WASHINGTON UPDATE

Congress Gets Low Score for Animal Protection

IF THE FIRST YEAR AND ELEVEN MONTHS of the 103rd Congress had looked anything like the last month, animal rights would have rivaled health care as one of the most pervasive issues on the Hill.

During the last month of Congress, the Agriculture Committee held hearings on the Downed Animal Protection Act and the Humane Methods of Poultry Slaughter Act. Four new bills were introduced and the California Desert Protection Act was finally signed into law. Unfortunately, with the exception of the California Desert Protection Act, all of this activity amounted to little more than "Much Ado About Nothing," as the 103rd Congress came to a close and all legislation that had not passed was declared dead. Groups and individuals working on these legislative initiatives, however, are hopeful that by forcing the Congress to at least recognize these issues, we are continuing to raise consciousness and hopefully to spur some earlier action in the 104th Congress that convenes in January.

The Agriculture Committee's hearing on two animal-related measures gave a preview of what to expect from the 1995 Farm Bill. The Chairman of the subcommittee opposes protection for both downed animals and poultry. Downed animals are cows, pigs, sheep or other animals headed for slaughter who arrive at the auctionhouse or stockyard too weak or ill to stand. Because these animals cannot walk, they are often dragged off trucks and left to slowly die with no veterinary care, food or water.

continued on next page

ANIMAL LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

PHOTO: LAURA WILENSKY

Dear ALDF Member:

At this time of year, I find myself uttering the word "thankful" more than usual. There is so much that is painful and distressing in our day-to-day work to protect animals, yet we can find joy in the many good things in our lives. So, I remind myself that my family is healthy and that we have a home to live in, a place that will keep us warm and dry through a winter in which too many people and animals will lack even the most basic shelter.

But, I'm also grateful for other, less obvious gifts. I am thankful that I've been a vegetarian for 18 years, and am not adding to the misery and pain suffered by factory farmed animals. I'm relieved that I don't own a fur coat or wear leather products; I have a great selection of nonleather shoes and handbags for every occasion. I'm proud that when my daughter asks me to buy her cosmetics to play with, she understands that we only buy the kinds that "don't hurt the animals." I appreciate that I don't live in a community where animals are sold by the pound to research laboratories, so that I don't have to fear the worst if my companion animals were to become lost. And, I'm much obliged that I was never taught to raise a gun to an animal, or to shoot animals for fun.

I am humbled by the extraordinary commitment, intelligence and good will of the people who work with and for ALDF: our Board of Directors, and dedicated staff. And, I am grateful, beyond my ability to express it, for the support of donors like you, which enables us to continue our work to protect animals.

At ALDF, we envision a world in which the lives and interests of animals are respected within the legal system; where companion animals have good loving homes for a lifetime; where wild animals can live out their natural lives according to their instincts, in an environment that supports their needs; where animals are not exploited, terrorized and controlled to serve frivolous or greedy human purposes. This vision guides and directs ALDF's litigation and legal work.

And, I look forward to the day when I can look back and be thankful that we have made this vision a reality.

With warmest regards,

Joyce Tischler

Joyce Tischler
Executive Director

Student Animal Legal Defense Fund Holds Successful Marine Wildlife Conference

The Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF) is a chapter of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, at the Northwestern School of Law, Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

HATS OFF TO SALDF for a job well done! This is only the second year they have held a conference, and from this auspicious beginning, we can look forward to future events by this dedicated group of law students.

This year's symposium focused on the legal, social and moral issues related to marine wildlife and fisheries, with a variety of interesting panels.

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It was sobering to hear of the extent to which life in the rivers and oceans has deteriorated due to global overfishing, high technology fishing methods, and pollution. Unless efforts are made now to secure worldwide cooperation and preservation, many fish populations will crash within the next several years. For example, in the Pacific Northwest, most salmon populations can no longer spawn and make the necessary migrations to ensure their cycle of life.

Of special value was a panel on wildlife litigation, and those seminars which focused on practical ways in which attorneys, law students, government employees and animal protection advocates can help contribute to altering the gloomy scenario unfolding in the rivers and seas today.

There was a heated debate between Ben White and Ron Arnold on the Ethics of Capture. White addressed the plight of wild dolphins who are cruelly caught and separated from their pods. A very rousing public debate pitted Wayne Pacelle of the HSUS, against Ron Harder, of Oregonians for Wildlife Conservation. They addressed the recently passed Oregon Bear and Cougar Initiative, which bans trophy hunting of mountain lions and bears in that state. Opponents of the measure cited an increase in cougar sightings and cougar/human contacts to support their claim that these forms of hunting should continue. Pacelle presented well researched facts and statistics and focused on the real issue, which is the cruelty of bear baiting and hound hunting.

The keynote speech, entitled *"Policing the World's Oceans,"* was by Captain Paul Watson, President of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Watson has focused on the conservation of whales and the prevention of harp seal killing, driftnet use and the killing of wild dolphins. He has made it his role to police those nations that are violating international marine conservation laws, regulations and treaties. Watson's tales of danger and rescue on the high seas were spellbinding.

Thanks to several SALDF conference committee members for doing an outstanding job organizing the conference.

WASHINGTON UPDATE

continued from previous page

Lobbyists from the slaughter industry argued that both downed animals and poultry are well-protected now and that industry is capable of policing itself with regard to the humane treatment of animals. Testimony from animal protectionists, including Valerie Stanley of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, demonstrated that downed animals are not being protected under voluntary industry standards and that poultry going to slaughter are processed under extremely inhumane and unnecessarily cruel conditions.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) amendments represented a major setback after years of hard won protections for these animals. Not only do the amendments allow trophy hunting of polar bears, they also shifted authority for enforcement to U.S. Department of Agriculture, which lacks both the commitment and the ability to do a good job.

The California Desert Protection Act was passed out of conference and approved by both the House and the Senate. On a positive note, this bill will set aside about eight million acres in California as wilderness and create three new national parks. Unfortunately, the Act will also allow hunting on a portion of the protected land that was set aside as a preserve.

In the last month of Congress, the frenzy of legislative introductions included bills that would prohibit canned hunts, require increased reporting from establishments using animals for research, and improve guidelines for the use of animals in experimentation by the military, regulate the transport of horses going to slaughter, and require government review of toxicity tests using animals. These bills are all expected to be reintroduced at the beginning of the 104th Congress.

Holly Hazard is the Executive Director of the Doris Day Animal League and an attorney member of ALDF.