



**L.A.'s urban sprawl** hasn't consumed the rugged landscape of Angeles National Forest, with its 650,000-plus acres of woods, meadows, and chaparral for mountain lions, quail, and bighorn sheep. The cities at the forest's edge are the last noise-filled bastions before the sounds of crickets prevail.

For locals like Monrovia resident Laura Ashmore, wildlife encounters come with the territory. She likes getting glimpses of coyotes. "They are not aggressive," she says. "... They are more like shy dogs running down the street."

But some people don't agree. Based on a few sightings and pet attacks, in August 2010 the city council in neighboring Arcadia decided in a closed meeting to sign a yearlong \$30,000 contract with a pest management company to kill coyotes. In the previous two years, a trapper hired under low profile had killed more than 100.

When the story broke, The HSUS wrote the mayor and city council asking for a better approach, to no avail. "This was a case where we needed the public to step up," says The HSUS's Lynsey White Dasher.

Animal advocacy groups sent alerts to

members, one of which caught Ashmore's attention—Arcadia is where her grandparents live. She and other volunteers, including Beatrice Simpson from nearby South Pasadena, began visiting grocery stores, the library, and the high school to spread the word. "About 90 percent [of people] were opposed to [the killing] and

didn't even know it was going on," says Simpson. Some people naively thought trapped coyotes would be released in the mountains.

Volunteers sent information to homeowners associations and the local PTA, shared the latest kill tallies with local media, and attended council meetings to speak against the trapping and request preventative measures such as hazing. Simpson described "jellyhead" to council members: when a neck-snared animal suffers brain hemorrhage and a slow, agonizing death. She also pointed out that someone had been feeding coyotes, thereby drawing them in.

In November, more than 250 people, including the mayor, attended an educational program on coexisting with coyotes, run by Project Coyote, The HSUS, and other organizations. Turnout at meetings began growing; at one, a one-time trapping proponent spoke up for the coyotes. At another, Ashmore's grandfather did the same. "It gave me chills," she says. "I was so proud of him. ... He's almost 80."

In January 2011, after receiving the signatures of 1,000 Arcadians opposed to trapping, the council voted unanimously to halt the killings. The change of heart is reflected in the city's newsletters and on its website, which now provide information on coexisting with wildlife. — *Ruthanne Johnson*

## Laura Ashmore & Beatrice Simpson

Monrovia/South Pasadena, California

► **THE APPRENTICE:** When Laura Ashmore heard about Arcadia's trapping, the then-22-year-old wanted to right a wrong in her own community, though she was new to advocacy work and wasn't sure if she could make a difference. She spent hours researching, but nerves sometimes got the best of her; she stumbled over words and argued a few times with confrontational opponents. Over time, her presentation became more polished. When seemingly supportive residents failed to show at meetings, disappointment fueled her determination. "We just kept going towards the goal of 1,000 petition signatures ... and eventually people started coming."

► **THE MASTER:** Twenty years ago, a few pet attacks had coyotes in trouble in Beatrice Simpson's South Pasadena neighborhood. A five-person study committee including Simpson's husband found that areas reporting conflicts had open trash cans, fallen fruit, and pet food left outside. The committee recommended education and not trapping, a model that still exists—and that Simpson proudly shares when talking to other towns.