19 state measures are enacted against wildlife abuses such as poaching, the exotic pet trade, and captive shooting

National shark finning ban is strengthened

Arizonans uphold their right to launch citizen initiatives on wildlife protection issues

The Truth in Fur Labeling Act is signed into federal law

Florida prohibits fox and coyote penning operations

Deaths in Canada’s seal hunt plummet to less than 20 percent of government quota

Sea lion killings are halted and North Atlantic right whales gain protections

Proposals to lift the commercial whaling ban are defeated; trade protections are gained for elephants, tree frogs, and other species

These baby seals are subjected to unimaginable suffering. The sealing industry would like the brutality to remain a secret, for the killing to happen out of public view. But we can’t let that happen. The tragic deaths of these defenseless animals will ultimately bring down the industry. As the images of this cruelty are broadcast around the world, global markets for seal products are closing, and consumers are taking action to stop the slaughter.

—Humane Society International Canada director Rebecca Aldworth, reporting live from the ice during her 12th year documenting the hunt
Fur Disclosure

Again and again, The HSUS’s Pierre Grzybowski helped undercover reporters scan sales racks to find coats with collars that resembled animal fur but labels that made no mention of it. Again and again, sales clerks assured them that the trim must therefore be fake. And again and again, Grzybowski—either in the parking lot or back at the newsroom—cut open the backs of the just-purchased coats to reveal pieces of an animal skin stitched together. It was real fur, after all.

In December 2010, after an Emmy-winning investigation by Los Angeles’ CBS2/KCAL and broadcasts by other local stations as well as Inside Edition, The HSUS achieved a major victory for fur-bearing animals. Cumulating five years of undercover investigations that showed consumers being duped into buying clothes trimmed with fur from raccoon dogs, rabbits, and foxes, Congress closed a loophole in a 60-year-old labeling law that had exempted garments trimmed in fur valued at $150 or less. Now, consumers who want to avoid buying animal fur have the information to make the humane decision, as all clothing with real fur must show the species and country of origin.

The Truth in Fur Labeling Act comes just in time, says John Bartlett, a designer who’s working with The HSUS to make the fashion industry more humane. While high-quality faux fur is more and more in demand by consumers who don’t want animals to be skinned alive or otherwise killed for clothing, animal fur has been reappearing on runways, he says. Some designers see it as a luxury material that will set their work apart.

“They are not thinking about the reality of the carnage that’s involved,” Bartlett says. “Many designers don’t know where their fur’s coming from or even what kind of animal it’s coming from.” The new law, which took effect in March, forces them to find out, he says.

Retailers are getting the message as well. In response to an HSUS lawsuit, companies including Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdale’s, and Lord & Taylor agreed to reform their labeling and advertising policies. Saks and Bloomingdale’s also joined Macy’s and Andrew Marc in agreeing to endorse the Truth in Fur Labeling Act, while a judgment was entered against Neiman Marcus in the case.

In September, a quick response by thousands of HSUS members—many of them fans of our Facebook page—helped persuade Talbots to reverse its decision to reintroduce animal fur after a decade of being fur-free. It remains one of more than 300 designers, brands, and retailers that do not sell fur, including Ralph Lauren, Liz Claiborne, Tommy Hilfiger, and Calvin Klein.

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With the passage of the Truth in Fur Labeling Act, that number should grow, says Bartlett. “Now the consumer will know more, and I think the design world and the retailers will be much more hesitant to buy something,” he says. “I think that they will ask questions.”

First Responders for Urban Wildlife

Crisscrossing the Washington, D.C., area, The HSUS’s Humane Wildlife Services team last year rescued more than 1,300 urban animals from harm while providing homeowners with long-lasting solutions to wildlife conflicts. Staff united orphaned mallard ducklings with another mother’s brood, coached contractors on salvaging a woodpecker nest cavity from a chopped-down tree, and persuaded a homeowner to postpone evicting a chimney-dwelling raccoon family until the babies were older. The team also saved a maternal bat colony at the historic Oatlands Plantation in Virginia. After the baby-rearing season, they climbed nearly 40 feet up ladders to install netting that allowed the bats to safely exit the roosting area but not return.

These alternatives to lethal tactics and forced relocation are now being implemented on a large scale in the District of Columbia with passage of the precedent-setting D.C. Wildlife Protection Act. Testimony from our field team was critical in rebutting industry arguments that humane resolutions aren’t possible.

Further afield, our wildlife specialists helped more than 30 communities resolve conflicts with Canada geese, deer, beavers, and coyotes. In Maryland, staff partnered with a developer to move box turtles from the path of construction; hazing and other nonlethal techniques prodded animals such as foxes and woodchucks to move on their own. And The HSUS worked alongside advocates to protest a deadly goose roundup near the Madison, Wis., airport. Car parts salesman Nathan Phoenix started a Facebook group, enlisting pilots and long-time goose hunters in the birds’ defense. As HSUS Wisconsin state director Alyson Bodai notes, Phoenix is “a prime example of how effective people can be when they put their mind to something and get involved.”

Teetering on the Edge: Persecuted by ranchers and big-game hunters as bloodthirsty predators, America’s gray wolves were once nearly hunted to extinction. In the years since they gained Endangered Species Act protection, The HSUS has successfully defended the animals in a series of lawsuits.

In August 2010, The HSUS and 12 other organizations helped gain yet another court-ordered reprieve for the Northern Rockies population, staving off Montana’s and Idaho’s plans for public hunts. Judge Donald Molloy declared the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service could not remove federal protections in those two states while upholding them in neighboring Wyoming.

In 2011, ESA protections for Idaho and Montana wolves fell victim to a provision slipped into a congressional budget bill by hostile interests. The HSUS will continue to monitor the situation closely and carry on the fight.

It inspired me so much that I wanted to take that enthusiasm and express it to my fellow designers.

— Fashion designer John Bartlett, describing an initial meeting with HSUS staff that sparked his fur-free leadership
Wild Revival

As field ornithologists John and Sue Gregoire gazed over the barren terrain surrounding their new property in western New York, they were profoundly disturbed by the absence of native plants and animals. “You could see forever, from one end of the property to the other,” says John Gregoire. “It was that open and bare.” They set about on a mission to restore the setting to provide food, water, and shelter for wildlife. Over the next 25 years, they planted offering gradations of depth and native vegetation. They’ve sighted

But even as their forested property flourishes with life, the surrounding landscape bears evidence of the destruction caused by large-scale dairy farms. To feed their animals and reduce the amount of waste stored in massive manure lagoons, these operations raze natural habitats and spread manure over thousands of acres. The resulting monoculture of feed crops creates a stranglehold on biodiversity. To protect their property from such a fate and designate it as permanent wildlife habitat, the couple gained a conservation easement through the Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust in 2010, joining 103 other properties in the trust’s 15,000-acre portfolio. Known as the Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory, the property has become an inviting migratory stopover and year-round sanctuary for birds and other wildlife. “I feel like we’ve really done something positive,” John Gregoire says. “And perhaps the most positive is knowing that it will always be that way.”

Ruthless “Recreation”: They couldn’t ignore what was going on in their state: dogs set loose on wild-caught foxes and coyotes trapped inside fences. So they rose up and joined The HSUS in persuading the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to take a stand. They were people like Cristin Tank and her family, who lived next to a fox and coyote pen, and Ron Wentworth, who promoted a ban to anyone who would listen. In September, commissioners unanimously outlawed pens, with chairman Rodney Barreno noting, “I think Florida needs to end this and we need to end this now.” More than 50 pens had operated in the state at the peak of this inhumane “sport.” Footage of a different form of cruelty elicited outrage in South Carolina: hounds being released to harass a black bear chained to a pole before a large audience. Calls for a ban poured in while HSUS staff pushed state officials to act. Says The HSUS’s undercover investigator: “How can you not be disgusted by this spectacle?”

Curtailing a Cruel Trade: With their skins fashioned into home decor and their tusks carved into necklaces, some of the world’s most magnificent animals also face the gravest dangers. Every three years, special-interest groups conspire to further decimate the earth’s natural treasures during debates at the U.N. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. But among the ivory carvers, fur traders, trophy hunters, and exotic pet dealers, a powerful voice has emerged: the Species Survival Network, a global coalition cofounded by Humane Society International’s Teresa Telecky. Last year the group gained or preserved protections for a range of species, including African elephants, Central American tree frogs, and great green macaws. Critically endangered Kaiser’s spotted newts have been poached for the pet trade, and professor Mozafar Sharifi’s proposal—the first by an Iranian scientist—prompted an international commercial trade ban. “It’s very exciting to see that your knowledge can be linked to practical conservation practices,” he says.

New Digs for Embattled Species: Under cover of pre-dawn darkness, HSUS environmental scientist Lindsey Sterling Krank embarked on an unusual series of moving days last July: the mass relocation of black-tailed prairie dogs into protected grasslands. Persecuted and decimated by disease, the species—and the other creatures who depend on it—faces significant threats to survival. So when a landowner near Wyoming’s Thunder Basin National Grassland wanted the two colonies near his property poisoned, a U.S. Forest Service biologist approached The HSUS for help. A groundbreaking partnership ensued, and 550 prairie dogs were moved (nearly 450 more were humanely relocated from two other locations in 2010).

The humane solution sets the stage for reintroduction of the endangered black-footed ferret—a prairie dog predator—and future federal conservation efforts. Even the uprooted animals seemed relieved, popping out of freshly dug holes to chirp and “jump yip”—a call used to spread the news that the coast is clear.

Wolverine Way

Wolverines have been spotted playfully tumbling down alpine slopes—but can also win starring contests with grizzlies over food and scale mountains that would defeat the hardiest of humans. Author and Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust supporter Douglas Chadwick has noted their unlikely strength: “Trying to keep up with them amounts to constant adventure in a world of avalanches, blizzards, sheer cliff faces, patches of thin lake ice, sub-zero moonlit ski trips, marathon hikes, cliff walls with tiny handholds, and big silver-tipped bears,” says Chadwick, shown above in blue, helping to remove an anesthetized animal from a humane trap. Partially funded by the Wildlife Land Trust, the multiyear Glacier Wolverine Project conducted by Chadwick and other researchers revealed that the little-studied animals are vulnerable to the warming of their Montana high-country home. Though the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service denied them protection in December 2010, the study—and Chadwick’s subsequent book, The Wolverine Way—should help make the case for the habitat connectivity and trapping restrictions necessary for their survival.
Protecting Wildlife

Going to Court for Sea Lions:
Along the pristine waters of Oregon’s Columbia River, California sea lions are branded and then monitored for their salmon consumption. In 2008, wildlife officials began killing sea lions who they decided had eaten too many fish. A few were sent to zoos. Advocate Bethanie O’Driscoll remembers the fearful cries of two sea lions being removed last spring at the Bonneville Dam. “I had never heard them make that sound before—the way a dog sounds when it’s injured.” The basis for killing stemmed from the National Marine Fisheries Service’s conclusion that these federally protected animals had a significant negative impact on endangered or threatened salmon. But sea lions eat an estimated 15 percent of the salmon returns, while fishermen are allowed to take up to 17 percent. In 2010, a lawsuit by our litigation team and other plaintiffs prompted a federal appeals court to block the killings.

Safe Harbor for Whales:
It took the government and media against the captive display of orcas. Naomi Rose, senior scientist for Humane Society International, gave congressional testimony in April, two months after Tilikum killed trainer Dawn Brancheau in Orlando. The orca was previously involved in the deaths of two other people. “No matter how big the tank looks, it’s a kennel to this large, wide-ranging predator,” says Rose. In August 2010, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued SeaWorld with a citation, which the company will appeal at a September hearing. Meanwhile, in March 2011, after 13 months in a back tank, Tilikum was brought out to perform again. Also in 2010, HSI successfully fought to maintain an International Whaling Commission moratorium on commercial whale hunting. And following litigation by The HSUS, the National Marine Fisheries Service agreed to propose expanding critical habitat for the 400 remaining North Atlantic right whales.

Shark Finning Out of Bounds
Tens of millions of sharks are killed each year to supply the market for shark fin soup. Many of them are victims of finning: Fishermen cut off the fins, then toss the bodies back overboard. Essentially paralyzed, the sharks typically die from suffocation, starvation, or predation. “It’s like cutting off your limbs and leaving you to bleed to death,” says Rebecca Regnery, deputy director of wildlife at Humane Society International.

But the sharks in U.S. waters recently gained more protection from the brutal practice after President Obama signed the Shark Conservation Act into law. That measure, which requires fishermen catching sharks to bring them to port with fins still attached, closed loopholes in the country’s previous ban on finning. It was a victory for the animals and their ecosystem, where sharks play an important role at the top of the food chain. Just as important, it gave advocates a stronger hand in negotiating increased protections with the EU and nations such as Australia and Indonesia. As Regnery says: “It’s hard to try to convince other countries to clean up their act when you have problems in your own country.”

State legislation passed in Hawaii last year went even further, after The HSUS and HSI worked with state Sen. Clayton Hee on a groundbreaking measure to ban the possession, sale, and distribution of shark fins in the Aloha State. “Legislation like that had never even been introduced anywhere,” says Regnery. Hawaii’s stance helped kick-start a trend. Washington State, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have since passed similar measures.

Seal Hunt Death Rattle:
Some of the world’s most iconic marine mammals are being slaughtered for their pelts. The only salve for the emotional wound is the knowledge that the relentless quest to end the brutal hunt is paying off. While the legal catch limit rises every year, the actual take is plummeting: The Canadian government set the 2010 quota at 388,200 seals, yet 69,184 were killed and fewer sealers participated. Spurred by footage and persuasive arguments from The HSUS and HSI, the EU’s ban on seal products, which took effect last year, has driven pelt prices to a record low and saved more than half a million lives. An HSUS/HSI boycott of Canadian seafood—joined by 5,500 chefs, restaurants, and grocery stores worldwide—sends a clear message that the hunt’s days are numbered.

Stopping Reef Raiders:
For more than a dozen years, Rebecca Aldworth, director of wildlife at Humane Society International, has documented the heartbreak of Canada’s annual commercial seal hunt, when pups as young as 12 days old are shot and clubbed to death for their pelts. The only salve for the emotional wound is the knowledge that the relentless quest to end the brutal hunt is paying off. While the legal catch limit rises every year, the actual take is plummeting: The Canadian government set the 2010 quota at 388,200 seals, yet 69,184 were killed and fewer sealers participated. Spurred by footage and persuasive arguments from The HSUS and HSI, the EU’s ban on seal products, which took effect last year, has driven pelt prices to a record low and saved more than half a million lives. An HSUS/HSI boycott of Canadian seafood—joined by 5,500 chefs, restaurants, and grocery stores worldwide—sends a clear message that the hunt’s days are numbered.

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