What’s All the Fuzz About?

Who was that creature on the cover of the July/August All Animals? It’s a fact we curiously (and somewhat pointedly?) omitted, prompting many inquiries—and scoldings—from enamored fans. One even called to settle an argument among her officemates. Another reader, Alexandra Kuman of Colorado Springs, Colo., was so smitten that she plans to enshrine the cover in a frame—“not just for this photo but because the layout is so beautiful, too.”

But first, like so many others, Kuman wanted more details. We’ll end her suspense here: Our mystery critter was a young porcupine. Who knew? We did, but maybe because we had access to the photographer’s caption information. To find out why it wasn’t immediately apparent to others, we asked our in-house experts, who live to opine on all things porcupine.

What may have thrown many readers off, they said, was the fuzziness: unexpected fine fur instead of quills. But, as it turns out, porcupines don’t have quills around their heads and stomachs; the 30,000 stiffened, barbed hairs are concentrated on the back and tail.

Porcupines are plentiful in Alaska, the western and northeastern U.S., and most of mainland Canada. But you may never see one in the wild. These slow-moving, solitary herbivores forage for food from dusk to dawn and sleep it off in trees or dens during the day. “They haven’t quite made it into our cities yet, but we can expect them,” says John Hadidian, director of The HSUS’s Urban Wildlife Program. “I’ve seen porcupine dens in busy Jerusalem neighborhoods.” If these prickly characters are taking so well to urban life overseas, he adds, it may not be long before their American cousins start picking up the habit.

Food for Thought

I was so glad to read your Q&A with Whole Foods CEO John Mackey (July/August 2009). I am pleased that there is an acknowledgment of us out there who are not vegetarians or vegans but who do care about the quality of life of those animals who feed us. I have even told others, prior to reading this article, how I hope a labeling system of this sort will provide information on and discretion in the treatment of farm animals. I feel like it is part of our duty as humans to care for those who nourish us in order to be healthy in both body and spirit. I hope to see this be the gold standard for all retailers. Thank you for this great article.

— ERICA GUTHRIE, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

How Can I Help?

I have been donating to The HSUS for some time. I can’t donate much, but I do try to donate regularly. I figure every little bit helps. I just got done reading the article “The Long Way Home” (July/August 2009). It touched my heart and my soul. I am not sure that I could do anything to help with this cause, but I would sure love to learn more about it and find out if there might be a way to get involved with the Parelli method and saving horses from slaughter.

— KAREN THORPE, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

EDITOR’S NOTE: Thank you, Karen. You are correct that every little bit helps; in fact, The HSUS would not exist if it weren’t for the donations of compassionate people like you. Find out how you can help us pass lifesaving legislation for horses at humanesociety.org. Check out horse rescues in your area to learn about volunteer opportunities; encourage them to contact our equine experts for information about natural horsemanship methods at equineprotection@humanesociety.org.

Don’t Be a Litterbug

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed and learned from reading your July/August 2009 issue. “The Deadly Truth about Trash” really hit home for me. I live on a beautiful lake in middle Tennessee blessed with many species of wildlife—great herons, wood ducks, cormorants, egrets, turtles, beavers, deer, foxes, and so many more of God’s beloved creatures. I have seen firsthand horrendous injuries, even death, as a result of litter left behind. It only takes a second to make a difference and help prevent manmade death traps for wildlife. Keep a cloth reusable bag or cardboard box in your boat for your trash, retrieve and cut up fishing line lost on a branch or boat dock, cut up six-pack plastic rings and discard them properly. Simple, easy steps that keep our lakes beautiful and safe for everyone, wildlife included.

— ANN Z. SHAPIRO, OLD HICKORY, TENNESSEE

I was aware that plastic rings on soda six-packs were bad, but I was shocked by some of the pictures and information this article provided. What an eye-opener.

— SUE VOGEL, BOERNE, TEXAS

Contact Us

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Send your feedback, and please include your contact information. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

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