WILDLIFE REFUGES: A National Disgrace

National wildlife refuges: places of shelter and safety for America’s wildlife, right? Wrong!

Wildlife is being sold out for economic gain and recreation for hunters, trappers, and commercial developers, as are the refuges set aside to protect it.

Currently, there are 424 refuges, composed of more than 88 million acres, stretching from the Arctic to the Florida Keys, and from Maine to American Samoa. Almost all of the refuges have been touched in some way by gas and oil exploration and development, predator control, pesticides, commercial farming, ranching, and lumber interests. And, as incredible as it may seem, over one-half of all refuges are open to hunting or trapping, or both.

All laws and regulations governing activities on wildlife refuges stipulate there be no conflict with the fundamental principle of refuges: to protect, preserve, and enhance wildlife in its environment. Unfortunately, what was once a network of “inviolate sanctuaries” is changing into a federal system of playgrounds where wildlife and the integrity of true refuges are being destroyed. For thousands of other animals whose habitats are being invaded, the refuges have become dens of noise, suffering, and death.

In 1982, over 386,329 animals were killed by hunters on this nation’s wildlife refuges. The figure includes 219 swans and 227,574 ducks. Among the 85,473 mammals killed were bobcats, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, and tiny Sika deer. About 12,000 animals were crippled and left to die from injury, exposure, or starvation. And from (continued on page 2)

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Project WILD Update

In our last newsletter (Spring 1985), we reported on HSUS’ opposition to the Project WILD teaching materials. Since then, two legislative subcommittee hearings and a state board of education hearing have been held in California.

The WCRO sent an Action Alert to humane societies and interested people, visited committee members, supplied them with background materials, and testified at all three hearings with other representatives of the humane community. John Hoyt, HSUS president, and Patty Finch, director of the National Association for the Advancement of Humane Education (NAAHE), submitted written testimony.

The outcome was positive. Project WILD staff and policymakers were directed to review the testimony and give serious consideration to the need for changes.

It is now clear, however, that although Project WILD materials are reviewed and reprinted yearly, the forthcoming revised edition only removes the most obvious forms of bias. After discussing the revisions with the national director of Project WILD, NAAHE Director Patty Finch stated, “Project WILD, even when revised, will remain biased and inaccurate....The Project WILD coordinators and facilitators will continue to promote the materials as objective.”

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Contact your state association of school boards (your state department of education can give you their address) and express your concern. State that Project WILD ma-
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As if America’s wild horses didn’t face enough problems already, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) now has proposed a plan to turn the wild horses over to state and game agencies. Such a turnover of authority is a way of hiding the Bureau’s problems and making it look like the wild horses are being handled properly.

The number of refuges opened to hunting and/or trapping has increased at an alarming rate. Of the 244 refuges where hunting is now allowed, 53 were opened from 1981 to 1983 and 22 opened new hunting programs in 1986. The HSUS believes the FWS is ignoring its duty to protect wildlife and that refuges have been opened for hunting without a complete and systematic analysis of the problems for which the National Wildlife Refuge system was created. If you would like more information about how you can help us in this fight, please write to The HSUS, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

At HSUS, our concern is that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is going to turn over the Wild Horse and Burro Program to the states. We want to be sure that the wild horses are not turned over to states that will abuse them. If you would like more information about this issue, please write to The HSUS, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

As you can see by this Report, the West Coast Regional Office has been very busy. While our accomplishments and activities have been mixed with disappointments, it is through your dedication and generosity that we have been able to make a difference in so many areas of concern.

Now, to update you on the case against research-animal dealer Don ‘Bud’ Keisler.

Later, he was tried on criminal charges of animal cruelty and sentenced to six months in prison. Keisler is expected to appeal his conviction.

Knudsen served two months of his jail sentence and was released on condition he join an alcohol rehabilitation program.

As of the date of this report, Keisler’s activities are unknown.

The HSUS believes wild horses should be saved for wildlife, not shooting galleries.

Fast Pace for Regional Staff

In May, WCRO Director Char Drennon was guest speaker at the annual Santa Rosa Charro College of the National Animal Control Association (NACA) in Salt Lake City, Utah. The presentation, "Adoptions: Is the adoption of animals saved from the streets the answer to problems in communities," was a community leaders in Santa Rosa and the charros.

In April, WCRO Investigator Eric Sakach was guest speaker at the 15th Annual Meeting and Training Conference of the California Animal Control Directors’ Association in San Diego. Sakach’s presentation, "Adoptions: Can We Do It Better?" was well-received by attendees.

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Keisler’s response was that the Bureau of Land Management will continue to work with private organizations to care for the wild horses.

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Legislative Update

CALIFORNIA

New animal-protection laws recently enacted include:

SB 89—establishes new rules on gill and trammel nets that will save sea otters from accidental drowning

AB 719—calls for endangered species check-off funds to be used for additional programs, not to pay for existing ones.

Here is an update on some bills now before the legislature:

Prospects for passage of SB 76, the mountain lion bill are not good. Even as more weakening amendments were being attached to the bill, Governor George Deukmejian announced he would veto any moratorium on the killing of mountain lions, stating they should be treated "like any other game animal."

WCRO helped write AB 1810, authored by Wally Herger. It calls for California state humane officers to be trained.

AB 1663, authored by Robert Campbell, would require a spay/neuter deposit on all dogs leaving California animal shelters.

Sam Farr's bill, AB 1620, would raise permit fees and the number of inspections for performing animals.

David Roberti's bill, SB 1405, would allow humane officers access to animal-research laboratories to check for compliance with state and federal laws. This is a two-year bill, as is AB 1628, authored by Norm Waters, allowing an income tax credit for spaying or neutering a dog or cat.

For more detailed information on California legislation, members are invited to contact our office. If you want a copy of a bill or a new law, please write Bill Room, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814.

OREGON

Three of four bills The HSUS WCRO and our Oregon members worked on have been signed into law by the governor. They are:

SB 508—completely revises the current animal-cruelty laws, defines the crimes of animal neglect and animal abuse in the first and second degrees, and the crime of animal abandonment. It also provides for forfeiture of animals in the custody of a person convicted of any of these crimes.

SB 509—defines exotic animals and requires anyone owning such an animal to obtain a state permit. It requires anyone who owns an exotic animal to be responsible for all costs incurred if the animal escapes. It also provides penalties for failure to obtain a license and for forfeiture of animals when license requirements cannot be met. (This legislation arose in part from the arrest of Robert Fieber, owner of Siletz Game Ranch, detailed in the Spring 1985 issue of the West Coast Report.)

SB 911—prohibits euthanasia of animals except by injection of sodium pentobarbital or other substances approved by the State Veterinary Medical Examining Board. It also classifies violation as a Class C misdemeanor.

Unfortunately, SB 303, which would have increased penalties for animal fighting, died in committee.

MONTANA

Announcing a big victory for animals in Montana! The WCRO is receiving letters of thanks for its assistance in helping to pass HB 155 which makes both cockfighting and dogfighting felony offenses in that state. The new law takes effect on October 1, 1985, and provides for a penalty of up to $5,000 and up to five years imprisonment for violators.

Reflect for a moment....

How can I help animals even when I no longer share their world?
By your bequest for animal protection to The Humane Society of the United States.
Your will can provide for animals after you're gone.
Naming The HSUS demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the Society for this task. We will be happy to send information about our animal programs and material which will assist in planning a will.
Please send will information to
Name ____________________________
Address __________________________________________
City __________________ State ____________
ZIP code ____________________________
Mail in confidence to Murdaugh S. Madden, Vice President/General Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

The Regional Report is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States West Coast Regional Office 1713 J Street, Suite 211 Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 447-3295 Charlene Drennon, Director

The HSUS West Coast Regional Office serves California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. All contributions made to The HSUS West Coast Regional Office will be used for regional purposes and are tax-deductible.

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