

HSUS Staffers Address International Humane Trapping Conference

Dr. Eileen Whitlock of HSUS's National Association for the Advancement of Humane Education (NAAHE) was the keynote speaker at the 2nd International Humane Trapping Conference. Sponsored by the Canadian Association for Humane Trapping, the conference was held in Toronto, Canada. HSUS staffers Dr. Michael Fox, Guy Hodge and Martha Scott-Garrett also participated.

The conference was a followup to a 1972 convention at which North American humane groups met to examine the problems to be resolved in the attainment of humane trapping.

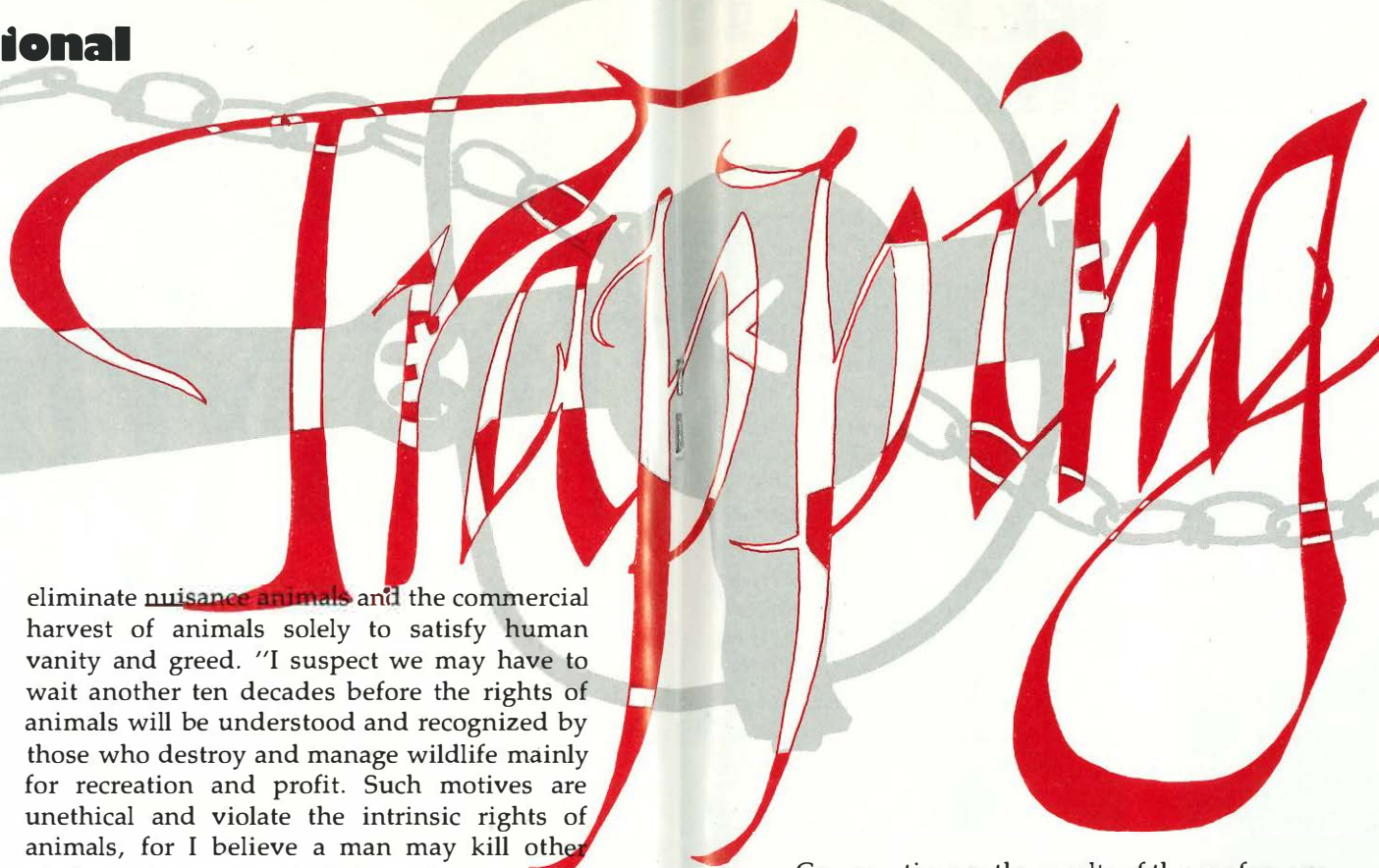
While The HSUS does not condone trapping in any form, they are working with Canadian colleagues in order to share and gain knowledge on the subject of trapping. In the intervening years there have been several significant advances including the establishment of a five year humane trap development program under the administration of a Canadian Federal Provincial Committee and the first United States congressional hearing on the humane trapping issue. The 2nd International Conference was called to assess progress in meeting the humane trapping objective and to identify the most promising areas for affecting humane trapping reforms. The program brought together 75 invited delegates representing 47 agencies. Among the participants were representatives of animal welfare organizations, government wildlife biologists, representatives of trappers' associations, veterinarians and researchers.

Dr. Whitlock's address entitled "For All that Lives" focused upon the man/animal relationship and the rationale for interjecting humaneness as a primary consideration in wildlife programs. Dr. Whitlock espoused a balanced sensitivity for all life forms and reminded participants that the lives and fate of mankind is closely bound to other life forms. She charged that the wanton or willful torment of animals was a derogation of human dignity.

Dr. Michael Fox, director of The Humane Society's Institute for the Study of Animal Problems, in enunciating the relationship between humane values and wildlife management programs charged there is an important fundamental distinction between biological trapping to control populations or

eliminate nuisance animals and the commercial harvest of animals solely to satisfy human vanity and greed. "I suspect we may have to wait another ten decades before the rights of animals will be understood and recognized by those who destroy and manage wildlife mainly for recreation and profit. Such motives are unethical and violate the intrinsic rights of animals, for I believe a man may kill other sentient beings not for profit or self-gratification, but for his survival only. The real issue is the rights of all creatures great and small and man's responsibility towards them, not as a manager, controlling and exploiting, but as a steward who seeks co-creative harmony with nature."

Guy Hodge, HSUS director of Research and Data Services, who has testified at congressional hearings served as co-moderator for the workshop on Trapping Legislation and summarized the status of anti-trapping efforts in the U.S. as follows: the 1972 New Jersey law prohibits the use of steel traps in the state's 11 most populous counties; a 1972 Florida regulation prohibits the use of the steel jaw trap except for permits for farmers; a 1975 Massachusetts law prohibits the use of steel jaw traps on land unless set within 50 feet of a building or under special permit for animal damage control; a Connecticut court suit charged the State Department of Natural Resources with violation of anti-cruelty statutes for not having adequately considered animal suffering in the enactment of trapping regulations; a Maryland Wildlife Administration established a Trapping Advisory Council to examine issues and make recommendations for improved humane trapping.



Commenting on the results of the conference, Hodge noted that the Canadian Government's commitment to humane trapping appears sincere. "They have committed \$436,000 to the development of humane trapping methods over

a five year period and have made the resources of government agencies available to the Federal Provincial Committee. Conversely, state and federal agencies within the United States have no similar program. The only research conducted has been peripheral to programs such as predator damage control. There has been no significant expenditure of funds or commitment of manpower despite the fact that almost twice as many furbearers are taken in the U.S. as in Canada."

The Federal Provincial Committee reports more than 3,000 trapping devices have been patented in Canada and the FP Committee has received 113 new trap designs for instant kill and low stress holding devices. Among the most promising of the devices is a spring powered cable leg snare, a modified conibear instant kill trap, a self aligning instant kill trap, and a padded offset trap. Hodge did express opinion that Americans were placing too much emphasis and hope on the Canadian programs. In response to a question from Hodge, the Chairman of Canadian FP Committee admitted that his group was exclusively concerned with the development of trapping devices appropriate for Canadian climate, habitat, and furbearing species. Hodge said that while portions of the U.S. are comparable to Canada "we must recognize that very likely Canadian research will not provide answers to many U.S. problems."

Society Completing Trapping Study

The Humane Society of the United States is completing a six month study of animal traps and trapping. The study was aimed at gathering data to support HSUS efforts to eliminate trapping entirely. Additionally the data details the annual U.S. fur catch and existing state trapping laws and regulations. The study was prepared by Martha Scott-Garrett, an experienced investigator, who has previously served as a research assistant for projects sponsored by the United States Department of the Interior.

A major objective of the study was to determine whether the management of animal diseases by trapping is necessary. The study points out that removing surplus animals by trapping does not protect wildlife against population buildups which lead to the spread of disease, starvation, and habitat destruction, as claimed by supporters of trapping.

In announcing the study, HSUS President John Hoyt stated "The humane movement is well aware of the arguments which have been offered against the elimination of trapping. The ominous shadow of a rabies or distemper epidemic and the alleged economic destruction of the fur industry have been serious obstacles in the effort to end all trapping. I am satisfied that these potential threats have been overdramatized and misstated. This study represents another element of The HSUS total commitment to our objective of eliminating cruel trapping."

Ms. Garrett's preliminary report was submitted to The HSUS in October and her findings were the subject of a workshop at The HSUS annual conference. Plans are now being considered to capsule the report into a pamphlet which will be available to humane societies for distribution to interested parties.