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NEW YORK'S HORSERACING INDUSTRY: SUBSIDIZED CRUELTY

by Patrick Battuello

Founder/President of Horseracing Wrongs

In 2004, New York's horseracing industry, no longer able to compete with casinos and the lottery, petitioned the legislature for help — subsidies, which eventually took the form of slots parlors at nine of New York's 11 tracks. This subsidization now exceeds \$230 million per year — and is growing. These payments were initially intended to give the failing industry an opportunity to become self-sufficient. 19 years and over \$3 billion in corporate welfare later, and that goal has not been, nor will be, met.

Worse still, since these subsidies first began flowing, the industry's prospects have dimmed even further. Last year, mobile sports-betting (MSB) debuted in NY. In its first 12 months, MSB generated over \$16 billion in handle, dwarfing the \$2.3 billion recently reported, and celebrated, by the New York Racing Association. Crucially, however, the MSB companies (FanDuel, DraftKings, et al.) pay 51% tax on wagers. In 2019, the last pre-covid year for which we have data, horseracing paid a microscopic 1.3%. So, this past year, MSB sent \$709 million in handle tax to the state; horseracing — that's all 11 tracks — sends in roughly \$10 million. That's \$10M minus the \$230M it receives, leaving horseracing as an annual net drain on the state of \$220M. Insane.

In addition, Saratoga excepted, since 1978 attendance at NY tracks has plummeted: Aqueduct, down 94%; Belmont, down 87%; Finger Lakes, down 83%. At the



INSIDE.....

- **Progress for Animals and the Environment in 2022**
- **A Closer Look at Federal Laws Protecting Wildlife**
- **Red Foxes in Your Neighborhood**
- **Fireflies and Our Future**
- **And MORE!**

seven harness tracks, attendance is so embarrassing they no longer even report it. (Typically, though, you'll find less than 50 middle-aged men on any given night).

Beyond being an affront to our free-market system — the vast majority of state businesses rightly receive no government handouts — this massive subsidization engenders a wrong against the two most vulnerable members of our society. In propping up an archaic, moribund gambling industry, the legislature is cheating schoolchildren out of tens of millions of desperately-needed dollars each year. (The primary beneficiary of all state-sanctioned gambling is supposed to be education.) But this corporate welfare also allows for the continued abuse and killing of horses.

From 2009 (when data was first made public) through 2022, 1,741 horses perished at NY racetracks — an average of over 120 per year. Imagine that. Now consider this: Without those aforementioned subsidies, nine of the 11 tracks — Aqueduct, Finger Lakes, and all seven harness — would have shuttered years ago, meaning that almost 1,000 beautiful, intelligent, and sensitive beings would still be alive today. And, of course, this doesn't even begin to account for the likely thousands more who were raced in NY and who were eventually bled-out and butchered in foreign slaughterhouses.

In short, currently NYS taxpayers are subsidizing animal cruelty — racehorses are confined (alone, to tiny 12'x12'

continued on page 6



People for Animal Rights (PAR) is a local grassroots organization founded by Linda DeStefano. **PAR** is dedicated to work for fundamental, nonviolent change to eliminate or reduce the oppression of non-human animals by humans. **PAR** also works to protect the earth, which sustains us all.

What does it mean to be a member?

According to our by-laws, a person is a member of **People for Animal Rights** when s/he agrees to our purposes as defined in the by-laws (as stated above) and has general agreement with **PAR's** goals as stated in our membership brochure, which is summarized in the insert to this newsletter. The second requirement for membership is that the person be up-to-date on dues. See the enclosed insert for more membership information.

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PROGRESS FOR ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN 2022

New York State

- Governor Hochul signed into law a moratorium on using fossil fuels to mine crypto. There is a 2 year pause on new & renewed permits for fossil fuel power plants. DEC is required to study the practice of cryptomining using fossil fuels and the environmental impact.
- Gov. Hochul also signed a bill that mandates that 30% of NYS land and water be protected by 2030. The bill emphasizes restoration of biodiversity, climate resiliency as well as expanded access to nature for all.
- **New York Cruelty-Free Cosmetics Act:** prohibits the sale of cosmetics in NYS that have been tested on animals.
- **Puppy-Mill Pipeline:** Pet stores are banned from selling inhumanely bred dogs, cats and rabbits. The law encourages the sale of dogs and cats from shelters. It takes effect in two years allowing shelters and pet stores to put into place their systems to facilitate this.

Federal

- **Big Cat Public Safety Act:** Bans the private ownership of big cats and prohibits cub petting operations.
- **Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act:** Prohibits the possession, sale and purchase of shark fins.
- **FDA Modernization Act:** Ends the 84 year old animal testing mandate for experimental drugs.
- **Honeybee Vaccine:** Critical to the US food supply, honey bees have been in sharp and alarming decline. American foulbrood attacks the larvae and can destroy an entire colony in just weeks. The new vaccine is administered to the queen in a sugar mixture and is passed down to her offspring.

International

- Ireland, Latvia and Malta have banned fur farming.
- Dolce & Gabbana, Moncler, Parajumpers, Copenhagen Fashion Week & Frasers Group have all committed to go fur free.
- South African Government suspended all hunting and export quotas for leopards, elephants and black rhinos.
- South Korea, Brazil and Indonesia will drop animal test requirements for vaccines & biological drugs. ■

A CLOSER LOOK AT FEDERAL LAWS PROTECTING WILDLIFE

by Gabor Hardy

In these gloomy days of February, I often wonder whether anything is moving forward to aid the fate of animals throughout the USA (and elsewhere). So it was with delight that I read an article called "Barbaric Hunting Practices to Be Banned in Alaskan National Preserves." (Lindsey Botts, Feb. 1, 2023: Sierra/authors/lindsey-botts) This is an article found in the *Sierra Club Magazine*. In this short essay I shall attempt to lay out the main findings and issues touched upon by the author.

It appears that in Alaska for some years the hunting of bear cubs and wolf cubs in their dens were allowed. The thinking was that if you killed off the natural predators of deer and moose there would then be more animals to kill for the hunter. Botts quotes many reliable individuals from conservation groups, environmental groups, and even members from the National Park Service along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska. They note that allowing this kind of hunting would cause deer and moose populations to soar which lead to further problems, not to mention the cruelty involved.

Other practices banned by upcoming rules include hunting game by the use of powerboats, using laser guided bullets, using machine guns, and unnatural traps. I learned that there is something that is on the books called "fair chase". This notion states that animals should have a fair chance to escape their pursuers. A ban on these practices had been in effect during the Obama administration. However, in 2020 the Trump administration reversed these rules. I suspect that the real reason these rules were reversed was because it came from former President Obama. It is quite sad to learn how cruel practices can be weaponized for political gain.

I also learned that using human food for bait was a legal practice in Alaska. This practice can lead to the endangerment of humans and is an artificial way to trap wildlife. This too will be banned in accordance

with the reinstated rules governing hunting in Alaska. Botts further noted that around 98% of local and state people opposed these Trump administration reversals. Essentially, their voices went unheeded. This seems to indicate that several powerful voices (though not in the majority) have more say in making rules than a majority. Of course, this is quite undemocratic.

Hunting is further defined as existing either for sports or subsistence. Botts points out that there are a different set of rules for both in Alaska. (Not quite sure about other states.) I wish that Botts had something to say on this point. She generally stayed away from the moral or ethical considerations of hunting as a sport. I got the impression that she could have gone into that, but that it was beyond the scope of her article.

A growing awareness is developing among people everywhere that animals do have the right to forage for food, live, and generally have access to land or water. I remember an old Cat Stevens song that asks the question: Where do the children play? I might add another: Where do the animals live? Federal lands, are perhaps, the last refuge for wildlife. Rules for maintaining and preserving land and those living creatures who live on them — need to be made. That needed regulations to protect animals, while not moving forward as fast as we would wish, is occurring is the main message of this article. This is an optimistic note to hear. Bott's article illuminates a place where legislation is gradually producing an effect. A light cutting through the ignorance of human misconceptions. ■

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For your respect, kindness and compassion for humans and animals and our planet...

"One day the absurdity of the almost universal human belief in the slavery of other animals will be palpable. We shall then have discovered our souls and become worthier of sharing this planet with them."

"Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way."

RED FOXES FAMILIES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

by Elise Able

The months of March, April, May and June are fox kit season in New York. People may become alarmed when they see adult foxes near their homes and trotting through yards during the day. Red foxes are very adapted to living in suburban and even urban areas. They are not nocturnal, so it is normal to see them any time of the day or night. When hunting, foxes scour the foundations of our homes and businesses, because that's where the rats and mice are. Suburban neighborhoods provide



foxes, who are omnivores, with plenty of rodents, roadkill, insects, food scraps, compost, grasses, seeds, fruits, and berries. Neighborhoods also provide

foxes with plenty of shelter and places to raise their young underneath sheds, decks, and old barns. Foxes may come in closer to humans to raise their families, because coyotes are in the further out areas. If a coyote finds a fox den, it may dig up the den and kill all the young in order to preserve enough rodent hunting and food for her own pups. Foxes instinctively know this, so they choose the lesser of two evils and come in closer to humans and away from the coyotes to raise their young. Please be kind and "rent" out your space to momma fox for a few months—you will be glad you did!

People tell me, "my gardens were never better! Thank you for talking to me about the fox family. We watched them instead of TV. They were so wonderful! We hope they come back next year!"

Foxes may have a den under your shed, porch, barn or in the back yard in a hill. In June, when the kits are older, they will be seen less and less. By late June or July, the fox family will most likely be gone and everything will be back to normal. Red foxes will not live in a den year-round. They only use a den to raise their families. Out of a litter of six, it is likely that only two or three young foxes will live to see September.

People are often worried that their family pets and children might be attacked. Foxes do not want to kill or eat your child, cat or dog. They don't want to get injured by trying to tackle formidable larger "prey". Foxes who grabbed a deceased cat from the road are sometimes wrongly blamed for the cat's death. They may watch your pets with concern, bark at them, and may even chase

your cat back into your yard or up a tree if it goes near the den. Of course, thankfully, many cat owners realize the many risks of allowing their cats to roam free, and know that a healthy adult dog will be able to hold his or her own against the average ten-pound fox. In fact, foxes, dogs, and cats often develop friendships and play.

An interesting little-known benefit of having a fox family in your yard, is that as long as the space is being used by foxes, it will not be used by skunks who may raise two litters a season or raccoons. Red fox urine is often used to humanely convince skunk and raccoon families to relocate their families.

Many people are afraid they can't use their yards or let their pets outside until the foxes are gone. Keep in mind that before you realize the family was there, you used your yard and let your pets out and everything was okay. Use your yard as you always have. If the fox is uncomfortable, she will move her family.

Please allow the mother fox to raise her pups in peace. Do not hire someone to relocate the family, as this will not work out well for anyone. The most that will happen is that one or two pups will be caught (and surely killed by the hired person) and the mother will get frightened and move her family. Quite often, a single last kit simply cannot be captured, ultimately suffering from loneliness and dying of starvation in the den. Many states have laws that state captured wildlife must be killed. Though trapped "humanely" by a hired agent, the ultimate ending for the family is generally not humane at all. Be patient and enjoy the fox family. It is a lot of fun to watch the pups scampering and tumbling with each other. In fact, it is more educational and better entertainment than most television shows on these days. Enjoy the breath of fresh air and the beauty in your back yard. It may be a once in a life time event for you.

Teach your neighbors about foxes if they notice them crossing the yards during the day. Red foxes are not nocturnal and it is normal for them to be active at any time of the day or night. Momma works very hard to feed her family. She will work all day and night to feed her growing young. The males are also very attentive parents.

If you really can't have a fox family in your yard, you should place an object such as a punch balloon, chair or



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RED FOXES... continued

continued from previous page

a bucket near the den, but not too close as to scare momma away from grabbing her pups and moving them away from the scary object. About 10 feet from the den should be enough to concern her. A very young family can be encouraged to leave on their own by sprinkling coyote urine in the area as well. Momma will think a coyote has discovered her den and will move them away from the danger. Coyote urine can be purchased online, and also works to encourage momma raccoons and skunks to move their very young babies. Think about this though, momma felt safe enough in your yard to have her pups there. Where else will she be able to move those pups where they will be safe? Don't be too quick to assume a young family will be a nuisance. They will provide you with free rodent control and wholesome entertainment. ■

The author, Elise Able, runs Fox Wood Wildlife Rescue, Inc., a small rescue and sanctuary for dogs and wildlife in East Concord, NY. The comfort and healing of the animals there are her first priority. Donations to assist with medical care, feeding, housing, and raising of orphaned fox and other mammals are always welcomed. 100% of the donations go directly toward saving animals. There are no paid staff or officers. Check out Fox Wood Wildlife Rescue on Facebook, and at <http://www.foxwoodwildliferescue.org/> Donations are appreciated and can be made via Paypal to: foxladye@yahoo.com You can chip in by checking out my Amazon Wish List too! https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3835W81H6XGOI/ref=nav_wishlist_lists_3

WHAT WILL BE YOUR LEGACY FOR ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT?

Please consider a bequest to People for Animal Rights and continue supporting our work far into the future. 85% of donations are used to reach out and educate. 15% are used for incidentals such as office supplies and postage. As always, PAR is grateful for your contributions.

WILDLIFE KILLING CONTESTS

By Nancy A Camorati

A wildlife killing contest is an event whereby prizes are given to participants who kill the most of a specific species of wildlife. Prizes are given for the most killed, the largest, smallest, ugliest etc. Contests are generally sponsored by hunting supply stores and gun shops.

Targeted animals can be coyotes, foxes, bobcats, rabbits, squirrels, crows, ground hogs and more. Thousands are killed each year where these contests are legal in 43 states.

The participants are allowed to use any means to attract their prey including baiting, cruel traps, scenting, calling and spotlights. Participants have an unfair advantage that does not provide for a fair chase. Unsportsmanlike practices, unfair advantages and no limits go against all sense of sport. It is a pure blood sport for the enjoyment of a few at the expense of innocent animals.

Proponents often cite overpopulation, and damage to livestock and crops as their justification. It is scientifically proven that these 'cullings' do nothing to control the perceived overpopulation of the targeted species. They also do nothing to increase the number of desired species to hunt, for example deer and turkeys.

Targeted species rebound quickly as more food is available to the survivors. They may also mate at an earlier age and have more offspring each litter to replenish the natural balance of an ecosystem.

There is a movement afoot to outlaw these cruel contests. The Humane Society of the United States is lobbying in New York state to get a bill passed, and has been for 10 years. To learn more about this issue, email peopleforanimalrightscny@gmail.com and request the HSUS booklet titled 'Wildlife Killing Contests: A guide to ending the blood sport in your community' In addition, to keep up with the bills in the NYS Senate and Assembly, go to nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2023/S4099. The Assembly companion bill is A2917. Go to nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2023/A2917. There you will be given an opportunity to contact to vote in favor of these important bills. You can also contact your senator and your assembly member directly from this website. If you wish, there are sample letters in the HSUS booklet, or you can just vote in favor. ■

CAN YOU EAT HONEY IF YOU'RE VEGAN?

By Chris Day

Honeybees, as well as other pollinators, are crucial to life. Planet Bee reported that in 2021, 45.5% of managed beehives in the U.S. collapsed. That is a scary statistic because without bees, there would be no food. It's vitally important to do everything possible to protect them, and we can't afford to lose a single one.

Bees love honey just like people do. What's not to love? It is a fantastic substance. Honey never spoils. It has health benefits — although it should never be given to a child under the age of one — and it can be used as a cough syrup. People have used honey for centuries, including the ancient Egyptians, who thought so highly of the sticky substance that they would offer it as a gift to their gods (per Honey Association). With so many advantages and such a long history, you'd think everyone would want to eat it. But is honey vegan?

Most people understand what vegans do not eat — no meat, dairy, or eggs. Vegans avoid using animal products,

including leather and silk products, but what's the buzz about honey?

DO NO HARM

From an ethical standpoint, vegans believe that animals — even insects — are not ours to use in any manner. Many vegans think that because honey is a food made by bees, it should only be consumed by bees and to take that honey for our use is wrong. Vegans believe in ahimsa, a Sanskrit word meaning “do no harm.” Unfortunately, commercial honey harvesting can often harm the bees.

Bees produce honey to sustain them through the winter; however, many commercial honey producers will replace the honey they take from the hive with corn syrup or sucrose, which does not provide the nutrients necessary for the health of the bees (via Healthline). A lack of nutrients can weaken a bee's immune system, making it more prone to the damaging effects of pesticides and more vulnerable to deadly illnesses.

Commercial beekeeping practices don't always consider our fuzzy friends during the business of honey production. In the same way birds in factory farms are destroyed when there's an outbreak of bird flu, bees are often culled if there's an outbreak of disease that could spread throughout the hive or simply if the beekeeper doesn't want to continue to feed the hive throughout the winter (via Guardian). Bees can be accidentally killed during the harvesting process as well (per Food Empowerment Project).

SWEET SUBSTITUTES

Making honey is hard work for the bees. According to Live Science, a bee has to visit over one thousand flowers to collect enough nectar to fill its belly. Once it's full, it returns to the hive to vomit out the contents of its stomach. The nectar is then passed from one bee's mouth to another to chew until it's transformed into honey and stored in the hive to be eaten later. If thinking about honey as bee barf doesn't turn you off, nothing will.

If your appetite for honey has been lost, don't worry — you have options. Substitutes like agave nectar, corn syrup, or molasses can often be used in recipes in place of honey. There are even commercial honey substitutes, like Bee Free, made from apples.

You can do your part to protect the bees by planting native flowers and other plants that attract them. Set up a place for them to build a hive away from people and let them do their thing without intervention. It's the sweetest way for you and the bees to live. ■



FIREFLIES AND OUR FUTURE

by Rob English

The fireflies are out this month. Have you seen them, winking on and off on a warm, dark night, each male blinking his own personal flying, flash pattern; each female sitting at the top of a length of tall grass, watching for just the right male signal to respond to? If she sees what she likes she will call the male down by imitating his flash and later she will deposit her fertilized eggs on the ground. Days later new larvae will hatch and crawl under the earth where they will grow and feed and wait for another year and another spell of warm, wet weather to bring them out to flash.

In ancient times the female firefly's watch was easier. There were no blinking satellites to distract her, no car or streetlights or streetlight-mounted blue-flashing police cameras, no Christmas lights strung on porches, and no fascinated children trying to catch them in jars.

If we shift our eyes upward from the back-yard grass at night, we see the twinkling stars and the blinking satellites, but even when we look with the strongest, cleverest instruments for looking that mankind has, we cannot see any life out there.

Scientists are baffled. They know that the Universe is unbelievably vast and filled with stars that have planets, and that millions, maybe billions, of those planets are amenable to life as we know it; yet we never find any sign of life. That paradox — the Fermi Paradox — insists that millions of civilizations must have formed on those planets, but where are they?

One possible answer arises from the “other” vastness of the Universe — its vast lifetime. It may be that civilizations rise up, develop intelligence, thrive for a million years, send signals to space, then ultimately decay, and go dark, never to be heard from again. It may happen quite often out there. But “quite often” on the clock of the Universe, a civilization's beginning and end is but a blinking firefly to any godlike creature who could sit for billions of years and watch the night sky. By the theory, civilizations have been blinking on and off throughout the Universe for fifteen billion years. We don't see them because we happen to be living in a section of the cosmos where any “fireflies” near us all happen to be between blinks.

On Earth we have developed a civilization that sends out signals. Will we thrive for a million years or more? Or will we wink out relatively soon due to any of the reasons that an intelligent species winks itself out? In my opinion our future is really not about whether individuals use plastic straws or paper or plastic bags, although those questions are important. Instead it's about the decisions our governmental leaders make. Only grassroots demands will cause them to do what is

right and what will keep our civilization alive and make it healthy for our grandchildren and the flora and fauna now dependent on us.

Write, telephone, march in the streets, use paper straws. Don't let others do it.

And if your kids catch fireflies in jars, please make holes in the tops so the bugs can breathe, and kindly let them go after a day or two. ■

VEGAN CHOCOLATE CHIP CUPCAKES

Submitted by Sabrina Bowker

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 Tbsp chia seeds
- 9 Tbsp water
- ½ stick vegan butter (¼ cup softened)
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup vegan chocolate chips



DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350° Fahrenheit.
2. Start with the chia seeds. Put the chia seeds in a small bowl and add the water. They will be ready to use in 15 minutes.
3. In a large bowl, cream the butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla with a hand mixer.
4. Add the chia seed mixture and mix in.
5. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, and salt.
6. Gradually beat the flour mixture into the wet mixture, adding the almond milk with it. When done, add the chocolate chips.
7. Put paper cups in the cupcake pan. Fill each cup about half full. (I use a cookie scoop.)
8. Bake for 20 minutes. Check with a toothpick. If toothpick comes out clean it's done.
9. Cool in pan for 10 minutes then put on wire rack until completely cool.

Makes about 24 cupcakes. ■

NY'S HORSERACING... continued

continued from page 1

stalls for over 23 hours a day), controlled (cribbing collars, eye blinders, tongue ties, lip chains, mouth bits), commodified (lip tattoos, auctions, “claiming races”), and cowed (whips) — and animal killing. (For more information regarding horseracing cruelty, please refer to the Fall/2022 newsletter of People for Animal Rights...the article, “What Is Wrong With Horseracing?” by Patrick Battuello of Horseracing Wrongs.)

So, what can we do about it? Horseracing Wrongs, as part of a large, diverse coalition, has helped introduce legislation that would redirect those subsidies — again, \$230 million a year — from animal exploiters, many of whom are wealthy, to schoolchildren. **Please help us...Urge New York State Legislators to Support Legislation to End Horseracing Subsidies - Action Network.**...apply respectful but forceful pressure on our lawmakers.

Thank you. ■

Note regarding sources: financial and attendance figures come from the NYS Gaming Commission and the Governor's Office, information on deaths comes from the NYS Gaming Commission. This issue will continue in discussion during the upcoming webinar event (July/2023) presentation by People for Animal Rights with Horseracing Wrongs as guest presenter.



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FIREFLY FACTS

Submitted by Nancy Camorati

Fireflies are not flies, they are beetles. They spend most of their time underground. There are approximately 2000 species spread around the world particularly where it is warm and humid.

They are bioluminescent, creating their own light along with a handful of other species. Different species emit different colors. Some glow yellow, others green, orange, turquoise or bright red. They glow during all stages of life. Even disturbed eggs have been seen to emit a faint glow.

Male fireflies flash a pattern to signal willing females. Females reply with their own pattern of flashes. Flashing is also used to attract prey.

Firefly populations are shrinking due to climate change and light pollution which interferes with their ability to detect the flashing of their prospective mates.

It's easy to help fireflies and treat yourself to a wonderful display in the late summer evenings. They rely on fallen leaves on the ground to shelter through the Winter. Raking your leaves deprives them of this protection. Leaving your leaves on the ground is a great help along with turning off your outdoor lights during the mating season. ■

