ALDF Takes On Wildlife Killing Agency

Animal protection organizations aim to shut down the United States government’s needlessly cruel $100 million war on wildlife

The USDA’s “Wildlife Services,” a federal predator control agency, has been mismanaging our wild habitats and killing our nation’s wildlife indiscriminately, recklessly, and cruelly for decades. And that’s why ALDF is leading a coalition of animal protection organizations and conservation groups to stand up for wildlife. In an ongoing campaign, we are working with county leaders to establish better ways of managing native carnivores and other wild animals. From eagles to condors, foxes to coyotes, and bears to bobcats, there is simply a more humane and more effective way to coexist with native wildlife, and it comes in the form of nonlethal predator control.

“Wildlife Services’ methods kill too many animals unnecessarily and aim to protect livestock at the expense of natural ecosystems,” said Chris Green, director of legislative affairs at ALDF. “States are obligated to manage wildlife resources for all...
The Animal Legal Defense Fund knows that advocating for nonhuman animals also means recognizing the connection between our environment and all the individual animals living in it—and this means our work for wildlife overlaps with conservation issues as well. Issues of climate change, overpopulation, and loss of precious habitat in our wild lands have a serious impact upon wild animals.

That is why ALDF has joined forces with animal protection groups and conservation organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council, Center for Biological Diversity, Project Coyote, Mountain Lion Fund, and Animal Welfare Institute to fight what we see as a war on native wildlife. The USDA's predator control agency, ironically called “Wildlife Services,” haphazardly slaughters tens of thousands of animals—like coyotes, bobcats, bears, beavers, and birds—in the most cruel and reckless ways. It’s time for proper wildlife management that is more effective at maintaining the balance of our ecosystems, and protects all animals in a humane way.

Indiscriminate predator control means inhumane and dangerous methods—like steel-jaw traps that, in addition to slowly and painfully killing their intended victims, capture “non-target” animals, including animals on the endangered species list as well as companion animals out for a stroll. As an outdoor enthusiast and a longtime wildlife advocate, my own dogs have been caught in the jaws of wolf traps in Alaska—I will never forget the sound of Olaf screaming as I worked hard to pry the trap jaws off his mangled toes. Though we were able to save him, most animals aren’t so lucky. And that’s why we need a wildlife management system that makes sense—that allows native wildlife to coexist with human populations. The relationship between native predators like coyotes and ranchers needn’t be completely one-sided, where wildlife always loses. The Animal Legal Defense Fund, and the growing coalition it is building between animal advocates and advocates for the environment, knows there is a better way.

We hope you enjoy the brand new design for our newsletter, and we are glad to be able to share stories of our work with our updated look. As a member of ALDF you make our campaigns for animals possible. Heroes like you ensure that more animals receive the justice they deserve and that our fight continues.

For the animals,

Stephen Wells, Executive Director
In March, Oglesby pled guilty to aggravated animal abuse for this depraved and sadistic crime and will serve one year in jail on that charge. What happens to those reward offers you read about on ALDF.org? Does ALDF ever get a chance to pay out the reward and help put an abuser behind bars? Well, thanks to some brave youths in Brooklyn this spring, that's just what ALDF did. When we come across a disturbing case of animal cruelty and there is no suspect captured ALDF steps in to offer a reward—a financial incentive to help track down and successfully prosecute animal abusers. These rewards not only allow communities to take action, but are also a way for ALDF to support law enforcement in their pursuit of justice for victims of heinous crimes.

Last summer, an orange tabby cat named Michael, alone in the stairwell of an apartment building, was caught by a perpetrator who used liquid accelerant to set the cat on fire. Michael was discovered by good Samaritans and brought to the North Shore Animal League. Sadly, despite heroic efforts by Dr. Mark Verdino and veterinary staff, Michael had to be humanely euthanized to relieve intense suffering from deep tissue burn injuries—the fire had torn through Michael's fur and skin and melted his claws. "The circumstances of Michael's death are horrible and underscore the need for increased criminal penalties for perpetrators of such acts of violence and increased government funding of humane law enforcement efforts," said Deputy District Attorney Dianne E. Malone.

To help track down the person responsible for this poor cat's torture, in July of 2013 ALDF offered a $1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator responsible for Michael's suffering. New York Detective Anthony Schembri led the investigation and tracked down and traced a crucial 911 call. Despite the violent nature of the crime, four brave young witnesses in the Brooklyn community came forward to cooperate with the investigation and help put the perpetrator behind bars. The defendant—Denzell Oglesby—was identified in a photo array and is also suspected of killing a neighbor's cat prior to Michael's death. The ALDF reward was split among the youths, whose identities are being protected for their safety.

In March, Oglesby pled guilty to aggravated animal abuse for this depraved and sadistic crime and will serve one year in jail on that charge (he will serve an additional year for bail jumping and attempted burglary). He is also prohibited by court order from owning, living with, or having any control or custody over an animal for five years.

In March, Oglesby pled guilty to aggravated animal abuse for this depraved and sadistic crime and will serve one year in jail on that charge.

"This abuser is being held accountable for his terrible act of cruelty," said Stephen Wells, executive director of ALDF. "Given the horrific nature of this crime, the Animal Legal Defense Fund is pleased to pay out this reward—we hope it encourages witnesses to come forward in the future to report and help prevent further acts of cruelty."

"Sadly, it is rare to see meaningful jail terms imposed in cases like these," observed Scott Heiser, director of ALDF's Criminal Justice Program and former elected district attorney from Oregon. "This case has proven to be the exception, thanks to the true dedication and fantastic work of Detective Investigator Schembri, former Deputy District Attorney Malone, and Kings County District Attorney Kenneth P. Thompson."
Working behind the scenes and in concert with law enforcement, ALDF has helped secure justice for animal victims in thousands of cases in courts throughout the nation. Now, Oregon animal abusers have a new reason to get packing. Just last year, ALDF awarded a three-year grant to fund and field the nation’s first dedicated, full-time animal cruelty prosecutor. This fully sworn prosecutor—Deputy District Attorney Jake Kamins—is available to handle animal abuse cases for any one of Oregon’s 36 district attorneys. Jake’s sole responsibility is putting animal abusers on trial, and he is based out of Corvallis, Oregon in the Benton County District Attorney’s office. It is a cutting-edge program intended to make sure that no criminal gets off the hook for animal cruelty due to a lack of prosecutorial resources.

Jake knows how important it is to have a dedicated animal cruelty prosecutor. He says, “Animal cruelty cases are technically and factually complex; every animal is different, and I am often dealing with dozens or even hundreds of victims. District attorneys throughout Oregon are facing substantial budget challenges. Focusing one prosecutor’s resources entirely on the issues of animal neglect and abuse ensures that these defendants are held fully accountable.”

Some of the work Jake has done includes a Polk County, Oregon case, in which more than 200 dead or starving alpacas were discovered in March 2014—the owners were indicted on animal neglect charges. In another case, in June 2014, Robert Gruntz was convicted by a jury of 10 counts of animal neglect. In 2009, Gruntz ran an investment scam that involved housing racehorses in California and Oregon. He was supposed to ensure that a herd of around 80 horses in Powell Butte got the care they needed. Instead, Gruntz underfed and mismanaged the herd and gave them little to no medical care. The 14 most neglected horses were seized and forfeited. Jake and ALDF helped Oregon State successfully appeal a motion to suppress the case. As this issue goes to press, Gruntz faces half a year of jail on each count, and will not be able to own domestic animals or equines for five years. Most of the horses involved were successfully re-homed and rehabilitated (sadly, some had to be euthanized).

ALDF’s Criminal Justice Program director Scott Heiser—himself a former elected Benton County District Attorney—is delighted with Jake’s progress. “When we began this process, I had one goal in mind—to ensure that animal cruelty cases are not among the growing list of crimes that go unprosecuted in Oregon,” Scott says. “Jake’s work and this position is a model to be implemented in other states.” And he notes, Jake’s work “engaging with the courts, prosecutors, and local law enforcement, has been overwhelmingly positive.”

For Jake Kamins, being the nation’s first dedicated animal cruelty prosecutor is challenging but brings its own rewards. “Helping to place neglected or abused animals into loving, stable environments and ensuring that neglectful or abusive animal owners are held accountable” is a big part of that reward. Jake is married with two children and they share their home with an 18-year old cat named Cassie.
citizens, not just ranchers who want to see all predators exterminated.”

So what’s the big deal with Wildlife Services? Well, it isn’t just “a bobcat here or a coyote there,” humanely euthanized to solve the problem of predation upon “live-stock” animals. Instead, the agency has killed a million coyotes and 15 million birds in the past decade, spending more than a billion taxpayer dollars to do so. In California, the agency kills thousands of bears, coyotes, mountain lions, and other native wildlife each year. The agency also relies upon controversial and outdated cage, steel-jaw, and Conibear traps and wire snares that maim and trap animals who then may take several days to die. These cruel devices are even used in suburban areas and have been known to injure hikers and kill pets.

As for the individuals responsible for “managing” wildlife, several have been caught torturing captive coyotes and dogs for their own amusement—like the Wildlife Services employee who posted photos of his dogs mauling trapped coyotes and bobcats on Facebook. In media reports, former trappers have called such abuse “very common,” and an outraged public has called for serious overhaul of this secretive, mismanaged, and archaic agency.

Nonlethal methods—used for example by Marin County, California—are very effective at chasing away coyotes. Other humane methods include range riders, herders, night penning of livestock, removal of carcasses that attract predators, and training herds to bunch up, rather than scatter. Still other effective methods include using alarms on radio collared animals and nonlethal ammunition. Marin County has been using humane predator control—spending the money they previously used on Wildlife Services to instead help ranchers implement these methods. Over the 13 years since the nonlethal program was initiated, Marin County has seen livestock predation decrease by 62% while spending only a third of what they formerly were paying Wildlife Services.

“Counties that introduce humane predator control to replace their Wildlife Services contract are standing up for wildlife. Taxpayers don’t want their hard-earned dollars funding a rogue federal killing agency,” said Stephen Wells, executive director of ALDF. “Drawing upon local resources and directing public funds to more effective and more humane wildlife management is better for our communities.”

That’s where the Animal Legal Defense Fund steps in. In 2013, we urged the Sonoma County, California Board of Supervisors to reconsider its contract with this killing agency. After presenting them with the facts, ALDF encouraged them to replace their wildlife control with humane, effective methods. In response, the county declined to renew the contract with Wildlife Services. And just this summer, ALDF joined with conservation organizations to urge other counties, like Humboldt and Mendocino, to follow the lead of Sonoma and Marin.

ALDF is calling on every county to reconsider the way it coexists with wildlife by more wisely protecting endangered animals and humans and pets, and by implementing more effective ways to protect animals on ranches. It is a campaign that stands to protect millions of animals and wild ecosystems across the nation. For more information, visit ALDF.org/wildlife-services.
In the first half of the year, we received several generous donations from estates. Many thanks to those people who include ALDF in their wills, helping to sustain our organization.

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Our new Legacy of Love Program ensures that your companion animals will receive a lifetime of care after you are gone. Leave a bequest to ALDF in the amount of $25,000 (cash and/or assets) and know that your animals will be well taken care of, in a loving home, for the remainder of their lives. Contact Dale Thompson, ALDF development associate, at 707-795-2533, x1046, or at dthompson@aldf.org, for more information.

Animal Law Leaders Gather at This Year’s Conference

The 22nd Animal Law Conference will be held at Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon October 17-19th this year, and we hope to see you there! The Animal Law Conference gives attorneys, law students, professors, and activists from around the world a place to share ideas, knowledge, and practical skills about advancing the interests of animals through the legal system. It has become one of the largest and most popular of its kind, including the most respected voices in the field of animal law.

This year’s conference will feature cutting-edge topics such as:

► “ag gag” legislation;
► closing the gap between animal law and environmental law;
► population growth as an animal rights issue;
► national and international trends in criminal and civil law; animal law employment opportunities; animal testing issues;
► the role of documentaries in animal advocacy; and the intersection of animal law and religion.

These topics will be presented by the best and brightest experts including the Center for Animal Law Studies Assistant Dean and Executive Director Pamela Frasch, Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Founder and General Counsel Joyce Tischler, ALDF’s Litigation Program Director Carter Dillard, and Animal Law Coalition General Counsel Russ Mead among others.

Friday night’s keynote speaker will be award-winning investigative journalist Will Potter, whose focus includes animal rights, environmentalism, and civil liberties. He recently raised nearly $100,000 on the popular website “Kickstarter” to buy drones and other equipment to get a bird’s eye view into what really goes on at factory farms. Saturday night’s keynote speaker will be Kieran Suckling, the outspoken co-founder and executive director of the Center for Biological Diversity, who has been called “the most-feared environmentalist in the West.”

The Animal Law Conference is co-presented by Animal Legal Defense Fund, the Center for Animal Law Studies at Lewis & Clark Law School, and the Lewis & Clark Student Animal Legal Defense Fund. We hope to see you there!

KILLING CONTEST SHUT DOWN | FROM PAGE 8

Project Coyote filed a lawsuit that alleged the annual “JMK Coyote Hunting Contest” in Crane, Oregon constituted a gambling enterprise, which is illegal and a public nuisance in the state of Oregon. This killing contest required hunters to “buy in” to the contest by paying an entry fee of $100. Top teams won cash prizes totaling more than $10,000 for various kills, including “most kills” and “largest kill.” Previous killing contests with this organization resulted in the death of nearly 150 coyotes. Under Oregon wildlife laws, there is no limit or restriction on the killing of coyotes.

We are delighted to report that in June, ALDF and Project Coyote settled that lawsuit with the killing contest organizer. In response to the lawsuit, the contest organizer had filed a counter-claim for $100,000. Arguing the counter-suit was an attempt at intimidation, ALDF and Project Coyote asked the court to dismiss the counter-suit. As a result, the organizer dropped his meritless claim and settled the lawsuit against him by agreeing never to host another hunting contest in Oregon and to pay $5,252 in fees to ALDF and Project Coyote.

Killing contests are an ineffective and cruel wildlife management tool. Wildlife biologists have shown that mass slaughtering of native predators like coyotes impacts not only that coyote population but the entire ecological framework of the habitat in which they live—from the birds to the trees to the rivers and the bees.

“Hundreds of coyotes can live a peaceful life in the precious ecosystems of Oregon’s wilderness,” said Stephen Wells, executive director of the Animal Legal Defense Fund. “The mass killing of coyotes and other native wildlife during killing contests is cruel and environmentally destructive.”
ALDF’s fifth annual National Justice for Animals Week celebrated America’s Top Ten Animal Defenders. The campaign’s mascot, Sunny, was a small dog rescued from notorious serial animal torturer Jeffrey Nally, who was convicted of 29 counts of animal cruelty with the assistance of ALDF.

ALDF helped secure a felony conviction in the case of a Fraser, Michigan man. Justin Coppola pleaded guilty to felony animal killing after a police officer witnessed Coppola throwing a kitten out a car window and attempting several times to run the kitten over before picking the kitten up and throwing him out of a moving vehicle.

ALDF filed a joint lawsuit against the California Dept. of Transportation for causing the deaths of migratory cliff swallows in a highway widening project netting in violation of federal laws. Governor Jerry Brown ordered an independent review of the department and a California State Assembly subcommittee approved a requirement that the Department consult with wildlife conservation groups before proceeding.

ALDF, along with PETA and individual plaintiffs, filed the first lawsuit in the nation to challenge the constitutionality of an ag gag law. Utah’s law, which criminalizes the videotaping on factory farms, attacks activity protected under the U.S. Constitution.

In a successful resolution in ALDF’s lawsuit against New York-based Hudson Valley Foie Gras, the largest foie gras producer in the nation stopped advertising its products as “humane.”

ALDF, in collaboration with the Center for Animal Law Studies, jointly sponsored the 2013 Animal Law Conference at Stanford Law School, featuring award-winning television journalist Jane Velez-Mitchell.

In ALDF’s lawsuit against WCI Foxhound Training Preserve, Inc., an Indiana coyote penning operation, the court found that WCI had illegally hosted “field trial” hunting competitions in which dogs chased, and eventually killed, live coyotes within an electrified, enclosed area.

ALDF’s Animal Law Program added its 195th chapter of the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF), spread across the top law schools in North America.
ALDF and Project Coyote Shut Down Shameful Killing Contest

In our last issue, we told you about the shameful practice of coyote killing contests—in which participants compete to see who can slaughter the most coyotes in the shortest amount of time for cash prizes. As we explained, these contests exploit legal loopholes. We are happy to report that ALDF recently closed one of these loopholes—and shut down an Oregon killing contest for good.

Earlier this year, in January, ALDF and