WCRO Fall 2004
River Cats Promote Safe Cats

Cats are America's most popular pets, but an estimated one-third of all cat owners allow their cats to roam outside, needlessly putting their feline friends at significant risk.

WCRO joined forces with the Sacramento River Cats, 2003 Pacific Coast League champions, to bring this message to Sacramento-area baseball fans on Sunday, June 20, which was also Father's Day and Kid's Day at the River Cats Stadium at Raley Field. Discounted tickets were available, and the first 300 Safe At Home attendees received a free T-shirt. WCRO staff were also on hand to give out free cat-care information and cat toys to throngs of River Cats fans.

During the game, sportscaster Johnny Doskow of KSTE radio interviewed WCRO Director Eric Sakach. "Many cat owners aren't aware of the dangers faced by cats who roam outdoors," said Sakach. "Outdoors, cats face threats that include traffic, predators, and diseases, and they can fall victim to animal cruelty. They also pose a threat to birds and wild animals. We hope that once they know the facts, cat owners will work toward transitioning their cats into indoor cats," he said.

WCRO's Eric Sakach joins HSUS's John Grandy (below right) in promoting Safe Cats at a River Cats game.

Gov. Schwarzenegger Terminates Ill-Advised Shelter Plan

Who says Arnold Schwarzenegger (below), the Terminator turned governor of California, is an immovable force? The leader of the country's most populous state reversed himself during a political whirlwind Friday, June 25, opting by the end of the day to drop his plan to repeal state laws that would have compromised many of the animal protections required at the state's shelters.

Facing $15 billion in budgetary red ink, Schwarzenegger had earlier announced a plan to amend or repeal several sections of the Hayden Act, a law that prescribes minimal holding periods, requires the humane handling of shelter animals, and defines tough punishments for convicted animal abusers. The governor's proposal was aimed at saving a reported $14 million, or approximately .09 percent of California's budget shortfall.

As soon as the plan went public, the governor's office was besieged by protests from animal advocates and pet lovers alike. WCRO Regional Coordinator Curt Ransom immediately went to the Capitol where he met with H.D. Palmer, the governor's deputy director for external affairs for the Department of Finance. Ransom shared our concerns over the proposed repeal and offered to help look for ways to preserve the protections afforded animals by the Hayden Act while suggesting the need for interested parties to sit down and discuss the broader picture of California's underfunded and overburdened animal shelters and the best way to meet their needs and the needs of their charges.

Later that afternoon, Schwarzenegger admitted to the media that he'd made a terrible mistake. In announcing his decision to pull his proposal, he stated that he loves animals and that his daughter was of particular influence in his change of heart. The HSUS received confirmation from the Assembly Budget Committee that the Hayden Act—in its entirety—will remain intact in the 2004-05 budget.

The ones to suffer under the governor's proposed plan to repeal the Hayden Act would have been the animals.
Sacramento's Safe Cats Week

Building on a campaign launched last year in Sacramento, Mayor Heather Fargo joined top officials of The HSUS, the Sacramento River Cats, “Mutt’s” comic strip creator Patrick McDonnell, cat lovers, and local animal shelter personnel from Sacramento, Stanislaus, Yolo, Placer, and El Dorado counties to launch the first Greater Sacramento area campaign designed to protect cats. “We are proud to once again have the support of Mayor Fargo for this important educational campaign,” said WCRO Director Eric Sakach. “The Safe Cats Sacramento campaign has brought together area pet owners, local animal control shelters, and veterinarians to educate the community about the lifelong benefits of keeping cats safe and healthy by creating cat-friendly homes and yards.”

“America’s most popular pets are quickly becoming more than just four-legged occupants of California’s animal shelters, causing considerable expense to city agencies,” said Mayor Fargo. “As a cat lover myself, I am pleased to again proclaim March 14-20, 2004, Safe Cats Sacramento Week.”

The HSUS offers numerous resources for transitioning an outdoor cat into an indoor cat on its Web site at www.safecats.org.

La Jolla Seals Update

WCRO staff member John Dommer addressed members of the San Diego City Council's Natural Resources and Culture Committee to discourage them from recommending an ill-conceived beach dredging plan that would effectively banish a harbor seal colony from a local beach. Close to 200 harbor seals use the protected beach as a resting and pupping area. More than 80,000 people visit the Children's Pool beach each month to view and photograph the seals. It is the only place in California's vast coastline where seals can be seen up close.

The City Council panel voted 5 to 0 to seed the plan to the full City Council without a recommendation, so members not on the committee will have an opportunity to debate the issue. Three committee members opposed the proposal, and it was suggested that it may not get majority support when it reaches the full council.

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Jim Hudnall, an advisor to the La Jolla Friends of the Seals organization, of which The HSUS has a chapter, speaks to a television crew about the importance of preserving the seal resting area at La Jolla’s Children Pool beach.

Artivist Film Festival Recognizes The HSUS

The HSUS was honored to be among four non-profit organizations recognized by the first Artivist Film Festival, which premiered on Earth Day, April 22, 2004, at the historic Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, California. With the stated objective of “merging art and activism for global consciousness,” the six-day festival presented 48 films, featuring a wide array of humanitarian, environmental, and animal rights issues.

HSUS Hollywood Office staff members attended the festival, as did The HSUS’s Kathy Bauch, and WCRO Director Eric Sakach. “Some of the most important issues facing the world today affect animals: respect for life, eliminating cruelty and violence, and creating a society of compassion and caring,” said Bauch. “These are honorable goals The Humane Society of the United States shares with the Artivist Film Festival.”

During the event, Sakach participated in a panel discussion and question session following the premiere of “Earthlings,” a documentary film directed by Shaun Monson and narrated by Academy Award nominated actor Joaquin Phoenix. “This film, while difficult to watch, is important because it not only examines mankind’s complete commercial dependence on animals, but also the disrespect and contempt demonstrated toward them,” said Sakach.

The HSUS offers numerous resources for transitioning an outdoor cat into an indoor cat on its Web site at www.safecats.org.

Stopping Costa Mesa Squirrel Poisoning

For nearly 20 years, Costa Mesa, California, has been killing ground squirrels at TeWinkle Memorial Park. But thanks to Eva Hoffberg, an HSUS member and regular park visitor, the practice may be changed. Hoffberg contacted WCRO and other animal protection organizations to ask for help in deviating humane solutions to conflicts between people and the park’s wild animals.

Every three months, workers have placed Fumitoxin gas pellets into active squirrel burrows and then plugged the openings with dirt. The soil moisture causes the pellets to turn into gas, which kills the rodents.

WCRO’s John Dommer will be working with Animal Advocates and In Defense of Animals to present a plan and proposal to Park and Recreation officials who oversee park maintenance. Part of the plan will focus on the uncontrolled feeding of park animals the public. Other parts of the plan will aim to prevent the squirrels without the need for poisons.

Rewards Offered in Cruelty Cases

The HSUS is offering rewards in the following cases to help bring animal abusers to justice. The HSUS offers such rewards nationwide and works to strengthen laws against animal cruelty. Go to www.hsus.org/firststrike for more information. Please note that all calls regarding the rewards will be kept confidential.

Honokohau, Hawaii, Cat Murder

The deaths of three cats found hanged in a grisly display during the last week of May at the state’s Honokohau Small Boat Harbor north of Kailua-Kona prompted a $6,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible. The reward includes $2,500 from The HSUS. WCRO Director Eric Sakach said, “In light of what we know about the connections between animal cruelty and human violence, it is disturbing to consider how these animals died and the kind of person who would make a public display of them.”

Anyone with information about this crime is asked to please call 808-987-7214.

Placer County, California, Dog Dragging

The HSUS is offering a $2,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for dragging a dog behind a pick-up truck on March 14, 2004, between 9:15 and 9:30 p.m. on Dowd Road, Placer County. The dog, a Radko Company Anniversary Products plush cat, was injured as it ran in front of a dog and a dog and cat plush toy by Gund. For more information visit www.hsus.org/marketplace.

Celebrate the Season and The HSUS Anniversary

The HSUS is proud to have May Company department store and Radko as sponsors of our 50th anniversary. As part of the celebration, May is offering a limited time three exclusive HSUS 50th anniversary products for sale this fall: A Radko ornament (shown above) and a dog and cat plush toy by Gund. For more information visit www.hsus.org/marketplace.

The Placer County Sheriff's Department is vigorously pursuing this case. Anyone with information is asked to please contact Det. Mark Steinhauser at 916-652-2445.

California Crossbow Deer Shootings

The illegal crossbow killing of deer in the Lake Hills Estates of El Dorado Hills in El Dorado County, California, led to The HSUS offering a $2,500 reward. Fifteen to 20 dead deer have been found since February, and some reports date further back.

Crossbow arrows or “bolts” have been found nearby or in the deer carcasses, according to Patrick Foy, California Fish and Game biologist and spokesman. “Since the ‘Sacramento Bee’ article on March 30, the shootings have stopped,” Foy said. “Citizens outraged by the killings have begun keeping watch for the poacher.”

California Fish and Game put up its own reward of $1,000 making the total reward at least $4,500. There are additional pledges by other groups and individuals.

The HSUS is vigorously pursuing this case. Anyone with information is asked to please contact the California Fish and Game’s hot line at 1-888-46-CALL (1-888-462-2554).

SACRAMENTO COUNTY"

Jim Hudnall, an advisor to the La Jolla Friends of the Seals organization, of which The HSUS has a chapter, speaks to a television crew about the importance of preserving the seal resting area at La Jolla’s Children Pool beach.

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Humane Education Learning Community (HELC) charter school is designed to have been pleased to be part of his development team for several years. Dr. Yale Wishnick of the California State Teachers Association was the place is to make sure all of our children are loved and respected. According to John Dommers, "Humane education fosters critical thinking, academic achievement, social success, self-worth, and respect for all species and the environment. HELC is committed to academic excellence consistent with California state standards. California certified teachers will staff the classrooms. There is no tuition for this school.

For more information, contact Dr. Yale Wishnick at 916-212-9297.

Children who learn kindness to animals learn kindness to everyone. This is the ethic the first humane education charter school hopes to promote when it opens in Sacramento this fall.

WCR雍 staff were pleased to help recruit kindergarten through third-grade students for the first humane education charter public school that will begin operation in Sacramento this fall. According to John Dommer's, WCR雍 special projects coordinator, "Humane educators have worked and dreamed about a school like this for half a century or more. Dr. Yale Wishnick of the California State Teachers Association was the moving force behind this cutting-edge project. He made it happen with the help of many teachers, parents, community leaders, and animal protection groups. We have been pleased to be part of his development team for several years." The Humane Education Learning Community (HELC) charter school is designed to create a compassionate learning environment for all children. School organizers believe the most important educational reform that can take place is to make sure all of our children are loved and respected. Humane education fosters critical thinking, academic achievement, social success, self-worth, and respect for all species and the environment. HELC is committed to academic excellence consistent with California state standards. California certified teachers will staff the classrooms. There is no tuition for this school.

For more information, contact Dr. Yale Wishnick at 916-212-9297.

The ban on kangaroo byproducts has been upheld.

Kangaroos spared. A.B. 2915, which would have removed the current ban on the import and sale of any part or byproduct of all species of kangaroos, passed the Assembly but was defeated in the Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee. Thank you for your efforts to follow certain regulations. A.B. 2915 prohibits the import of any part or byproduct of all species of kangaroos. The governor did not sign this bill.

Force feeding of ducks for pate de foie gras to end. S.B. 1530, effective in 2012, prohibits force-feeding ducks or geese to enlarge their livers by inserting tubes down their throats. S.B. 1530 also prohibits the liver product, pate de foie gras, from being sold if it is the result of force-feeding. The bill passed the Legislature, and Gov. Schwarzenegger signed it into law.

Vets to report abuse. S.B. 1548 requires that a veterinarian or veterinary technician who has reason to believe that an animal has been abused must report it to authorities. This measure was signed into law.

The HSUS Golden Anniversary: The Next 50 Years

By HSUS President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne Pacelle

A
t the age of 50, any individual or institution pauses to reflect on both the past and the future. That moment has arrived for The HSUS.

Five decades since its inception, The HSUS can look back on its accomplishments with pride. The HSUS has grown and diversified since 1954, now employing experts in companion animals, wildlife, farm animals, and animal research and attracting more than 8 million members and constituents. The HSUS has developed the most sophisticated government affairs, investigations, and humane education programs of any animal protection organization, and, recognizing that animal exploitation extends beyond our borders, now extends its programs across the globe.

Yet while our gains and our growth have made the largest and most influential organization in the field, the challenges ahead are daunting. Animal abuse—especially in institutional forms, such as factory farming—remains more acute than ever.

As we look ahead, The HSUS will continue to pay attention to the wide range of issues that affect the lives of animals. We will never forget our birthright: the responsible care and protection of companion animals. We will also work to root out persistent forms of animal cruelty such as dogfighting, cockfighting, and other blood sports. But we must redouble our efforts to protect long-neglected classes of creatures, specifically animals raised for food, who are confined and killed by the billions every year.

We must become a powerful and unrelenting force in the public policy domain, working to halt intensive confinement of animals on factory farms; to compel companies to stop needlessly and duplicatively testing on animals; to limit alternatives exist; to shutter "puppy mills" that mass-produce dogs for the pet trade when millions of healthy and adoptable animals face abandonment or euthanasia for lack of suitable homes; to halt the fur trade; and to safeguard animals' habitats so they, too, have space and shelter.

The professional staff of The HSUS can do a great deal to achieve these goals. But we cannot accomplish them alone. Only when HSUS members in communities are active—in financially supporting our efforts; by writing letters to newspapers and lawmakers; making responsible and humane choices in our daily lives—will we see success.

Only with your active engagement will we see, on the distant horizon 50 years from today, a truly humane society that accounts for the basic needs of animals and treats them all with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Wayne Pacelle took over as The HSUS president and chief executive officer this summer. He has been with The HSUS for 10 years and served most recently as senior vice president for communications and government affairs. The HSUS has grown and diversified since 1954, now employing experts in companion animals, wildlife, farm animals, and animal research and attracting more than 8 million members and constituents. The HSUS has developed the most sophisticated government affairs, investigations, and humane education programs of any animal protection organization, and, recognizing that animal exploitation extends beyond our borders, now extends its programs across the globe. Wayne Pacelle took over as The HSUS president and chief executive officer this summer. He has been with The HSUS for 10 years and served most recently as senior vice president for communications and government affairs.
By Eric Sakach
Director of the West Coast Regional Office

The Hayden Act and California’s Animal Shelters: Good Intentions Aren’t Enough

Gov. Schwarzenegger showed the strength of character to reverse a decision when he was shown the error of his ways. We applaud him for his actions, and urge him to sit down with us and take a larger and more in-depth look at the plight of homeless animals in California (see story on page 1).

As originally proposed in his 2004–2005 budget, Schwarzenegger wanted to repeal several sections of the Hayden Act, the controversial 1998 law named after former Santa Monica senator and activist Tom Hayden, who was the prime mover behind the act.

The Hayden Act is controversial because some parts of it are very good, and others are very problematic. The provisions that benefit animals and shelters alike include requirements for shelters to: seek veterinary care for animals in their care; hold stray animals, including small animals (guinea pigs, hamsters, etc.) for six days to allow owners a better chance to reclaim them; document and report the number of animals they handle; and use any acceptable means, including microchips, to identify owners of seized or stray animals. These requirements, along with provisions requiring people accused of animal cruelty to pay for their animals’ care while the issue of guilt is being decided, and preventing people who have been convicted of animal cruelty from owning animals for up to three years are positive aspects that should remain unchanged.

Clearly, Hayden meant well. How often is it that a legislator drafts a bill that would reduce euthanasia, increase adoptions, and give lost animals a better chance of reuniting with their owners? Examining the actual situation in California after the enactment of such a law demonstrated that the Hayden Act was filled with good intentions, but woefully shortsighted when it came to helping shelters comply.

Historically underfunded, California’s animal shelters were not prepared for the heavy financial and operational burden that they were forced to accept with regard to two Hayden mandates. The law required a 72-hour holding period for owner-relinquished animals and that all adoptable and treatable animals be adopted. In reality, what this meant was that whenever an aggressive, unsocialized, unadoptable dog was relinquished by an owner, the shelter had to hold the animal along with all the others awaiting adoption, causing huge problems with overcrowding.

The law was achieving the opposite effect of what was intended. As a result, some private shelters stopped accepting stray animals and others dropped their contracts to house strays for local municipalities. Likewise, some public animal shelters, against their better judgment, stopped accepting owner-surrendered animals in order to free up space to accommodate the longer holding periods. “People are frustrated because they want to relinquish their animal to us, and they’re turned away,” one shelter director told us.

Overcrowded conditions for animals are now a serious problem in many of California's animal shelters, many of which were built more than 30 years ago and were not designed to hold the large numbers of animals they are now expected to hold. At times, some shelters have been forced to hold double their capacity. Shelters already filled to capacity found it nearly impossible to accommodate the additional animals without massive increases in their budgets. For example, The City of San Bernardino Department of Animal Control estimated that complying with the law led to an increase of at least $150,000 in operational expenses alone. This is a crisis that many shelters have been dealing with for years. In order to comply with the Hayden Act, many shelters sacrifice other important programs including field services and cruelty investigations.

Of course, we all want euthanasia of adoptable animals in shelters to be a thing of the past. But we must recognize and agree that the Hayden Act is not a magical fix. Pet overpopulation still exists, and looking to shelters alone to solve a problem they didn’t create is not the answer.

We look forward to working with Gov. Schwarzenegger on this important issue.

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