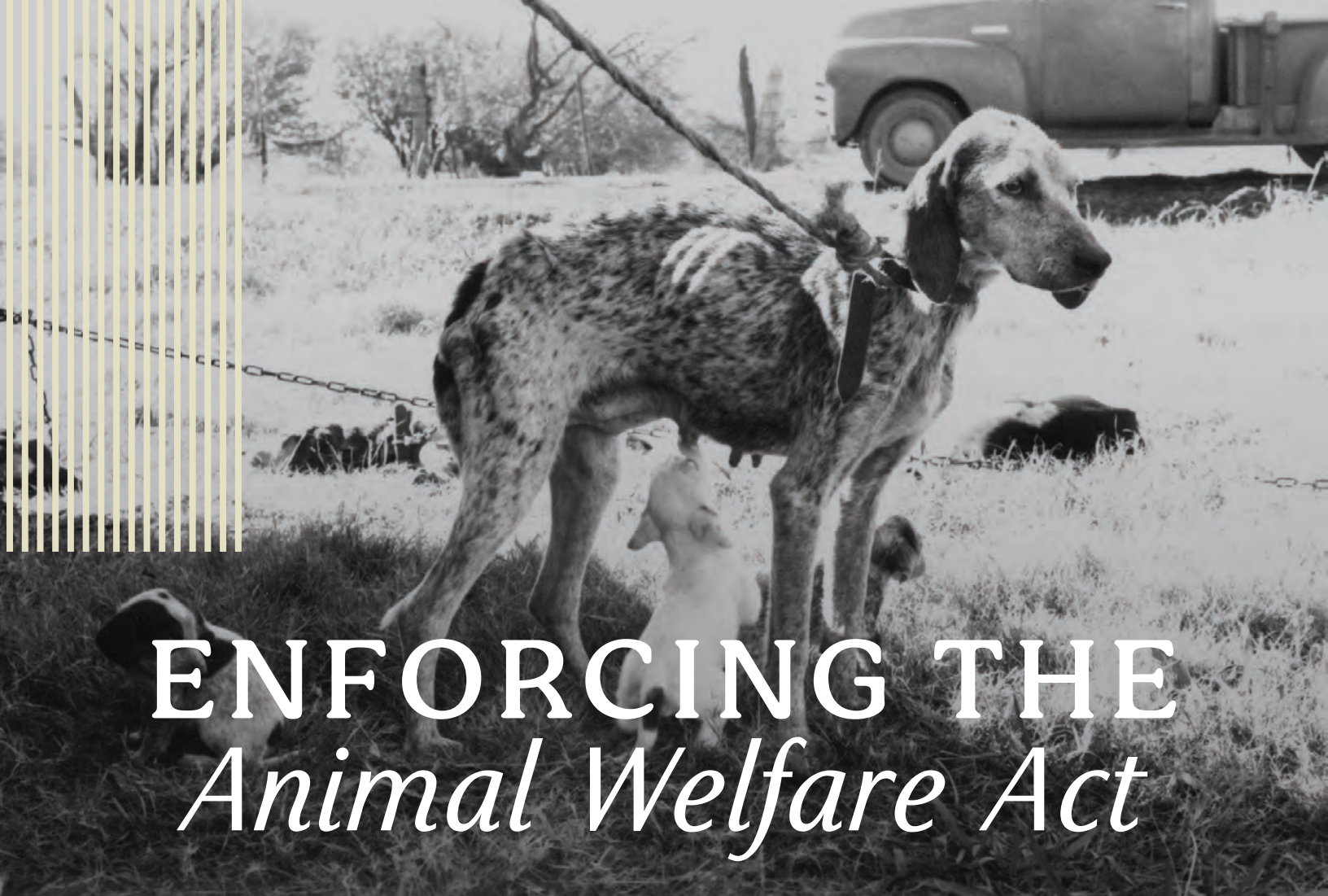
Animal Welfare Act amended to cover animals in more settings

### October 10, 1978

Humane Methods of Slaughter Act amended to extend coverage to all commercial slaughter plants

### August 15, 1979

Packwood-Magnuson Amendment to International Fishery Conservation and Management Act signed into law



# ENFORCING THE *Animal Welfare Act*

“**H**umanitarianism and science, far from being antagonistic, should complement each other if civilization is to progress,” Christine Stevens, AWI’s president, said at a regional meeting of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science in 1968.

From an early age, Christine had learned from her father, the prominent physiologist Dr. Robert Gesell, that animals used in experimentation could be cared for and treated with compassion without jeopardizing the research. Dr. Gesell’s respiration experiments on dogs, for instance, involved housing them in roomy pens with direct outdoor access, and fully anesthetizing them prior to death—

practices that were exceedingly rare at the time. He also vehemently opposed state legislation, promoted by the research industry, that required animal shelters to surrender unclaimed dogs and cats to experimental laboratories for painful tests.

Not long after launching, AWI began publishing manuals to educate researchers about best practices in the treatment and housing of animals in laboratories and urged the federal government to license and inspect laboratories. Animal research groups resisted—vehemently. Eventually, however, two influential magazine articles sparked national outrage and prompted Congress to act.



**1981**

AWI publishes *Whales vs. Whalers*, chronicling fight to end commercial whaling



**Summer 1981**

Future AWI president Cathy Liss starts internship at AWI



**July 23, 1982**

International Whaling Commission approves whaling moratorium

Christine was friends with *Life* magazine publisher Henry Luce. She shared with him a series of photographs taken by AWI laboratory animal consultant Dorothy Dyce of horrific conditions at the property of a Maryland dog dealer who sold animals to laboratories. In February 1966, *Life* published an exposé titled “Concentration Camps for Dogs,” eliciting more reader responses than any other article in the magazine’s history. Less than a year earlier, *Sports Illustrated* had published “The Lost Pets That Stray to the Labs,” an article about a Dalmatian named Pepper, who had disappeared from her family’s farm in Pennsylvania and was eventually sold to Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx, where she died in a botched surgery.

AWI and its sister organization, the Society for Animal Protective Legislation (SAPL; established in 1956 and merged with AWI in 2003) led the campaign to pass the first federal law against theft and mistreatment of animals, the

Laboratory Animal Welfare Act of 1966, and championed subsequent amendments to strengthen and broaden it.

To make the case, Christine and Dorothy spent years methodically documenting dealer and laboratory mistreatment of animals based on firsthand observations and inspection reports. They found rats with eyes collapsed from radiation, emaciated and trembling dogs who received no anesthesia before surgeries, and rabbits jammed into cages atop a pyramid of feces. At one laboratory, Dorothy discovered a dog still wearing his identification tag; she negotiated his rescue and returned him to his family.

Replacing a patchwork of state standards, the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act of 1966 established a national framework for the humane handling, care, treatment, and transport of dogs, cats, nonhuman primates, guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits by researchers and dealers. In 1970,



Left: Dogs at a dealer’s compound. Middle: A collie too weak to crawl to the frozen entrails scattered in the yard. Right: Dorothy Dyce with a starving dog she purchased from a dealer and nursed back to health. Photos by Stan Wayman.

## 1983

AWI publishes *Endangered Species Handbook*

## 1985

AWI publishes *Beyond the Laboratory Door*

## April 12, 1986

Betsy, a 20-foot-tall inflatable beaver, begins touring to promote campaign to ban steel-jaw leghold traps

# “Christine’s argument that healthy animals make better research subjects was so obvious.”

the law was amended and renamed the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), extending protections to other warm-blooded species intended for research, bred for commercial sale, exhibited to the public, or commercially transported.

One year later, however, the US Department of Agriculture undermined the law’s intent by issuing regulations that expressly excluded birds, rats, and mice from coverage under the AWA. Thus, the vast majority of animals used in research were denied the law’s protections. As the years went on, USDA administrators also continued to tolerate massive noncompliance with the AWA, as documented by AWI in the 1985 book *Beyond the Laboratory Door*.

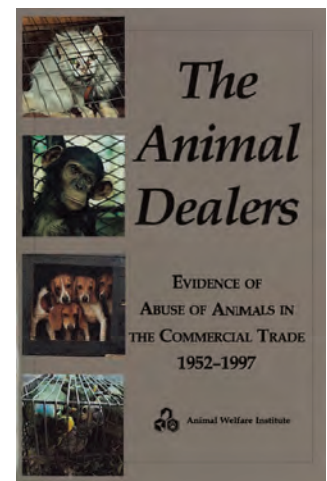
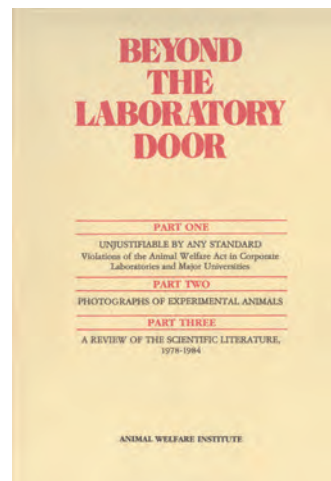
In 1984, during a shared elevator ride, Christine persuaded Rep. George E. Brown Jr. (D-CA), to introduce a House version of the Improved Standards for Laboratory Animals Act (ISLAA), a bill championed in the Senate by Sen. Bob Dole (R-KS). At a congressional hearing for the bill, Christine presented an AWI analysis of federal data, which showed that slightly less than a quarter of registered research facilities regularly met AWA standards. Buttressing her position was recent footage of horrendous mistreatment of baboons used in head injury experiments at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

“Christine’s argument that healthy animals make better research subjects was so obvious. It should be impossible to argue with,” recalled Louise Wright, who worked as a laboratory researcher for AWI. “You’re never going to get rid of abuses. But you just have to keep shining a light on it. That’s the job. That’s what Christine understood.”

Predictably, ISLAA faced tremendous industry opposition, yet AWI and other groups coordinated widespread grassroots support. In the end, it was incorporated into an omnibus

farm bill and signed into law two days before Christmas 1985. It added provisions to the AWA to minimize the pain and distress experienced by animals used for experimentation. It required research facilities to provide exercise opportunities for dogs and psychological enrichment for primates. Research institutions were also required to form “institutional animal care and use committees” to review research protocols and inspect lab facilities.

Dr. Viktor Reinhardt, former AWI laboratory animal advisor who now serves on AWI’s Scientific Committee, pioneered efforts to pair-house primates and authored AWI-published books on how to achieve better housing and handling of all animals used in research. Seeking to build public empathy for nonhuman primates, Christine helped fund Central Washington University’s Chimpanzee and Human Communication Institute (cofounded by primatologists Roger Fouts and his wife, Deborah), and visited its chimpanzee residents, including Washoe, the first nonhuman primate to learn sign language. Christine



1987

AWI publishes *Factory Farming: The Experiment that Failed*

October 17, 1989

CITES member nations approve ban on international commercial trade in ivory

1992

AWI cofounds Species Survival Network



Baboons being subjected to callous and inhumane head trauma experiments at the University of Pennsylvania.

“was remarkable. She wasn’t intimidated,” recalled Roger Fouts, who served on AWI’s board of directors for seven years. “She had very reasonable questions that made it very difficult for some of the scientists to answer.”

ISLAA’s passage represented one of AWI’s great achievements, but it was six years before the USDA finalized regulations to enforce the law. Dismayed by the department’s delay, Christine did not mince words. In 1988, while serving on a National Research Council committee to examine the use of laboratory animals in biomedical and behavioral research, she issued a minority statement

in which she criticized the committee’s report for refusing “to face the widespread, ingrained problem of unnecessary suffering among the millions of laboratory animals used yearly in our country.”

Later, AWI published *The Animal Dealers: Evidence of Abuse of Animals in the Commercial Trade 1952-1997*, a shocking exposé of cruelty, fraud, and negligence in the trade of dogs, cats, primates, birds, and reptiles. The book described how USDA inspectors, charged with visiting and reporting on the treatment of animals in research facilities and dealer operations, often complained that their recommendations for strict enforcement were not followed by supervisory staff, due to outsized influence from the industries they were supposed to be regulating.

To spotlight enforcement failures, AWI staff tracked the journey of animals collected from pounds, farms, and bunchers (unlicensed dealers). In early years with the organization, former AWI president Cathy Liss visited more than 50 animal auctions, dealers, and laboratories. One irate dealer chased her and a colleague through Iowa’s backroads after they took photographs of his operation; they emerged unscathed.

After a long legal battle, the USDA finally agreed in late 2000 to amend the AWA regulations to extend AWA coverage to birds, rats, and mice—correcting its 1971 misstep. The victory, alas, was short lived. An appropriations rider blocked the USDA from acting on the agreement in 2001, and in 2002, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) slipped a provision into the omnibus farm bill to expressly exclude birds, as well as most rats and mice, bred for research from the definition of “animal” in the AWA itself—essentially altering the underlying law to fit the 1971 regulations rather than correcting the regs to fit the law.

AWI has continued to document the USDA’s failure to enforce the AWA, confiscate neglected and abused animals, and pull licenses from chronic violators. In 2016, after AWI published scathing reports on egregious AWA violations involving goats and rabbits at Santa Cruz

### October 23, 1992

Wild Bird Conservation Act signed into law

### October 26, 1992

International Dolphin Conservation Act signed into law

### November 8, 1994

First Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Awards presented by AWI at CITES plenary meeting



Top: Goat at Santa Cruz Biotechnology Inc.  
Bottom: Dogs at facility of Daniel Gingerich.

Biotechnology Inc.—one of the world’s largest research antibody suppliers—the company was finally stripped of its research registration and dealer license and assessed an unprecedented \$3.5 million civil penalty.

In 2021, AWI chronicled the case of notorious Iowa dog breeder Daniel Gingerich, who was cited more than 200 times in 25 inspection reports before the department temporarily revoked his license and referred the case to the Department of Justice. Gingerich was finally fined \$500,000, forced to surrender over 500 dogs, and had his license permanently revoked.

That same year, AWI repeatedly raised concerns about abysmal conditions at Moulton Chinchilla Ranch—supplier

of chinchillas for experimentation—publicizing inspector reports of animals’ eyes bleeding and oozing fluid, collars embedded in animals’ necks, protruding bones, and more. Once the USDA finally took action, an administrative law judge described the animal welfare violations as “absolutely astounding” and permanently revoked owner Dan Moulton’s dealer license.

Today, AWI is urging passage of the Animal Welfare Enforcement Improvement Act, a bill to end the USDA’s practice of issuing licenses to dealers and exhibitors who chronically fail to comply with the law’s minimum welfare standards. The USDA also must rebuild its staff to fulfill the congressional mandate for humane treatment of animals at dealers, zoos, circuses, laboratories, carriers, and handlers.

Enactment of the AWA, as well as of ISLAA and other amendments to strengthen the law—was a monumental victory. Sadly, much of the ensuing decades have been marked by an ongoing struggle against the feeble enforcement efforts keeping this landmark law from manifesting its full animal protection potential. AWI will continue to fight for reforms and call out the unconscionable failures to hold scofflaw businesses and research institutions accountable for abusing animals under their care. 🐾



Chinchilla at Moulton Chinchilla Ranch.

## 1996

AWI submits *The Case Against Random Source Dog and Cat Dealers* report to House subcommittee

## 1997

AWI publishes *The Animal Dealers: Evidence of Abuse of Animals in the Commercial Trade 1952-1997*

## 2000

AWI launches Refinement Database of studies to improve conditions for animals in laboratories

# BATTLING BIG AG

## to Advance Humane Slaughter



Years before the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) was enacted in 1958, Christine Stevens attended an animal protection conference that presented footage of a common slaughterhouse practice at the time. Pigs were shown being hoisted upside down by one leg, without prior stunning, and screaming as knives plunged into their throats. The film documented—with devastating clarity—the cruel demise of animals raised for food in this country. As Christine later recalled, people began rushing out as fast as they could. Many, she said, had incorrectly assumed that Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel, *The Jungle*, which exposed shocking conditions in the Chicago meatpacking industry, "had taken care of all this."

In industrial agriculture, slaughter signifies the end of an animal's short, and often immensely painful, life. AWI believes that each phase—from breeding to rearing to transport to slaughter—offers an opportunity to choose compassion over cruelty. Two years after founding AWI, Christine began writing about advancements in more humane slaughter methods, such as the use of carbon dioxide gas and captive bolt pistols

to render animals insensible to pain prior to killing them. In 1955—the year Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-MN) introduced the first-ever federal humane slaughter bill—Christine wrote: "It has been a great disappointment to humanitarians that not one single American packing plant, except the Hormel Company which invented it, has installed a CO<sub>2</sub> tunnel for anesthetizing hogs prior to slaughter."

AWI and the Society for Animal Protective Legislation, a companion organization established in 1956 to focus on legislation, worked in lockstep with Humphrey to secure passage of the HMSA, despite formidable opponents—the country's largest meatpackers and the US Department of Agriculture. USDA officials asserted that "mandatory federal legislation would not be the best way to assure continued real progress," which "can best be accomplished by private initiative and individual ingenuity in the traditional American manner." The American Meat Institute, for its part, called the legislation "premature," although humane slaughter laws had been on the books in most countries for a quarter century or more—82 years in Switzerland's case.



### 2002

AWI launches Laboratory Animal Refinement and Enrichment Forum (LAREF)



### October 10, 2002

Christine Stevens dies at the age of 84; Cathy Liss appointed president



### March 2003

AWI relocates headquarters to Alexandria, VA



## “If I went by mail, I’d think no one was interested in anything but humane slaughter.”

Having never set foot in a slaughterhouse, Christine resolved to visit slaughter facilities across Europe and in Chicago. “This was a woman who did her homework who went places where women didn’t go,” remarked Caroline Griffin, who chairs AWI board of directors. As Christine recounted in a 1962 *Harper’s Magazine* piece, one of the Chicago workers shook her hand but said nothing. “Perhaps it was my imagination,” she said, “but that silent handshake seemed to say, ‘Do something about this... I work here and I can’t.’ I don’t even remember what he looked like, but I can still feel his grip.”

Christine and AWI staff helped secure hundreds of editorials in the media in favor of the HMSA, staked out lawmakers’ offices to deliver factual arguments—devoid of emotion or exaggeration—and urged the public to flood elected officials’ mailboxes to the point that President Eisenhower commented: “If I went by mail, I’d think no one was interested in anything but humane slaughter.”

During a 1957 congressional hearing, AWI exhibited four higher-welfare stunning instruments that were readily available to meatpackers yet rarely used. Two months before Congress approved the HMSA, Gerald W. Siegel—

advisor to then-Senate majority leader Lyndon Johnson (D-TX)—underscored Christine’s influential tactics in a letter to future Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas: “I surrender,” he wrote. “Mrs. Stevens and I visited at some length yesterday on the humane slaughter bill. She is as persuasive as she is charming.” As Christine would later explain: “You see, the secret of lobbying is to wear the man down. Keep on. Don’t let an issue die.”

On July 29, 1958, Christine, her husband, and daughter watched from the gallery as Humphrey commanded the floor for eight hours before the Senate finally voted 72-9 to pass the bill. Signed into law less than a month later, the HMSA required all meat companies selling to the US government to provide rapid and effective stunning prior to the killing of cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, and other livestock, except in the case of slaughter for religious or ritual purposes. *New York Times* coverage of the vote chronicled how AWI helped marshal forces to aid Humphrey, in part, by arguing that big packers had been renegeing on promises to adopt more humane practices for the past two decades.

AWI and allies resisted multiple attempts to sabotage the HMSA, including a substitute bill that simply encouraged

### July 1, 2003

SAPL merges with AWI

### December 2003

Future CEO Susan Millward joins AWI staff

### 2006

AWI launches Christine Stevens Wildlife Awards to fund research on human-wildlife conflict resolution

further study of the issue. (They also pushed for, but failed to secure, a more expansive bill that included poultry.) Christine then took the fight to the states, where smaller operations were exempt from federal control and inspection. Over time, AWI expanded its farmed animal focus to address inhumane husbandry practices—such as gestation and farrowing crates that severely restrict pigs’ movement—and to promote family farmers that adhered to higher-welfare standards.

In 1978, AWI helped secure HMSA amendments that extended the requirements of the 1958 law to all commercial US slaughter establishments—not just those selling to the US government—as well as to livestock imported for meat. The amendments also empowered USDA inspectors to stop the slaughter line if they observed violations.

And yet, the cruelty continued. *Slaughterhouse*, a 1997 book by Gail Eisnitz—a former writer and investigator

for AWI—documented how fully conscious pigs and cows were being beaten, strangled, scalded, skinned, and dismembered. In her latest book, *Out of Sight*, Eisnitz recalls that “Christine expressed deep disappointment over the fact that the law she had fought so hard to pass was going altogether unenforced by the USDA.”

In 1998, AWI executive director (and later president) Cathy Liss presented a detailed resolution to the US Animal Health Association’s Animal Welfare Committee calling for strong enforcement of the HMSA. The association, which represents federal and state regulatory veterinarians across the nation, instead adopted a weaker resolution after the Livestock Marketing Association objected to nearly everything AWI proposed.

A congressional resolution declaring that the HMSA should be fully enforced to prevent the needless suffering of animals was not passed until 2002. The resolution further called on the secretary of agriculture to track violations and report them to Congress annually.

Today, the HMSA applies to roughly 166 million livestock killed each year, while still excluding poultry numbering in the billions. Since 2008, AWI has published reports based on rigorous analysis of government records that consistently show egregious abuse of farmed animals at slaughter and inadequate enforcement by the USDA. AWI and allies have filed multiple petitions and lawsuits over the years to compel proper enforcement, calling on the USDA to prevent rough handling of pigs too sick or injured to walk at slaughterhouses, spare goats and lambs from deplorable conditions in holding pens, and install cameras to enable inspectors to monitor the stunning of pigs with carbon dioxide gas. The USDA chooses instead to encourage voluntary industry adoption of humane handling best practices. The department, in essence, is taking the same “let industry solve it” stance it took in opposing passage of the HMSA in 1958—a strategy almost as ineffectual in the absence of enforcement as it was in the days when there was no law to enforce. 🐾



Christine displays humane stunning device to Sen. Humphrey.

## 2006

AWI publishes *The Boy Who Loved All Living Things: The Imaginary Childhood Journal of Albert Schweitzer*

## 2006

AWI launches online database of restaurants that serve shark fin soup to encourage boycott

## 2006

AWI launches the Compassion Index of legislators’ animal welfare voting records

# ERADICATING STEEL-JAW TRAPS— *“One of the Cruellest Inventions of Man”*

In the mid-1950s, AWI was a new organization focusing its limited resources on combating the most brutal practices that caused inexcusable suffering in animals. In a 1955 *Information Report*, AWI condemned the steel-jaw leghold trap as “one of the cruelest inventions of man.” The jaws of these devices clamp down with bone-crushing force, inflicting extreme pain. Victims will tear ligaments, break teeth, and even chew off their own limbs in the struggle to free themselves.

The World Veterinary Association, the National Animal Care and Control Association, and the American Animal Hospital Association all agree that steel-jaw leghold traps are inhumane, and more than 100 countries have banned them. Yet, the vast majority of US trappers continue to use them. Their continued popularity stems from the fact that they can catch animals of nearly any size and can be deployed on land or in water. However, due to their nonselective nature, the traps also catch nontarget animals, including raptors,



Left: Christine testifying at a congressional hearing. Right: Cathy Liss using a pen to demonstrate the force of a steel-jaw trap.

2006

AWI founds Whales Need US coalition

November 3, 2006

AWI launches Animal Welfare Approved farm certification program

2007

AWI cofounds Homes for Horses Coalition

threatened and endangered species, and domestic dogs and cats. People have also been seriously injured.

To increase awareness about these barbaric devices, AWI promoted Dr. F. Jean Vinter's definitive book, *Facts About Furs*, first published in 1957 by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare in the United Kingdom (and republished by AWI in 1973 and 1980). The year 1957 also saw the first federal bill introduced to mandate the use of only "acceptable" traps on federal lands; a similar bill was introduced in the next three sessions of Congress. A number of federal measures have been introduced in the decades since—some aimed at preventing use of steel-jaw traps on federal land; others seeking to ban interstate commerce in the traps and furs from animals caught with them.

Christine Stevens frequently testified in federal, state, and local forums in support of commonsense reforms to reduce the suffering of trapped animals. One such instance occurred in 1984, when she testified in support of a federal bill to prohibit interstate shipment of furs obtained through use of steel-jaw leghold traps. At the hearing, a cat, a dog, and a hawk—each of whom had lost a leg in a steel-jaw trap—provided stark evidence of the device's brutality.

AWI staff worked with trap inventors and researchers in the United States, Canada, and Sweden to learn more about the various available devices and encourage development of ways to reduce animal suffering in traps. AWI's Tom Garrett authored three reports on various types of traps, outlining the characteristics of each, including both positive and negative attributes. AWI also demonstrated steel-jaw traps and less cruel alternatives to state legislators, members of Congress, and EU officials to show what hundreds of millions of furbearers in the United States have endured and to build awareness of available alternatives.

Building public awareness of the issue has sometimes involved a bit of street theater. Betsy—a 20-foot-tall inflatable beaver covered in faux fur and designed by John Perry (who also created a giant inflatable whale for the Save the Whales campaign)—began touring the country in 1986. During a



Betsy on display in Paris.

1997 European tour, the artist himself chauffeured her down the Champs Élysées in (though mostly out) of a tiny Fiat.

At the state level, Florida, South Carolina, Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, Arizona, Colorado, Rhode Island, and New Jersey have prohibited all or most use of steel-jaw traps. A particularly noteworthy success was New Jersey's 1984 enactment of its landmark law to prohibit the sale, possession, and use of steel-jaw leghold traps in the state. During hearings, AWI's Cathy Liss (then a research associate at the dawn of a long and storied career with the organization), invited any trapper in the room to let her spring a steel-jaw trap on his hand and leave it there for the remainder of the hearing. A man volunteered, but he was unable to stand the pain and removed it in less than five minutes. She then set a Swedish foot snare off on herself—without adverse effect—to highlight the dramatic difference between steel-jaw traps and their alternatives.

Sadly, in 2015 the New Jersey Fish and Game Council carved out an exception to the ban by approving the use of "enclosed" steel-jaw leghold traps on raccoons and opossums. Such traps feature openings just large enough to

## 2008

AWI publishes *Pablo Puppy's Search for the Perfect Person*

## May 2008

AWI releases *Crimes Without Consequences: The Enforcement of Humane Slaughter Laws in the United States*

## December 2008

AWI relocates headquarters to 900 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Washington, DC

allow these species to reach for bait within—and thus spring the steel jaws on their highly sensitive feet. Although AWI and allies called attention to the unconscionable suffering this caused—and the fact that both species are easily caught in box traps—the council’s decision was allowed to stand.

In the mid-1980s, in response to a mounting movement in Europe to ban imports of furs acquired using cruel traps, Canada’s Department of External Affairs (later renamed the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development) hired a PR firm and issued a report suggesting that trappers recast themselves as a band of eco-conscious souls that practiced “relatively humane” trapping while “augmenting or maintaining nature’s balance.” A name floated for a potential organization to represent trapping interests was “Friends of Nature.”

Soon thereafter, the Fur Institute of Canada announced plans to develop supposedly humane trapping standards for each furbearer species. With Canada leading the charge, a process emerged to develop a set of “humane trapping standards” through the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The hope was to have these standards provide cover for the types of steel-jaw traps already in use.

During this time, AWI was actively campaigning in the European Union in support of a measure to ban the use of steel-jaw traps in EU countries and fur imports from countries that continued to allow their use. A significant victory was achieved on November 4, 1991, when the Council of the European Communities (now the Council of the European Union) adopted Council Regulation (EEC) No 3254/91, which banned the use of steel-jaw leghold traps within the European Union. Imports, though, would be allowed from nations that had *either* banned the traps *or* adopted “internationally agreed humane trapping standards.”

At that point, ISO’s humane trapping standards had not yet been finalized. In 1992, Cathy (AWI’s executive director by then) joined the US Technical Advisory Group representing the United States on the ISO trapping standards committee. With little hope of swaying the US position, she turned her attention to the other national delegates. Her concerted efforts helped secure a vote to remove the word “humane” from the description of the standards—dashing North American trappers’ original hope of sanitizing steel-jaw traps via an ISO “humane standards” label.

In the aftermath of this, however, the European Union faced intense diplomatic pressure and threats of a challenge to the regulation under free trade rules. Within four years, sadly, it capitulated—entering side agreements with the United States, Canada, and Russia that substantially eased import restrictions and undermined the regulation’s original purpose: to have the European Union rid itself not only of these exceedingly cruel devices but also of its participation in commerce that supports their use elsewhere.

AWI remains determined to reduce the long-drawn-out pain and fear caused to animals in steel traps (as Christine frequently described it). At present, AWI is seeking to build support in Congress for the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act, which would ban possession and use of steel-jaw leghold and other body-gripping traps within the National Wildlife Refuge System. 🐾



A dog tests out a pair of temporary prosthetic limbs after losing his back legs to a trap. Photo by NMDOG.

## 2010

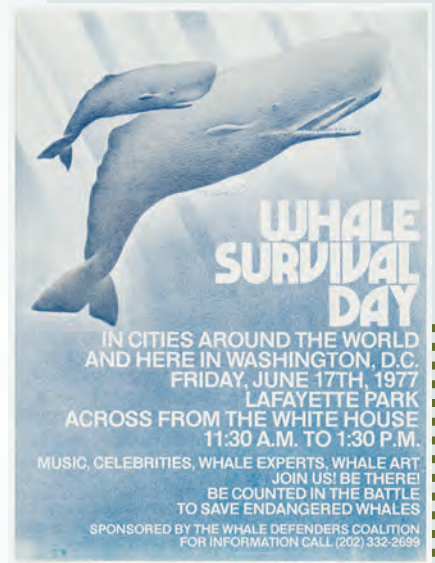
AWI partners with the Humane Education Network on “A Voice for Animals” contest

## 2010

AWI publishes *Kamie Cat’s Terrible Night* and *The Magic of Touch*

## August 14, 2011

AWI releases *A Consumer’s Guide to Food Labels and Animal Welfare*



# Saving Whales from Commercial Slaughter

In December 1978, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) held a special meeting in Tokyo. Inside the Japanese Foreign Ministry, government representatives haggled over whale-killing quotas. Outside, ballerina and choreographer Martita Goshen glided up and down a line of pro-whaling protesters, poignantly enacting a whale's slow demise after an explosive harpoon ripped through the animal's body. The "scorn when she began changed to silence as she expressed joy, fear, and finally death of the whale," AWI's *Information Report* noted at the time.

By that point, intense public pressure emanating from the Save the Whales movement, led by AWI and other animal welfare and conservation groups, had helped save tens of thousands of whales from being killed worldwide each year. Nevertheless, it would be another four years before

the IWC adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling of all large whale species in all waters, and another four years before it took full effect in 1986. By that time, scientists estimated, most whale populations had lost 66 to 90 percent of their pre-whaling abundance. Some of the most targeted populations—such as blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere—had declined by 99 percent.

## BUILDING COALITIONS

In the early 1970s, AWI began calling for a ban on commercial whaling, warning that many whale species, including humpback whales and gray whales, had been driven to the brink of extinction. A 1970 edition of the *Information Report* stated that Russia and Japan were responsible for 85 percent of the whales killed in hunts each year, and two American companies were importing and processing 20 percent of the oil.

## October 3, 2011

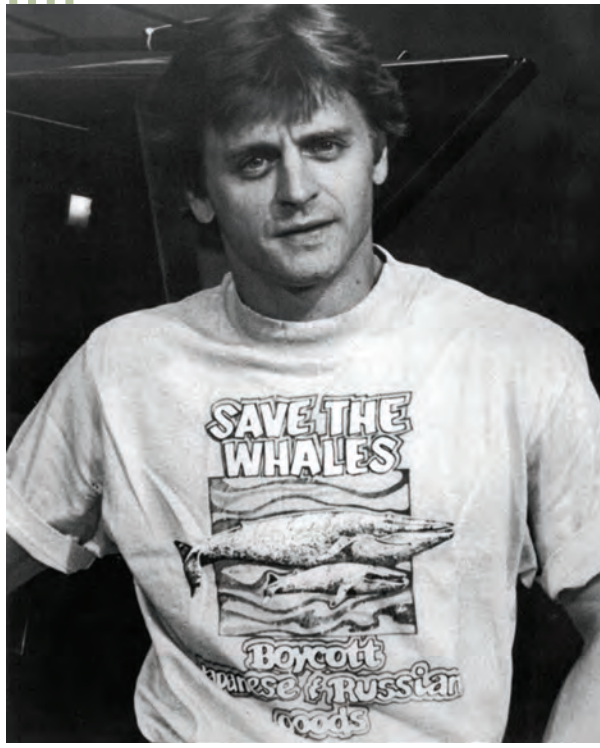
AWI establishes Safe Havens for Pets Mapping Project (now Safe Havens for Pets)

## 2013

AWI begins tracking US barn fires to highlight need for safety measures

## 2014

AWI and Kenya Wildlife Service publish *A Dangerous Life*



Mikhail Baryshnikov.

In 1972, AWI's president, Christine Stevens, together with Craig Van Note, an investigative environmental journalist, established the Monitor Consortium, a coalition of animal welfare and environmental groups that promoted wildlife conservation and served as a leading voice against commercial whaling. That same year, the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm overwhelmingly voted to recommend a 10-year moratorium on commercial whaling, placing immense political pressure on the IWC to help whale populations recover.

In another pivotal move, on October 21, 1972, President Nixon signed the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), which effectively ended US involvement in commercial whaling. The MMPA prohibits harassing, hunting, capturing, or killing marine mammals without federal authorization and bans the importation of any whale part or product. Christine testified before Congress in favor of the MMPA, playing a haunting excerpt from *Songs of the Humpback Whale*, a 1970 album produced by biologist and AWI Scientific Advisory Committee member, Dr. Roger Payne.

"She just had good instincts. She knew when not to talk," said AWI board chair Caroline Griffin. "She knew the power of performance and emotion." The Save the Whales movement harnessed that power by launching a sophisticated public relations strategy worldwide, relying on evocative imagery and celebrity spokespeople to cultivate empathy for whales and support for marine mammal conservation. Wearing an AWI "Save the Whales" T-shirt, ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov urged a boycott of goods from Japan and Russia. Actors Gregory Peck and Jack Lord narrated public service announcements. AWI took out full-page ads in major newspapers and sold drawings and prints of whales by artist Richard Ellis to raise money for the campaign.

Perhaps the most iconic Save the Whales image was "Flo," an inflatable 110-foot-long humpback whale balloon (and her "Little Flo" offspring) designed by sculptor John Perry. Years before every other car dealership had an inflatable gorilla or neon air dancer to drive foot traffic, Christine recognized that Flo would be a peaceful, relatively inexpensive vehicle to capture the media's attention, Perry recalled.



Save the Whales protest in London.

## February 17, 2014

Federal Bureau of Investigation adds Animal Cruelty category to National Incident-Based Reporting System

## May 14, 2014

AWI releases *Label Confusion* report on deceptive animal welfare claims on food packaging

## 2015

AWI publishes *Monkeys Don't Wear Diapers: Heartwarming and Heartbreaking Stories from a Monkey Sanctuary*

Among her more famous stops, Flo flew in front of the Statue of Liberty, with the press corps trailing her in a ferry. When Prime Minister Masayoshi Ōhira of Japan visited President Carter in 1979, a 21-gun salute greeted him on the White House South Lawn. After the smoke had cleared, Flo floated up with a banner imploring “peace for the whales” in Japanese, Perry said. For a time, Flo even replaced actress Sofia Loren as the face of Honda’s gas-powered minibike campaign.

In order to play a role in the deliberations of the IWC, Christine and husband Roger—AWI’s longtime treasurer—began attending commission meetings regularly as accredited observers. Socially and politically savvy, Christine organized side receptions for key IWC commissioners, including pro-whaling representatives, to present scientific evidence to refute sustainable hunt claims. After anti-whaling protesters swarmed London’s Trafalgar Square and scaled statues, the IWC opted to move 1977’s plenary meeting from that city to Canberra, Australia’s relatively remote inland capital. Christine and the conservationists followed.

Since that time, AWI has maintained a consistent presence at IWC meetings around the world. AWI has also financially supported the commission’s various conservation and animal welfare initiatives, hosted strategy sessions for the NGO community, prepared briefing documents to inform decision-making, and more.

AWI believes all whaling to be inherently cruel. Even the most advanced commercial whaling methods cannot guarantee an instantaneous death, leaving whales to suffer agonizing pain as they are hauled in or after they are lost at sea. Scientists agree that whales and other cetaceans provide enormous ecological benefits, and global whale-watching tourism is estimated to generate billions of dollars in annual revenue. The whaling industry, by contrast, is unsustainable. Taxpayers in whaling nations have been bankrolling government subsidies for whaling operations and marketing efforts that encourage whale meat consumption, while plummeting public demand



AWI staff at IWC 2011 in the British Isles.

means that meat stockpiles are sometimes being offloaded as dog food.

The IWC’s commercial whaling moratorium set a benchmark in the wildlife protection movement. Four decades later, it remains one of the most effective international conservation measures, in part because it led to a global ban on trade in whale products. Its Scientific Committee consists of the world’s most eminent marine mammal scientists and works on myriad whale conservation matters. Still, more than 45,000 whales have been killed under objections/reservations and in special permit hunts since the moratorium took effect, with minke whales as the primary target. To this day, three countries—Japan, Norway, and Iceland—collectively hunt more than 700 whales annually.

Apart from campaigning against this continued commercial whaling, AWI works diligently to protect marine mammals from other serious threats, such as entanglement in fishing gear, vessel strikes, ocean noise, habitat destruction, and pollution. AWI remains committed to securing a safer world for whales and all marine mammals. We are optimistic about the IWC’s future and will continue to support its vital work. 🐾

### March 17, 2016

SeaWorld announces end to orca breeding program

### June 26, 2018

US Court of International Trade orders ban of seafood imports from Mexico caught with gillnets that kill vaquitas

### December 20, 2018

Provisions of Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act signed into law as part of omnibus farm bill

# TACKLING WILDLIFE TRADE

## to Preserve Global Biodiversity



In 1969, Sen. Philip A. Hart (D-MI), a staunch environmentalist who chaired the Senate Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources, and the Environment, credited Christine Stevens as “our source of information and our conscience with respect to man’s treatment of animals.”

Throughout the 1960s, AWI was one of the few organizations campaigning for comprehensive protections for critically imperiled species. An initial victory came with passage of the first federal law to protect endangered species: the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966, a stepping stone on the path to passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Christine also testified before a House subcommittee in support of the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969, which strengthened and broadened the earlier law’s protections, including by extending them to species outside the United States.

Christine recognized that one of the biggest threats to vulnerable wildlife populations is the lucrative global trade

in live animals, animal parts, and products derived from animals. In early 1973, Christine and her husband Roger (AWI’s treasurer) attended the three-week plenipotentiary conference in Washington, DC, that produced the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This treaty—aimed at ensuring that international trade in wild animal and plant species does not threaten their survival—has since been ratified by over 180 nations and the European Union and currently protects nearly 40,000 species of animals and plants.

CITES is implemented through national laws that enable parties to enforce the treaty’s trade protections. The US law serving that purpose is the ESA, enacted in December 1973 to preserve endangered and threatened species and the habitats on which they rely. In Christine’s testimony before Congress to rally support for the bill, she had stated, “To turn the tide of extinction, a substantial edifice of rational protection has to be built. Each building block must be solid and strong.” Today, the ESA remains one of the strongest and most effective conservation laws in the world.

**November 25, 2019**

Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act signed into law

**December 20, 2022**

Big Cat Public Safety Act signed into law

**December 23, 2022**

Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act signed into law



Left: Confiscated ivory. Right: Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Award recipients in 2013.

Christine was acutely aware that sprawling investigations into both legal and illegal wildlife trade activities could shift public perception and lead to meaningful enforcement. In the 1980s, AWI began providing funding for detailed reports by the UK-based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) that exposed rampant poaching of African elephants. Highlighting information from these reports, AWI and EIA were instrumental in obtaining the historic 1989 listing of the African elephant on CITES Appendix I—resulting in a ban on international commercial trade in ivory—following an organized consumer boycott.

AWI and EIA also collaborated to expose the devastating impacts of the international trade in wild-caught birds, such as green-winged macaws and endangered African grey parrots. In 1985, delegates to the fifth meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP5) received two AWI-sponsored reports: a five-year study by EIA on the shocking failure of shippers and carriers to ensure humane treatment of animals during transport, as required by CITES, and a report on the horrific death rate of birds imported into the

United States for the pet trade. Determined campaigning by AWI and EIA resulted in more than 100 airlines ultimately refusing transnational shipments of wild birds.

In 1992, President George H.W. Bush signed the Wild Bird Conservation Act, which instituted a ban on exotic bird imports into the United States, except under strictly regulated circumstances. Prior to its passage, Christine engaged in intense behind-the-scenes wrangling with lawmakers—and even with other wildlife protection groups—to preserve its robust requirements. EIA cofounder Dave Currey recalled that, during a particularly heated exchange, Christine threatened to broadcast one group’s tacit acceptance of the wild bird pet trade to “everybody on your membership list.” She told Currey, “When everyone starts to water it down, don’t do it. You know what’s right.”

Soon after, AWI launched a campaign against the consumption of bear parts such as gallbladders for use in traditional medicines. The demand for gallbladders (and the valuable bile they contain) is directly responsible for the decline in populations of sun bears, Asiatic black bears, brown bears, and others. Though the brutal trade in bears and bear products is largely prohibited by CITES, enforcement is lacking. AWI continues to support sanctuaries for bears rescued from cruel bear-bile farms in Vietnam.

## January 2023

Cathy Liss retires; Susan Millward appointed chief executive officer and executive director

## June 2024

National Fire Protection Association adds sprinkler system requirement to farmed animal housing code

## August 29, 2025

National Marine Fisheries Service bans seafood imports from 42 nations due to marine mammal bycatch issues



Animal advocates at the WTO protest in Seattle.

In 1992, AWI cofounded the Species Survival Network (SSN), an international coalition of organizations (now numbering nearly 90) that works to strengthen CITES and address the increasing threat of wildlife trade to global biodiversity. At each CITES CoP since 1994, AWI's Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Award has been presented (traditionally by the CITES secretary-general) to individuals and agencies in recognition of extraordinary efforts to combat wildlife crime.

For more recent CoPs, SSN has produced a comprehensive *CITES Digest* with a summary and analysis of listing proposals and working documents for that meeting. The information is trusted and invaluable, according to Will Travers, president of SSN and executive president and cofounder of Born Free, an SSN member. It also helps avoid incidents like the one Travers recalled from 1994 when, shortly before a vote on vicuñas, a delegate asked him if they were plants. (They are, in fact, South American camelids closely related to alpacas and llamas.)

Travers said, "I've always seen AWI as an organization that doesn't necessarily shout out loud, but it just digs in and gets the job done with a really fantastic team." At public

demonstrations, however, AWI is not above shouting to make a point. In 1999, as members of the World Trade Organization convened in Seattle for their ministerial conference, AWI participated in one of the largest protests the city had ever seen. Ben White, a wildlife investigator at AWI, worked with volunteers to outfit advocates in 240 sea turtle costumes to oppose a WTO ruling against US restrictions on shrimp imports from nations not using turtle excluder devices to limit bycatch. The marching turtles received massive media coverage, drawing attention to the environmental and animal welfare implications of unfettered global trade.

With respect to animals targeted in trade, AWI has led or co-led successful efforts to gain CITES appendix listings for dozens of species as varied as the Dorcas gazelle, chambered nautilus, and West African manatee. Working with representatives of CITES member nations and other NGOs, AWI also has staved off repeated attempts to weaken existing protections for commercially valuable species such as rhinos and elephants, and pushed for trade sanctions against Mexico for its failure to control illegal fishing of totoaba, which is hastening the extinction of the critically endangered vaquita porpoise.

DJ Schubert, AWI's senior wildlife biologist, has attended CITES meetings on behalf of the organization for nearly two decades. He expects that, in the future, AWI will play an increasing role in addressing the trade in spiders (such as the Chilean rose-haired tarantula AWI helped get listed at last year's CoP20), insects, snakes, and other animal groups that are heavily traded but understudied and underrepresented in the CITES appendices. Reflecting on AWI's success to date, he says, "We're very persistent and creative as an organization. If we're defeated in one strategy, we have in our back pocket other strategies that can help us ultimately prevail." 🐾



## Our Mission

The Animal Welfare Institute is dedicated to alleviating animal suffering caused by people. We seek to improve the welfare of animals everywhere: in agriculture, in commerce, in our homes and communities, in research, and in the wild.