Helping FL Hurricane Victims

Charley and Frances had already pummeled Florida on both coasts. Next it was Hurricane Ivan, the strongest storm yet, which tore through the Panhandle. As part of HSUS’s disaster services, NRRO Director Dave Pauli and Program Coordinator Colin Berry joined Richard Stockdale, director of Flathead County (MT) Animal Control, and Jeff Gustafson, animal control officer for Charles County Animal Services, in rescue efforts in hard-hit Gulf Shores, Alabama.

When they arrived, they found desolate streets strewn with debris and fallen power lines. After making contact with officials to gauge animal needs, the team made plans for pet food distribution, expanded community outreach, and animal rescue. They also visited local vet clinics to assess the damage and to see what resources they needed. At one clinic, which was still closed because of the storm, they found a couple sitting in their car, unsure of what to do with an injured gannet they had found in their yard. The continued on page 2

By NRRO Director Dave Pauli

Every time I participate in an HSUS disaster services or Humane Society International (HSI) project, I grow personally and professionally. But my February 2005 trip to Sri Lanka was perhaps the most profound experience. Sri Lanka, just south of India, is about the size of West Virginia, and the residents of the southern and eastern shores lost at least 31,000 neighbors, family members, and tourists to the tsunami.

My role was to join an HSI team after a 10-hour jungle drive from the airport to a base camp clinic set up in villages near Arugam Bay. This area was devastated on December 26, 2004, and about six weeks later, relief workers were still setting up tent refugee camps. Power was sporadic and water unsafe. The daytime temperatures were in the low 100s with high humidity, so just moving about the devastated neighborhoods in the middle of the day was a chore. Washed out bridges made daily boat or barge rides a necessity, and obtaining safe food for clinic staff proved an ongoing challenge.

My job was to patrol neighborhoods and net or live-trap dogs and bring them in for surgery and vaccinations. My capture teammates were from Bali and Japan. We quickly learned to get around our language barriers with hand signals and the words “bellig,” “bala,” or “nye,” which all mean “dog” in the Sinhalese and Tamil languages. Considering the extent of the disaster, the dogs were in pretty good shape. Most were surviving, but the stress of finding food was taking a toll.

The local school children attended classes until 1:30, when it becomes too hot in their outdoor classrooms. So we focused our capture efforts during this time; once school was out, 20 to 40 kids would follow us trying to help. In reality, they made so much noise that the dogs would leave before we got there!

The local people were amazing. Despite their losses of homes, family, and jobs, they offered us shade, hot tea, rice, and help in locating dogs. One Sinhalese man lost his 10-year-old son and his home, but when I offered him condolences, he said, “It’s okay, maybe people have lost more.” This man was also providing shelter and scarce scraps to a stray dog who had five puppies in the damaged home where he and his 14 extended family members were living. We spayed this dog, wormed the puppies, and supplied him with canned dog food to help wean the puppies and give mama dog some additional energy.

The good spirits, resilience, and friendship of the Sri Lankans will be with me for the rest of my life. The HSUS and all those who supported this humanitarian effort can be proud of relief we brought to the people and animals of the eastern shore of Sri Lanka.
NRRO's Glendive dogs. which the defendants had been ordered to than 30 dogs; his daughter also had many Out defendants was an elderly man with more dogs. The defendants had one week to spaniel, were blind and had special veterinary needs, which were met by Rushes In You contributions and support, not only for this rescue success, but also for future rescues of animals whose lives are in peril, is so very much appreciated.

NRRO's Colin Berry with one of the Glendive dogs.

Dogs Ordered Out, NRRO Rushes In

Late on a Friday afternoon, NRRO staff learned from a Billings-area humane society of an animal cruelty case in which the defendants had been ordered to give up all but one dog apiece. One of the defendants was an elderly man with more than 30 dogs; his daughter also had many dogs. The defendants had one week to comply with the orders of the court in Glendive, Montana.

The NRRO team went into action, and the following Wednesday met the elderly defendants. With so many animals, the defendants could not move all of them at once. After speaking with the defendants, the NRRO team learned that the dogs had been boarded at a kennel in Rapid City, South Dakota, and that NRRO had given this kennel a one-week time frame to house the dogs. The NRRO team rushed to Rapid City to pick up the dogs.

The NRRO team arrived at the kennel and proceeded to take over the entire kennel. The NRRO team was able to house all of the dogs in the kennel for a week, and NRRO was able to get the dogs to animal shelters and sanctuaries. Two of the defendants were ordered to move to Rapid City, South Dakota, to pick up the dogs, and NRRO was able to get the dogs to Rapid City, South Dakota, to pick up the dogs.

NRRO has been busy in the field! We thought you might be interested in hearing about just some of the animal rescues we've worked on (or roughly to the tune of "The 12 Days of Christmas").

In the last six months, our Northern Rockies office handled: 767 goldfish, several bushy-tailed rabbits, a lost parakeet, a crow with a broken wing, a squirrel hit by a car, seven Rottweilers, one injured dog, five domestic rabbits! A great horned owl, a tail-less iguana, two bull snakes, and an orphaned baby fox.

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The evening of September 7, the conference hall will open to the general public for a household cat show sponsored by the Yellowstone Valley Cat Club. There will also be training sessions on grooming, cat care, and youth involvement in feline issues. The first 300 people to attend this event will receive a free kitty condo!

The NRRO team is excited to host this first-ever regional conference, and we are looking forward to a productive and educational training event! For more information, contact our office.

The highlight of the conference will be a panel discussion about the effects outdoor cats have on wildlife. This discussion will bring together people on all sides of the issue— including Montana Audubon Society; feral cat advocates; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and animal shelter personnel—for what promises to be a lively discussion on this controversial topic.

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A major event for our office this year is the Safe Cats Conference to be held September 7-9 at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center. This conference will bring together animal welfare professionals from six western states for training to promote HSUS's campaign that encourages cat owners to keep their cats safe from the dangers of roaming outdoors. Safe Cats will feature a host of nationally known speakers, including Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald of Animal Planet's "Emergency ER." The exhibit area will include a Safe Cats technology demonstration site, featuring the latest in feline fencing, housing, toys, and identification.

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Dear Friends of Northern Rockies Animals

Each year in this issue I write about the accomplishments of the previous year and our goals for this one. And each year it becomes more and more difficult to list all the accomplishments in one article, or to predict what our goals for next year will be. After some reflection, I realize that NRRO cannot possibly address all the animal issues in our six great Western states and that we have to prioritize our efforts and utilize all the local and statewide volunteers to make good things for animals happen. So this year I will give a briefer summary of 2004 and ask you to help us spread our message to your friends and family so we can accomplish even more. For starters, consider passing this newsletter on to any animal loving neighbor or co-worker so that we can get them active in our legislative efforts or rescue projects.

For 2004, I am happy to report that we helped more animals and had a higher caseload than any other in the 15-year NRRO history. Some of the individual rescues—the starving horses, fox cubs, and tortoises—you read about in our news-letters. But hundreds of rescues—from the crow with a broken wing to half a dozen bushy-tailed wood rats—do not routinely get reported to you. Rest assured that if a call comes in to help any animal, we will provide the assistance needed.

We also had our share of cruelty cases in 2004, with some court proceedings carrying over into 2005. Volume cases involving dogs, cats, and horses were the norm, but we also handled cases involving nearly 800 goldfish, and others with snakes, rabbits, and birds. Our 2004 RAVS native nations outreach and some other Native American assistance programs such as our pilot Certified Rez Dog adoption program were other positive projects. The only thing preventing us from having even more success in 2004 was a limitation of time and resources to address other requests for assistance.

For this year, I want to tell you that we are planning great things: an improved RAVS native nation outreach with clinics in Colorado and Utah, a Safe Cats regional conference in Billings in September, and some real successes in all six state legislatures. But in animal protection, while we try to be proactive, we still have to be reactive to the yet unseen cases of animal cruelty, hoarder cases, and disaster and emergency situations that come up each year and test the mettle of your NRRO team.

So my message for the remainder of 2005 is first and foremost a thank you for your support, which allows us to help our non-human neighbors. I also want to challenge you to consider becoming more involved. Think about getting on our legislative e-mail lists, or attending one of our dozens of field events. Again, pass this newsletter along and get more people from your community involved in helping animals. Or if you have orphaned wildlife, feral cats, need a spay/neuter clinic, whatever—give me a call, and I can discuss with you ways you can help.

Contacting HSUS
Write: HSUS Northern Rockies Regional Office 490 N. 31st St., Ste. 215 Billings, MT 59101
Call: 406-255-7161
Fax: 406-255-7162
Web Page: www.hsus.org/nrro

Promoting the protection of all animals