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LAWS editorial by Wally Burley

Its good news about the banning of wild animals in Circuses. I would have preferred to ban all performing animals in Circuses. There is still a great deal of work to do in regards to campaigning to stop the Badger Cull and we must never rest until the Government changes its mind. We must thank Mary Creagh MP Shadow Environmental Secretary for her support and work to stop the cull. We must also thank the great band of Labour MP's who without their support the ban on wild animals in Circuses would not have been won. We must also thank them for the support they have given to stop the Badger Cull.

GOVERNMENT U-TURN ON WILD ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES

The good news is that the Government has published draft legislation to ban the use of wild animals in travelling circuses in England. From 1st December 2015, wild animals will no longer be used by circuses travelling the country.

The December 2015 implementation date is too far away and we would like to see this ban applied much earlier. LAWS are pleased with the part that they played, together with CAPs and many other organisations and individuals.

The Tory MP Mark Pritchard stuck his head above the parapet and publicly accused David Cameron of coercion when he attempted to put a three line whip to vote against the proposals during the 2011 Parliamentary debate. However this was not proceeded with and the proposal to ban wild animals in circuses was carried without opposition. The Government stated that they do not have to implement the decision and would put into place regulations. The Labour MP Thomas Docherty moved a private members bill in January this year to ban wild animals in circuses but withdrew the bill when the government stated they would introduce their own bill. We want to place on record our thanks to the large number of Labour MP's who attended and those who spoke in the debate and helped to ensure that the campaign never dropped off the Government agenda.

Impact

April 2013



Stop the Cull in England

There will be no Badger cull in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland but this disgraceful Tory/Lib Government are still proposing to cull Badgers in England even though the scientific evidence and the weight of public opinion is against it. Of course we know why because a large number of Tory and Liberal Democratic seats in Parliament are in the countryside and some of their main supporters are the Hunting and farming community even though a majority of people (63%) in the countryside are opposed to a Badger cull.

LAWS wrote to all Labour MP's asking them to take part in the Parliamentary debate and to vote in favour of the motion that is against the Badger Cull. It was good to see a number of LAWS members and supporters taking part in the debate. Mary Creagh MP Labour's Shadow Environment Secretary made an excellent contribution during the debate.

When the vote was taken those who voted in favour and against the cull were 122 Labour, 1 Green, 15 Conservatives and 9 Liberal Democrats. The two tellers were also Labour making the Labour Total 124. Those in favour of the cull were 24 Tories, 3 Liberal Democrats and 1 Democratic Unionist. The two tellers were Tories.

The Government has now changed its mind and done a U-turn on wild animals in Circuses (report on Page 2). We must endeavour to change their mind on the Badger cull. Write to you MP calling on them to campaign against the Badger cull.

Journal of the Labour Animal Welfare Society

FUR CAMPAIGN REPORT *by Mark Glover*

2012 was a very bad year for the animals targeted by the fur trade for the skins off their backs.

Skyrocketing demand for fur from the new Russian and Chinese wealthy classes pushed the demand and therefore the price of fur pelts at auctions to levels not seen for many years.

With a single mink skin now selling for more than \$100 (some 10% higher than the year before) more and more animals are now being bred in fur factory farms to meet this new demand.

Similarly, as 'Trapper & Predator Caller' (a regular magazine produced for wild animal trappers in the USA) reports, the 'hunger for wild fur is peaking'. At one recent auction more than 400,000 racoon skins were sold for up to \$240. 6,112 bobcat pelts sold for an average of more than \$500 with some skins going for \$3,000. Even otters do not escape the carnage with more than 11,000 sold averaging more than \$100 for each pelt.

Another auction in Russia saw more than 350,000 sable furskins sold for an average of more than \$250 per pelt.

All this adds up to a global fur industry now worth more than \$15 billion a year. The much more important and relevant statistic, however, is that more than 50 million mink are now bred each year to feed this morally bankrupt trade. Add to this the number of fox bred and the wild animals caught and it is estimated that more than 70 million animals are suffering and being killed annually.

The anti-fur campaigners have a huge job on their hands. To take on such an enormous, well-funded and ruthless industry is daunting but essential. The animals confined in the barren, tiny cages, driven mad by their captivity, and those facing indescribable suffering in cruel and indiscriminate traps deserve better and it is only us that can help them.

Despite this seemingly overwhelmingly odds and the gloomy news, 2012 also saw positive moves in the right direction.

The government in the Netherlands (the third largest mink breeding country in the world) passed legislation that will ban fur farming there. Due to the large scale of the industry, a long phase out period was agreed but the last fur factory farm will have to close by 2024.

Croatia and Slovenia have also banned the breeding of animals for their fur which, although they were never large fur farming countries, adds to the growing list of those countries that find the practice abhorrent.

Following a 'people's initiative' in Finland which saw more than 70,000 people calling for fur farming to be banned, a debate is to take place in the parliament. Despite polls showing majority support from the people for a ban it is unlikely that it will come about. Finland is the world's largest breeder of fox in the world.

Unfortunately, due to industry pressure, a move to ban fur farming in Ireland failed to pass in the Dail. Part of the problem is with governments having to deal with economic crises the prospect of paying out compensation to close down fur farms becomes more difficult and the fur industry plays on this dilemma by exaggerating the numbers of jobs that would be lost.

LAWS members will be interested to note that, almost without exception, it is Parties on the left (along with the Greens) that have been at the forefront of all of these initiatives that have either tried to or succeeded in banning fur factory farming.

It is worth remembering that it was the UK that got the ball rolling when, back in 2000, the Labour Government passed the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Act that closed down fur farming here.

Respect for Animals is committed to fighting to end the cruel and unnecessary fur trade. For more information or to support the campaign please call 0115 9525440 or visit www.respectforanimals.org

Birds maimed in their thousands by UK zoos

A report released just before Easter by leading animal protection charity, the Captive Animals' Protection Society (CAPS), exposes the widely-practiced, but little-talked about, practice of pinioning birds in zoos around the UK. The discovery that thousands of birds have been deliberately maimed in order to keep them in captivity has led to calls to see the practice banned by the campaigners and their supporters.

Pinioning is the practice of "the cutting of one wing at the carpal joint, thereby removing the basis from which the primary feathers grow. This makes the bird permanently incapable of flight



because it is lopsided". It is used on birds such as flamingos and wildfowl in zoos that keep the birds in open-top enclosures. The procedure is usually carried out at just a few days old and renders the birds permanently disabled as a result of the partial amputation of one wing.

The report highlighting the practice is entitled "Mutilated for your viewing pleasure" in recognition of the fact that the practice of pinioning birds is classed as a "permitted mutilation" under UK law. The report reveals that a minimum of 6,000 birds in UK zoos have been subjected to the practice but concedes that this figure is likely to offer only a conservative estimate of the true numbers of individuals affected, given the small sample of zoos considered during the study.

amputating the paws of tigers or the legs of giraffes, it would never be accepted. This has gone on for too long – no animal should ever be subjected to the removal of part of a limb simply so that they can be more easily and cheaply exhibited to zoo visitors".

The zoo industry has argued that creating aviaries large enough to house birds such as flamingos would be cost

prohibitive and that, therefore, the only alternative to pinioning would be putting birds in small enclosures. Furthermore, it has been argued that full-winged birds in open top enclosures would escape

into the local surroundings, causing environmental damage. The CEO of the conservation charity, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, gave evidence to Parliament on the subject, stating that they pinion all of their captive wildfowl and flamingos in order to bring people closer to wildlife.

The charity has confirmed that the launch of the report marks the beginning of a concerted campaign, named the "Fight for Flight", to see the practice prohibited in the UK, as it has been in countries such as Estonia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. A petition has been established by the group and can be signed by visiting

www.captiveanimals.org/bird-petition

Seal shooting in Scotland - Update

The Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) has condemned the Scottish Government for sanctioning the shooting of almost 900 seals in the past two years. The figures were published on an obscure website, so avoiding public scrutiny and further outrage at these ongoing killings.

The Marine Scotland website says that 61 licences were granted in 2012 to shoot a maximum of 878 grey and 289 common seals, (1,167 seals in total), by salmon aquaculture, wild salmon netting companies and sports fishing interests, but only as a 'last resort.'

The final quarter figures, posted in mid-March reveal that 349 grey and 74 common seals were shot last year, 423 seals in total. This number represents only 38 animals less than the 461 shot in 2011, the inaugural year of the Government's Seal Licence Scheme. That means a total of 884 seals have been shot in just two years under the scheme.

While the Scottish Government claims the scheme is a success because the overall quota of over 2,000 seals were not shot, SPAG is appalled that almost 900 seals have been reported shot in just two years in Scotland, allegedly as a 'last resort' measure. That's an awful lot of 'last resorts' and it strongly suggests nothing much is being done to curb shooting which is becoming an annual cull under a government scheme we hoped would help end it.

The news followed the revelation that the patent for a new seal-scaring device, developed by scientists at St Andrews University with a grant from the Scottish government, has fallen into the hands of a private finance company in New



York. The device, which has proven very effective in deterring seals in laboratory and field trials, without harming them or other wildlife, is now being offered for trial to Scottish aquaculture companies, but at huge prices!

SPAG backed this device some two years ago, but it is yet to be made available to the salmon industry. SPAG campaigners fear that if simply renting the device for trial is this expensive then it could be priced out of market while seals continue to be shot.

Every day seals are shot in Scottish waters while the Scottish salmon Industry, worth half a billion pounds, quibbles over testing a device for just a few thousand pounds. It's a shameful situation and we appeal to the government and the industry to pull together and subsidise trials far and wide, because it may save seals now as well as resolve an issue that leaves a bloody stain on the image of Scotland and Scottish salmon products.

For further information or to donate to our campaign to save Scotland's seals please visit www.sealaction.org or call us 01273 471403

Saving the pilot whales!



Last year, over 700 pilot whales were brutally slaughtered in the Faroe Islands. Entire family groups pods of whales are driven ashore, gaffed with hooks and then hacked to death with knives. Pregnant whales, mothers and calves, none are spared a truly terrifying and horrific death.

The meat and blubber from the whale hunts known as '*grinds*' are distributed for food even though Faroese Medical Officers have warned it unfit for human consumption because of toxic pollutants that concentrate in the whales.

Campaign Whale has established a network of Faroese people that oppose this whaling and want to work with us to end it once and for all. While linking the consumption of toxic contaminants with the high incidence of serious illness in the Faroese has led to a marked decline in consumption of whale meat and

blubber, sadly, the number of whales killed each year has risen to the same levels seen before these health warnings were issued some five years ago.

To address the resurgence in whale killings, Campaign Whale is working on a major campaign in the Faroes, backed by Sir David Attenborough. While we cannot reveal more details here, it is an exciting and truly unique opportunity to consign the cruel tradition of Faroese pilot-whaling to the history books where it belongs.

We are engaging with the Faroese people in a respectful and non-confrontational way. We aim to convince them that these animals are wonderful, intelligent, highly social creatures, seriously threatened by climate change, toxic pollution, over-fishing and many other growing problems. That these whales are worth far more alive than dead, through whale-watching, rather than whale-killing.

The Faroese no longer need whale meat to survive. In fact the *grind* is producing meat and blubber that no-one can safely eat anymore. For the sake of the whales and the Faroese, the *grind* must end.

**Please help our campaign.
For further information or to
donate to our campaign to
stop whaling in the
Faroes, please visit
www.campaign-whale.org or
call us on 01273 471403**