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Geese Peace Northwest: Give Geese A Chance

When summer approaches and the days lengthen, Pacific Northwesterners emerge from their homes to appreciate the scenery and wildlife that make our region such an enticing place to live. But as rural habitat shrinks because of soaring human populations and increasing development, this is also the season when people and wildlife often come into conflict.

In the summer of 2000, Canada geese made headlines in the Puget Sound region, earning the fatal reputation of “nuisances.” Park goers and homeowners, frustrated by geese in urban areas and the messy fecal matter the waterfowl leave behind, demanded action. The result? More than 3,000 of these once-revered birds were rounded up and slaughtered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) Wildlife Services program.

This so-called “solution” to a human...

Canada geese nest once a year in the spring in the Pacific Northwest region. Both the male and female tend the flightless young until mid-summer.

Washington Coast Native Nations Program a Success

In May, PNRO teamed up with The HSUS West Coast Regional Office and Remote Area Medical (RAM) veterinary services to bring spay/neuter clinics to the Quinault and Makah reservations on the coast of Washington State. Over the course of nine days, the RAM team spayed or neutered approximately 260 dogs and cats, and administered vaccinations and medical treatment to more than 100 additional animals.

This year’s program also included a comprehensive humane education program aimed at promoting animal care and protection among the clinic participants and community members. This effort was well received. Local tribal members Dollie Price and Maynard Sampson-Johns were so enamored with the program that they signed on as full-time volunteers for the duration of our stay on the Quinault Reservation. Community members such as Dollie and Maynard soon became adept at talking about dog bite prevention and the importance of spaying and neutering.

“It was a privilege to work closely with the Quinault and Makah reservations on such an exciting and far-reaching program that positively impacts so many lives,” says Stephanie Bell, PNRO program coordinator. “The native nations program literally prevents thousands of unwanted animals from being born into lives of suffering. It also empowers community members like Dollie and Maynard to serve as role models and spread the message of animal protection in their own communities.”

The education program and the large number of animals who were sterilized or received medical care free of charge will have a significant impact in both the Quinault and Makah communities, where financial resources for animals, animal protection education, and access to veterinary clinics are extremely limited. Animal overpopulation is a major concern in both communities, where many animals roam at large, animal/vehicle accidents are frequent, diseases such as mange and distemper are prevalent, and dog bites are common.
No Contest for Coyotes

O n the weekend of February 17, 2001, the Northcentral Washington chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation sponsored and held a coyote derby, a contest in which the hunter with the most kills wins a prize. This barbaric event was the first of its kind to take place in Washington State. The stated goal of the event was for contestants to kill as many coyotes as possible during the allotted time period. Individuals who killed the most coyotes increased their chances of winning raffle prizes. Unbelievably, the permit for this event was issued by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Participants killed 124 coyotes during the three-day event—50 males and 74 females. The grand-prize winner of the event killed 16 coyotes.

The reason for the contest, as put forth by the organizers, was to attempt to decrease the coyote population and reduce coyote predation on deer. This rationale is unscientific and disingenuous. There is little, if any, scientific information showing that coyote predation on deer will boost prey animal population numbers or that a sustained reduction of coyote numbers can be accomplished randomly. Therefore, a contest to kill coyotes is not likely to affect either coyote or deer populations.

More importantly, the promotion of our states wildlife as living targets in order to garner raffle prizes for hunters is an outdated concept. Contest hunts are inhumane and inappropriate methods of wildlife management that promote unprofessional and disrespectful treatment of Washingtons wild animals. The fact that such hunts continue to be legal in Washington, and are even advertised by the WDFW, is outrageous and indefensible.

Upon learning of the coyote derby, PNRO petitioned the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission to strike coyote hunting contests from the agencies list of sanctioned hunting contests for mammals. By a vote of four to three, the Commission denied our petition. PNRO will pursue our request again when WDFW begins working on its six-year game management plan this winter. You can help deal with these visitors... [N] ow that an uncomplicated, low-tech method of reducing their number is available—one that's worked well elsewhere—what are we teaching our children if we continue to rely on the lethal option?

Legislative Update

T he 2001 Oregon legislative session was truly a milestone for the state's animals. A record-breaking number of animal-related bills captured the attention of lawmakers, media, and the public. PNRO's Oregon Program Coordinator Kelly Peterson spent the duration of the session lobbying tirelessly on bills addressing trapping, tundra swans, wolves, farm animals, cougars, elk ranching, and numerous other animal issues. In addition, strengthening Oregon's anti-cockfighting law was of top priority.

Although it is illegal to fight roosters for entertainment or illegal gambling purposes in Oregon, it is still legal to raise, sell, and possess birds for fighting. This loophole severely undermines the ability of officials to enforce the state law; since cockfighters can elude prosecution simply by claiming they are raising fighting birds for shipment to states where the practice is still legal. As a result, although cockfighting is technically banned in Oregon, this barbaric "sport" is still all too common. In early May, the House overwhelmingly approved H.B. 2930, which increased penalties for cockfighting and banned possession of birds and implements for fighting purposes. Unfortunately, a Senate version of the bill with a similar level of support was stymied by committee.

1-713 qualified for the ballot with an all-volunteer signature gathering effort and passed with a 56 percent majority vote. Nevertheless, trappers sought to overturn this popular citizens initiative in order to protect their unsavory hobby. We are happy to report that on July 13, Thurston County Superior Court Judge Richard Strophy dismissed the lawsuit that sought to overturn 1-713. "The trappers failed in the court of public opinion, and now they failed in the courts. It is a victory for the wildlife and people of Washington State," said PNRO Director Lisa Wathne.

Defending 1-713 from additional legal and legislative challenges will be PNRO's top priority. We will also work to ensure implementation of the initiative, which includes educating communities about effective, non-lethal solutions to wildlife conflicts.

Legislative Update

P N R O Regional News 
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T H E H U M A N E S O C I E T Y O F T H E U N I T E D S T A T E S
Director’s Report

By Lisa Wathne
Director of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office

Who Are We? Pacific Northwest Regional Office Staff

It is my great pleasure to serve as director of The HSUS’s new Pacific Northwest Regional Office. I’d like to begin my ongoing correspondence with you by introducing the PNRO staff and myself.

I have worked for the past two years as The HSUS’s Washington State legislative field representative. Prior to that I worked for King County (Washington) Animal Control for four-and-a-half years, where I created, implemented, and oversaw the agency’s first shelter adoption program. I also spent seven years at the Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) in its animal advocacy department. I have worked on a variety of animal advocacy campaigns, including I-655, the successful 1996 ballot initiative that banned bear baiting and hound hunting of bears, cougars, and bobcats in Washington State, as well as the anti-trapping initiative that passed last fall. I helped to pass the Pasado Law, making intentional cruelty to animals a Class C felony in Washington State. And I coordinated HSUS activities at the World Trade Organization Ministerial Summit in November of 1999.

Stephanie Bell joins our office as the Washington State program coordinator. She worked for five years as a travel writer and wrote quarterly newsletters for the Animal Legal Defense Fund. Stephanie also worked for PAWS in its companion animal shelter and its animal advocacy department, where she helped conduct puppy mill investigations, as well as other animal welfare and advocacy campaigns. In addition, she worked for PetShelter Network, a Web site promoting shelter animal adoptions.

Kelly Peterson will serve as the Oregon State program coordinator. Most recently, Kelly served as the campaign manager for Measure 97, the Oregon anti-trapping initiative. She has worked in the animal protection community for many years, including as HSUS’s Oregon statewide coordinator, co-founder and organizer of the Humane Oregon Political Action Committee; and as a fundraiser for the Sierra Club and Oregon’s Water Watch.

Stephanie, Kelly, and I share a deep commitment to the respectful and humane treatment of all animals. We hope you’ll join our efforts as we work on behalf of the animals of Washington and Oregon, and we invite you to contact us with your comments, concerns, thoughts, and ideas.

Promoting the protection of all animals

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legislation moving. Despite incredible efforts from powerful legislators, law enforcement officers, activists, the media, the governor’s office, and even from business lobbyists, Sen. Beyer stalled all anti-cockfighting legislation.

The loss was very disappointing, but awareness of this issue is now at an all-time high, and momentum continues to build. PNRO will continue to work diligently on this issue during the next session of the Oregon Legislature. The HSUS would like to thank House Judiciary Committee Chairman Max Williams for his leadership in championing this legislation.

Save This Date!

When: May 29–June 1, 2002
Where: Radisson Plaza Hotel, Fort Worth, Texas
Why: The HSUS National Conference on Animals in Disasters. You’ll meet hundreds of people involved with caring for animals in disasters: emergency management personnel, animal shelter staff, community volunteers, and more. You’ll gain valuable information about disaster planning, preparedness, and response as well as important hands-on training and much, much more. For more information, contact Andy Adams at 301-258-3063.

PNRO staff from left: Director Lisa Wathne, Oregon State Program Coordinator Kelly Peterson, and Washington State Program Coordinator Stephanie Bell.