MARO Spring 2004

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Key Dog-Fighting Figure Is Convicted

In a courtroom in Orange County, New York, a judgment was rendered on March 1, with potentially daunting consequences for dogfighters throughout the country. Judge Nicholas DeRosa convicted James Fricchione, publisher of “Sporting Dog Journal,” of six felonies and five misdemeanors for dogfighting-related activities.

After the verdict, Assistant District Attorney David Hoovler said, “To the dogfighting world, this is like taking down Al Capone.” Eric Sakach, director of HSUS’s West Coast Regional Office and the country’s leading expert on illegal animal fighting, agrees. “This could easily be the most significant case ever prosecuted with regard to the crime of dogfighting,” Sakach said, in tribute to Hoovler’s skills and the judge’s ruling.

Fricchione’s role as publisher of “Sporting Dog Journal,” a magazine suspected by humane law enforcers to link animal fighters all over the world, attracted authorities’ attention nearly two years ago. At that time, The HSUS had helped launch an exhaustive investigation. Continued on page 5

Bear Hunt Proceeds Amid Protests

Despite a campaign promise to support a five-year ban on black bear hunting; despite tens of thousands of letters, phone calls, e-mails, faxes, and petition signatures against the bear hunt; and despite poll results showing that 58 percent of registered New Jersey voters believed the bear hunt should be stopped, Gov. James McGreevey allowed the first black bear hunt in 33 years to take place December 8–13, 2003. Although the hunt proceeded, The HSUS and other animal advocates never ceased efforts to stop it.

December 1, 2003: A coalition of animal protection organizations including The HSUS, The Fund for Animals, the Center for Animal Protection, and several individuals filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court to stop the hunt from taking place in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. “If the governor won’t stand by his word, we will ask the court to prevent the circumvention of our federal environmental laws,” stated Wayne Pacelle, an HSUS senior vice president. On December 5, U.S. District Court Judge Reggie B. Walton issued a temporary restraining order. Although the prohibition was lifted on December 9, it gave the black bears in the recreation area a one-day reprieve.

December 4, 2003: In a letter, The HSUS appealed to Gov. McGreevey to halt the bear hunt on the grounds that donations to fund humane conflict resolution efforts had risen to more than $100,000 for funding non-lethal management programs for the state, should the state agree to halt the hunt. The original $30,000 check to The HSUS, from a donor who chose to remain anonymous, inspired financial pledges from several New Jersey and out-of-state residents. The HSUS’s Barbara Dyer appealed to McGreevey to “call off the ill-fated hunt and take advantage of the generous offers by New Jersey citizens who want effective bear management, not bear skin rugs.” These donations are an excellent example of the determination of citizens to pursue a solution that does not involve random sport-killing of bears. The governor did not respond.

Citing the deplorable cruelty of the bear hunt, The HSUS joined the Center for Animal Protection, Saving Our Resources Today, and The Fund for Animals in placing an ad in “The Star Ledger” (New Jersey’s largest newspaper), urging the governor to stop this hunt. Continued on page 2
Tigers Win in Battle with NJ Owner

This past Veteran’s Day, November 11, 2003, the long-running battle between the state of New Jersey and a Jackson Township woman known as the Tiger Lady came to an end. The ultimate winners were the 24 tigers who were removed from her premises that day and transported to a new home at the Wild Animal Orphanage in Texas.

The move was a well-coordinated effort by state and local officials, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and sanctuary staff, whose aim it was to move the big cats with as little stress as possible. It began at dawn, and capture and loading was finished by late afternoon. The cats began their road trip to Texas that same evening, funded, in part, by an HSUS contribution.

Richard Farinato, HSUS director of captive wildlife protection, was on site at the invitation of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to make sure the animals were handled humanely and with as little stress to them as possible. MARO had been involved in this case for several years prior to the move, and supported the actions of the state in seeking custody of these animals for both humane concerns and public safety issues.

“The conditions these animals were forced to live in were deplorable,” Farinato said. “And the presence of 24 big predators in a suburban New Jersey neighborhood was a constant threat to the safety of the public. The move was carried out beautifully, with the welfare of the tigers the first priority. This was the day the fortune changed for these cats, removing them from a life of substandard care.”

The HSUS wrote to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bradley Campbell and urged him to cancel the remaining two days of the hunt in light of a data review released by DEP showing that a disproportionate number of female bears had been killed in the hunt’s first four days. The kill numbers indicated that out of 182 bears killed on the first two days of the hunt, 120 (66 percent) were female. “Data released from the hunt paint a potentially troubling portrait of overexploitation of the state’s small black bear population,” wrote Wayne Pacelle. “We should observe the precautionary principle and halt this hunt immediately. The high number of females killed in the hunt so far is a dangerous trend that could severely impact the viability of the bear population in New Jersey,” said Barbara Dyer. “Continuing this hunt over the next two days may cause long-term irreparable harm to the population.” There was no response from the Commission.

At dawn on November 11, 2003: The HSUS wrote to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bradley Campbell and urged him to cancel the remaining two days of the hunt in light of a data review released by DEP showing that a disproportionate number of female bears had been killed in the hunt’s first four days. The kill numbers indicated that out of 182 bears killed on the first two days of the hunt, 120 (66 percent) were female. “Data released from the hunt paint a potentially troubling portrait of overexploitation of the state’s small black bear population,” wrote Wayne Pacelle. “We should observe the precautionary principle and halt this hunt immediately.” Pacelle added that the hunter kill thus far suggested that the population estimate in excess of 3,000 bears was inaccurate. Based on the data from the hunt, there are probably only 2,000 bears in New Jersey. “The high number of females killed in the hunt so far is a dangerous trend that could severely impact the viability of the bear population in New Jersey,” said Barbara Dyer. “Continuing this hunt over the next two days may cause long-term irreparable harm to the population.” There was no response from the Commission.

Opossums Now Safer in the City

The lives of hundreds of healthy opossums will be saved in New York City and the five boroughs because of MARO’s intervention. MARO Program Coordinator Barbara Dyer challenged the New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) policy of classifying opossums as a rabies vector species. The classification meant that opossums in the city were killed because of the risk that they might transmit the rabies virus. However, the opossum is not considered a rabies vector species by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. Most authorities believe that opossums are unlikely candidates for transmitting rabies, perhaps because their body temperature is significantly lower than most mammals.

As a result of MARO’s challenge, the NYCDOH has told The HSUS that it will no longer mandate that trapped opossums be killed. Dr. John Hadidian, HSUS director of urban wildlife programs, has asked the NYCDOH commissioner for written confirmation of this new policy. “It is of some urgency to us,” he wrote, “given that animals may unnecessarily be killed unless a wider understanding of your policies is forthcoming.”
Those in the animal protection field—particularly in animal sheltering—are familiar with the sad, bizarre form of abuse known as animal hoarding, or animal collecting. Members of the public, though, are often astonished when they see for the first time a report on the nightly news about numerous cats, dogs, birds, horses, or other animals being hauled out of a person's house. It is invariably appalling to learn that dozens, even hundreds, of creatures in various stages of illness, malnutrition, or other serious condition, had to be rescued from an indescribably filthy environment.

Animals living in such conditions often suffer from extreme emaciation; advanced mange and other painful skin conditions; mats "bigger than baseballs," as one shelter worker described the coats of some of the dogs in a recent hoarding case; nails grown into footpads; open wounds; and eye, ear, and upper respiratory infections. Those responsible for such suffering invariably perceive themselves as animal lovers, and others may be misguided by the hoarders' "good intentions."

Some have even formed charitable organizations eligible to receive tax-exempt donations, yet do not meet the needs of the animals in their custody. "Having a house full of cats no more makes you a sanctuary than a house full of newspapers makes you a recycling center," says HSUS's Dr. Randall Lockwood, a psychologist and animal behaviorist who has studied, lectured, and written about the animal hoarding phenomenon for more than 20 years.

Samantha Mullen, MARO program coordinator, is one of HSUS's representatives in a national group spearheaded by The HSUS in 2003 to consolidate existing resources and develop new ones to address animal hoarding. The group is focusing on animal hoarding as a complex societal problem that, to be dealt with effectively, must be addressed in each community by a task force comprised not only of animal care and control staff, law enforcement personnel, and veterinarians, but also psychologists, social workers, health agencies, fire departments, and zoning officials. Psychologists and social workers have critical roles in the intervention and long-term treatment of individuals who are seemingly incapable of recognizing their own limitations concerning the care of animals. Such people are often found in conditions of squalor and sickness as alarming as that of their animals.


I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about

- Making a memorial donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or relative.
- Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency.
- Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.
- Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.
- Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

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Promoting the protection of all animals

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE
Barley Square
270 Route 206
Flanders, NJ 07836
for countless individuals interested in an illegal and violent exploitation of animals. Those who enter their dogs in fighting matches, as well as spectators at such contests, often stake large sums of money on the outcome of bloody battles. Many also profit substantially from breeding dogs with bloodlines ardently sought out by other fighters. Ironically, Fricchione himself could not be charged as a breeder of fighting dogs because New York’s statutes related to animal fighting—like those in most states—do not include a ban on such activities. It is critical that legislators close this loophole in their state laws against dogfighting. New York Governor Eliot Spitzer, who credits New York’s Humane Society as a leader in getting the law passed, believes that if we want to end animal fighting, the law alone will not be enough. According to Spitzer, the problem is too widespread and too deeply rooted to be resolved by a single law. He believes that in addition to laws, we need to address the social and cultural factors that have led to the rise of animal fighting. The New York State Humane Society is working to address these issues by providing education and outreach programs to the public. In the meantime, the organization remains committed to fighting animal cruelty and working towards a future where all animals are treated with respect and compassion.