

On Thin ICE

With the EU ban on seal product trade, Canada's bloodbath may soon end



Canada's harp seals inhabit an icy landscape that seems far from civilization. Birthing season at their nursery, located in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, is marked only by the sounds of the shifting ice floes, the bleats of the seals, and the cries of the newborn pups.

Each spring, the peace is shattered by club-wielding sealers who descend to carry out the world's largest commercial slaughter of marine mammals for their fur. But hope remains for these vulnerable creatures and their habitat, which is ripe for visits from ecotourists whose money could help turn the killers of seals into some of their biggest defenders. Now that the EU has banned all seal product trade, closing the industry's largest remaining market, advocates aim to transform the ice from a place of death to one of reverence, sharing the beauty of the nursery with the rest of the world—and also with those closest to home.

"People come from Europe and Japan to see the seals," says Rebecca Aldworth, director of Humane Society International Canada, "and it's my hope that in the coming months HSI and The HSUS will help Canadians see that these amazing seals can be worth more alive than dead."

Thanks to the work of HSI and The HSUS's Protect Seals team,

the value of seal products has indeed been rapidly dwindling in recent years as the EU advanced toward a ban, preparing to join nations around the world that have denounced the inhumane and unsustainable slaughter. With the declining number of sealskin buyers, the value of pelts has plummeted from a high of more than \$100 (Canadian) apiece in 2006—when sealers clubbed and shot more than 350,000 seals—to \$15 (Canadian) in 2009, when the death toll totaled 70,000. Given that the EU was responsible for one-third to one-half of the industry's global trade, it's likely that even fewer animals will be killed next year, when the ban takes effect.

Capitalizing on this momentum, Aldworth and her colleagues have been promoting Canada's budding seal watch industry as a lucrative and humane enterprise. It's an idea supported by Canadian Sen. Mac Harb, who returned from the ice this year to introduce the first bill in his country's history to end the seal hunt. "The location of the small and isolated sealing communities is ideal for access to the seal nurseries. The fishers are already experts in the navigation of these waters," says Harb, who has been urging the government to buy back sealers' licenses and to redirect the money it spends subsidizing the hunt to helping sealers transition to ecotourism.

Other than Green Party officials, Harb is the only parliament-

tarian to speak out against the bloodbath. He has done so in the face of stubborn defense by government officials; one even ate a slice of raw seal heart to show solidarity with sealers, and legislators have also proposed that the country's 2010 Olympics team don sealskin uniforms.

The attitude contrasts sharply with that of officials in the EU, where the seal product trade ban has received overwhelming support ever since Swedish member of Parliament Carl Schlyter drafted a resolution after visiting the ice with the Protect Seals team in 2006. Following a subsequent European Commission report condemning the cruelty of the hunt, the European Parliament overwhelmingly voted for a strong ban on all seal products, no matter the species or age of the seals and including those ill-gotten in commercial hunts in countries besides Canada.

As Harb speaks before the Canadian Senate each week, he urges his fellow senators to follow the wishes of key trading partners such as the EU—as well as the majority of Canadians. Polls show that more than 70 percent of the country's residents share his feelings about the hunt, and Harb says he has received more than 575,000 e-mails, letters, and names on petitions in support of his position.

To provide an economic incentive for the government to change its ways, The HSUS's Protect Seals team continues to expand the boycott of Canadian seafood, which 600,000 individuals and more than 5,000 food-related businesses have joined since it began in 2005. In that time, the value of Canadian snow crab exports to the U.S. has declined by more than \$750 million (Canadian).

Aldworth says there is a narrow window of opportunity before the Canadian government develops new markets for seal products in countries such as China and Russia. "Now is the time for every supporter we have to get involved in the boycott," she says.

— *Ruthanne Johnson*

▶ [JOIN THE CANADIAN SEAFOOD BOYCOTT](#) and learn how to spread the word at humanesociety.org/protectseals.



Pressure Builds Against Cruellest Farming Practices

When California voters passed the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act in November, it meant that, by 2015, about 20 million animals in the nation's largest agricultural state will finally be able to stretch their limbs, no longer squeezed into small cages where they're virtually immobilized. But as the domino effect from the Proposition 2 ballot initiative ripples throughout the country, the numbers of animals helped by the most significant farm animal welfare reform in the U.S. to date will reach far beyond that.

Just six months after passage of the initiative—which garnered more voter support than any other in California history—legislators on the other side of the country took up the issue of inhumane confinement.

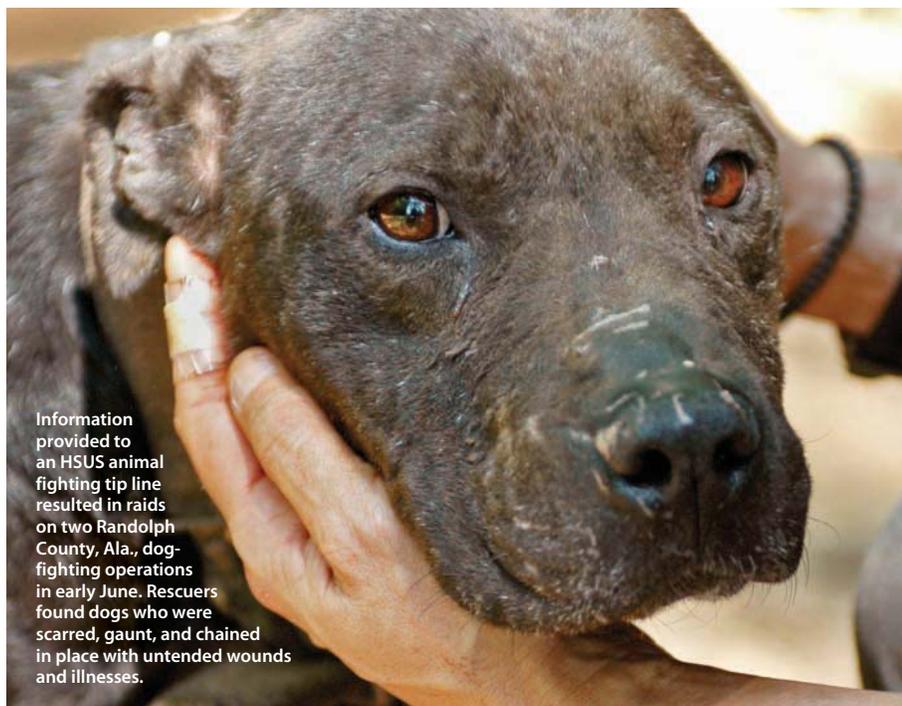
In May, Maine Gov. John Baldacci signed into law a ban on gestation crates and veal crates that takes effect in 2011. After the bill unanimously passed the state joint agriculture committee as well as both chambers of the legislature, Maine became the sixth state to enact this kind of reform, joining Colorado, Florida, Arizona, Oregon, and now California. New York and Massachusetts could soon join their ranks; bills to ban gestation crates, battery cages, and veal crates are pending in both states.

The changes are occurring as lawmakers realize they cannot ignore the public's demand for more humane treatment of farm animals. In California, Assembly Member Jared Huffman introduced a bill to prohibit the sale of eggs that do not adhere to the standards established by Prop 2. Huffman had taken no public position on the ballot measure, but, as he told the Associated Press, "The voters spoke pretty loudly to me and everyone else. I think we need to listen."

The HSUS now has its sights set on Ohio, the nation's second-highest egg-producing state, with 28 million egg-laying hens, nearly all of whom are confined in battery cages. Paul Shapiro, senior director of the Factory Farming Campaign, and president and CEO Wayne Pacelle met with state agriculture leaders earlier this year to discuss prohibiting some of the most extreme confinement practices. If the industry doesn't accept the olive branch to work together for a legislative solution, Shapiro says a ballot initiative like Prop 2 could succeed in November 2010: "We of course don't take anything for granted and know that it won't be an easy battle, but our polling shows that we currently have the support of a very sizeable majority of voters in the state."

— *Andy MacAlpine*





Information provided to an HSUS animal fighting tip line resulted in raids on two Randolph County, Ala., dog-fighting operations in early June. Rescuers found dogs who were scarred, gaunt, and chained in place with untended wounds and illnesses.

Hitting Animal Fighters Close to Home

The HSUS gains ground with comprehensive approach

The streets of Chicago hold many ghosts of Sean Moore's younger days: The alleys remind him of people gathering to watch dogs tear each other apart. The people strolling with their pets stir memories of pit bulls put down because of injuries they'd suffered. Younger neighbors summon visions of Moore's former self, when he didn't think there was anything wrong with training his dogs to fight.

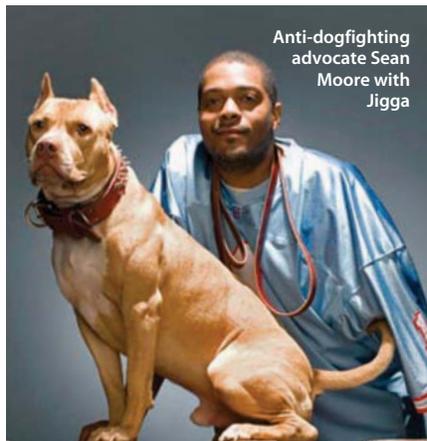
Now 38, Moore has escaped his past. But he makes a point of not forgetting it. Instead, he has spent the last two years as an anti-dogfighting advocate for The HSUS's End Dogfighting program, relying on his inside knowledge of the streets to transform attitudes among young people who are following in his footsteps.

"It's a sad situation what I've done to these animals that haven't really asked to have anything done to them," says Moore, who now owns three pet pit bulls. "[I thought] that's what pit bulls are supposed to do; that's what we were taught. I could

bring you into the 'hood right now and we could get a 7- or 8- or 9-year-old boy or girl and ask them what these dogs are bred for—and they'll tell you these dogs are meant to fight.

"That's what I'm trying to change in my community."

Working in neighborhoods where many children have few role models, Moore and others like him in Chicago and Atlanta



Anti-dogfighting advocate Sean Moore with Jigga

speak of the perils of dogfighting and encourage dog owners to attend weekly training classes that demonstrate what loving, smart companions their animals can be. An eight-week humane education curriculum in Chicago also helps change the hearts and minds of young students already immersed in a culture of violence.

The on-the-ground outreach is just one of many HSUS programs to stop animal fighting. Long at the forefront of the struggle for stronger legislation, the organization has made remarkable progress since NFL quarterback Michael Vick's arrest on dogfighting charges two years ago, securing the passage of 23 new laws against animal fighting.

In 2008, raids on dogfighting operations doubled from the previous year. Riding this wave of unprecedented law enforcement interest, The HSUS has trained thousands of officers and made headway in the crackdown on major figures in the dogfighting underworld. In December, the Wilkes County (N.C.) Sheriff's Office arrested dogfighting kingpin Ed Faron, seizing 127 dogs. An infamous breeder and author of the handbook *The Complete Gamedog*, Faron was sentenced to 10 months in prison. The three-year investigation was fueled by HSUS intelligence-gathering and cultivation of a confidential informant. "Faron is the largest target that The HSUS has seen convicted in the five years of the campaign," says Ann Chynoweth, senior director of The HSUS's Animal Cruelty and Fighting Campaign.

In Vick's home state of Georgia, The HSUS provided information for the cases against Gerald Holcumb, who had reportedly been involved in the brutal blood sport since 1966, and Al White, a big-name breeder who was sentenced to 20 years in prison. The busts are two of nine resulting from phone calls to an HSUS tip line, 877-TIP-HSUS, that receives reports of animal fighting nationwide.

As the organization works toward legal and legislative remedies, Moore and other anti-dogfighting advocates tackle the problem at its root. Moore was just 12 years

old when he found himself in his first fight. His dog's "win" led to more fights in alleys, backyards, and garages. Training exercises included putting dogs on treadmills turned to their fastest speed for up to an hour and even using smaller stray dogs as sparring partners.

After seeing hundreds of animals die over nearly 15 years, Moore tired of the suffering one day in 1997 when he was talked into one last fight with Butch, whom he had owned for just two years. "Even though my dog won that fight, I still had to put him down because he was severely injured—a puncture hole in his neck, a broken vein that couldn't be healed," he says. "That was it for me."

Memories of Butch still haunt Moore



Ariana Huemer, an HSUS animal cruelty case manager, comforts a dog found at one of the Alabama raids.

during training sessions at the local community center, where his recruits are on a waiting list just to get in the door. Three of

the children he works with have probably seen as much dogfighting as Moore has in their short lives, he says. But now, instead of stealing dogs and fighting them in abandoned houses, the boys and their dogs spend a few hours with Moore every day.

"They were headed down the path I was on with these dogs," Moore says, "because no one was showing them all the positives that a pit bull has. My whole goal is to educate the brothers and sisters that pit bulls are not bred to fight. They need to hear it on a consistent basis every day."

— *Andy MacAlpine*

➤ **TO FIND OUT** how you can bring the End Dogfighting program to your city, visit humanesociety.org/endeddogfighting.



A Corridor of Cruelty

When HSUS staff receive credible tips about animal fighting operations, they pass them along to people like Tom Farrow. A retired FBI agent working for The HSUS as a private investigator in east Tennessee, Farrow uses surveillance, interviews, and other investigative tools to develop leads and gather evidence.

"We've even got a little putt-putt airplane that we fly around in trying to take pictures over the top," he says. "We use night vision. Or we'll put a little button-cam on one of our guys, and they'll go into a



The HSUS's John Goodwin, manager of animal fighting issues, cradles a rooster rescued during a May raid on the Shiloh Game Club in Lewis County, Tenn. The HSUS supplied authorities with intelligence that led to the raid.

cockfight and wander around for a couple hours taking video."

Farrow operates in the heart of a region known as the cockfighting corridor. Of the 11 states without felony cockfighting laws, those in this area—Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi—form a swath of security for out-of-state criminals who bring with them the increased drug and gambling activities that typically accompany animal fights.

A February raid in Alabama that netted arrests of 114 people from Georgia illustrates the need for tougher laws in this region. In their home state, the Georgians would have faced one to five years in prison and fines of up to \$15,000, but in Alabama, the maximum penalty is a \$50 fine. When The HSUS tried to change that this year by pushing for a felony-level law, the cockfighting lobby came out in force. Referring to the February raid in an e-mail to one of her members, D'Renda Lewis of the Alabama Gamefowl Breeders Association advised that "if everyone will just behave themselves ... we might scrape by" and complained that The HSUS "added a hell of a lot more [to the legislation] to hurt us."

Though Lewis and her allies this year kept Alabama from joining 39 other states that have made cockfighting a felony, the days of safe harbor for animal fighters are numbered. After a long-fought battle by The HSUS, Louisiana lost its place in the corridor in August when it became the final state to ban cockfighting at some level. In March, HSUS staff assisted state police in a raid of the infamous Little Bayou Club; authorities charged 37 people and seized more than 600 birds and \$60,000.

In jurisdictions where prosecutors are more hesitant to get involved, public pressure is key, says Farrow. "I know there are more HSUS members in these counties than cockfighters," he says. "They've got to know about some of these venues or know somebody who does. It's incalculable how valuable that [information] is."



Cats and dogs at the Osan Air Base veterinary treatment facility in South Korea (top) face brighter futures thanks to volunteer Danni Armstrong (below).

Sheltering the Defenseless

Civilian spouse partners with The HSUS to help homeless pets on Air Force base

In the heart of a South Korea military base, Danni Armstrong has been a staunch defender of the vulnerable.

Homeless animals had few allies when she and her husband arrived at Osan Air Base in May 2007. During an orientation session for military spouses, Armstrong was dismayed to hear no mention of services for pets. She didn't even know where to find a veterinarian for her four cats and two dogs.

So she checked out the base's veterinary treatment facility, which is primarily tasked with caring for working military dogs and, to a much lesser extent, the base's stray, abandoned, and relinquished animals.

There she saw animals living in a 25-by-6-foot room with one small, partly blocked window. Some of the pets lacked water, and all the litter boxes needed to be scooped and cleaned. There was no information identifying the animals or outlining their care instructions. "The final straw was when I saw a volunteer trying to walk a very fearful dog on a leash ... and the volunteer turned and smacked the dog right on the butt," Armstrong says. She offered to become the facility's volunteer coordinator, and the veterinary technicians were happy to oblige.

Armstrong brought some useful skills to the job. A certified veterinary assistant, she had been working with shelters, rescue groups, and kennels since 1989 in places where her husband was stationed. But even so, she needed help, so she contacted The HSUS. "I've always been the little volunteer—I'm just here to help—but I was given the whole program to take over and I wanted to do it right," she says, "and the people at The Humane Society are the experts."

She was put in touch with The HSUS's Stephanie Shain, who sent her books, copies of the organization's *Animal Sheltering* magazine, and lists of online resources. The pair soon began exchanging countless e-mails. "For her to stop what she was doing just to help me get going on my program was amazing," says Armstrong.

With Shain's guidance, Armstrong began delving into disinfection

protocols and other critical operating procedures. "The steps that she was taking may seem tiny, like making sure the animals are properly separated for quarantine periods," says Shain, "but they're so important when you're running a shelter. She's improved things there drastically."

In just two years, Armstrong and volunteer Monica Hoagland turned the cramped space into a place of hope and second chances. Armstrong trained more than 350 volunteers to feed, clean, walk dogs, socialize cats, assess behavior, build outdoor dog runs, and make other improvements. Today, every animal has a medical record, those who need shots get them, and animals are placed through a formal adoption program.



Armstrong has also guided relocating military personnel through the process of getting pets to their next destinations rather than simply relinquishing them. "I see some of my adopted dogs and kitties getting their plane tickets, and I just go, 'Yes, you're out of here! You made it!'" she says.

The shelter still lacks funding and a paid staff, but the military has taken notice of the problem of animal relinquishment, says Danni's husband, Lt. Col. Lee Armstrong. "It hasn't been fixed yet, but the issue has been raised, so she did her job. She let the base commander and other leadership know about what's going on, and what, in our opinion, needs to be done."

The military has responded by giving her the Joan Orr Air Force Spouse of the Year Award. While in Washington, D.C., to receive the award in April, Armstrong finally met Shain, who now runs the Stop Puppy Mills Campaign, and Wayne Pacelle, HSUS president and CEO.

Armstrong has since departed Osan Air Base for her husband's next assignment, leaving big shoes to fill. But she remains a role model for future volunteers, given her persistence and willingness to jump in "even when she didn't really know all the answers," says Shain. "She's a great example of one person making a huge difference in a place where it might seem almost impossible."

— Jim Baker

A Fight to the Bitter End

Retired postal worker wins crusade to protect pets from antifreeze

As a mail carrier in Chesterfield, Va., for 10 years, Yvonne Royster was chased often by dogs. And for good reason: She carried dog biscuits in her pocket.

The goodies endeared her to the pets in the neighborhoods she traveled, and she knew them better than the people. So when two dogs on her old route died from antifreeze poisoning last October, this retiree launched into action to protect other pets in her state from a similar demise. “I did not want the dogs to die such a painful, excruciating death without something being done,” says the self-described armchair activist.

It all started when Michele Woods came home one evening to find her dogs suffering from seizures. Within 24 hours, Lindsay’s seizures were uncontrollable, and Woods decided to have the miniature pinscher euthanized. A week later, she did the same for toy fox terrier Lenny. “As I looked into his eyes, I could see the pain and the agony that he was in,” she says.

A necropsy identified the culprit as antifreeze, which is composed of 95 percent ethylene glycol, a chemical with a sweet taste that belies its deadliness. Just 1 or 2 teaspoons can cause the irreversible liver, kidney, and brain damage that kills or injures at least 10,000 cats and dogs annually, as well as innumerable wild animals; many cases go unreported, making definite statistics elusive. With its lollipop colors of green, yellow, or pink, antifreeze also harms an estimated 1,400 children each year.

Woods had no clue how her dogs could have gotten into antifreeze until she told their story to a neighbor, who broke down in tears. Acting on someone else’s bad advice, the neighbor had put out antifreeze-soaked dog biscuits to control squirrels in her yard. The squirrels probably carried the biscuits onto Woods’ property, where her dogs found them.

When Woods relayed the story to her

former mail carrier, Royster went to work. Most antifreeze poisonings are accidental, when a child or pet comes across a spill or open container. From endless hours of Internet research, Royster learned that such tragedies could easily be avoided by adding an extremely bitter substance, denatonium benzoate, to antifreeze at a cost of about 3 cents per gallon. This nontoxic aversive agent is used in products such as household cleaners and paint. Japan, Germany, Australia, and the U.K., as well as several states, require that it be added to antifreeze.

Armed with this knowledge, Royster was determined to see legislation passed in Virginia. After studying the state’s bill process and lawmakers’ stances on animal protection, she met with her local delegate, Kirk Cox, who agreed to sponsor a bill. Supported by The HSUS and other animal groups, H.B. 2629 moved forward with amazing speed. In January, Royster told Lenny and Lindsay’s story during a hearing in the Virginia House of Delegates, while Ann Church, The HSUS’s senior state director for Virginia, used her minute of testimony to attest to the pain and suffering caused by antifreeze poisoning. In February, the bill passed in both chambers with only

two “no” votes, and it was signed into law by Gov. Tim Kaine in March.

The antifreeze industry itself supports the bittering of antifreeze but prefers a uniform federal mandate to a confusing patchwork of state laws. A federal bill was first introduced in 2005 by legislators including Rep. Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y., who gave a dramatic demonstration during a House hearing: He displayed two glasses, one containing a fruit drink, the other antifreeze. No one accepted his invitation to pick one and taste it.

Though a Senate version of the bill was poised for floor action, the House bill died in committee. Nonetheless, the effort resulted in an unusual alliance between animal activists and industry lobbyists. Building on this partnership, advocates have been advancing bills state by state. Since 2005, Washington, New Mexico, Arizona, Tennessee, and Maine have joined California and Oregon in enacting laws, and this year at least six more states are considering the matter.

As for Royster, she continues to campaign on behalf of animals, e-mailing and writing letters on issues such as protecting seals and banning aerial hunting. “I consider her a great activist and friend,” says Church. “She got involved with this antifreeze poisoning case, and thank goodness she did.”

—Arna Cohen



Yvonne Royster, shown with her dog Minnie, helped pass lifesaving legislation.



Lenny and Lindsay died after ingesting antifreeze.



Birth control is the federal government's humane weapon of choice for keeping Assateague's wild horse population in check.

Staying Wild and Free

The HSUS and the National Park Service work together to control Assateague's horse population

Wild horses attract countless tourists to Assateague Island every year, each hoping to see some of the storied herd grazing in the distance or sauntering through a campsite. Smaller and typically more people-friendly than the wild mustangs on the western ranges of the U.S., the Assateague horses have endured the harsh conditions shaping this windswept island where Virginia meets Maryland at the edge of the Atlantic for more than 300 years.

But too many horses can damage the island's ecosystem, putting the herd and other animals at risk.

Fortunately, there is a happy solution. The National Park Service regularly surveys the horse-related damage to the island. Its most recent study in 2006 found that the previous standard of about 150 horses was too large. In a May 2008 environmental assessment, the agency outlined four strategies for bringing the population to between 80 and 100 horses in a timely manner.

An early favorite seemed to be a "one-time capture and removal" consisting of an unavoidably stress-filled roundup and transfer of some of the horses from their island home to an adoption program or horse sanctuary.



The HSUS pushed for a more humane alternative: increasing the contraception efforts that had successfully reduced the herd from a high of 175 horses in 2001. Early this year, the park service agreed to stay the course, sparing dozens of horses the risky long-distance journeys to bewildering, and perhaps dangerous, new environs. It will take five to eight years to reduce the Assateague herd through birth control, but biologists concluded the program would be successful.

"It's the best outcome for keeping a free, wild, and sustainable population," says John Grandy, Ph.D., a biologist and The HSUS's senior vice president for wildlife and habitat protection.

The Assateague model underscores an emerging trend that deserves greater acceptance—the humane management of wild animals. The HSUS is a global leader in encouraging the use of contraception as an alternative to culling, relocation, or confinement.

Assateague has been a proving ground for such techniques. In 1988, a team led by Jay F. Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., the director of the Science and Conservation Center in Billings, Mont., introduced the use of porcine zona pellucida immunocontraceptive vaccine to the island. Funded in part by The HSUS, the pilot project was so successful that the park service began to use PZP—a natural protein that blocks fertilization—as a population management tool in 1994.

Now unencumbered by annual pregnancies, the island mares are living longer than ever—some have even seen the ripe old age of 30 years. This has allowed natural family units to remain intact and has made it possible for visitors to witness mothers, grandmothers, and foals grazing together.

"I would call this [decision] a success because it takes another important step forward in the evolution of our management program for the feral horse population," says Carl Zimmerman, acting superintendent of the Assateague Island National Seashore. "We're committed to taking care of that population." —*Andy MacAlpine*