

# ANIMAL ISSUES **DIGEST**

**NEW TRAPPING REPORT**

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**1,000 LB. OF ILLEGAL  
SHARK FINS SEIZED IN  
WEST AFRICA!**

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**PLUS**

**FUR SAFE FROM PANDEMICS ACT**

**ILLEGAL TRADE ROUTES**





## WELCOME

When you received the Spring 2020 edition of *Animal Issues*, the pandemic was still new, and no one knew what to expect. Like you, I hoped we would return to normal quickly, but I also feared the unknown – what effects it would have on society, animals, the economy ... and the lifesaving work of Born Free USA. There has been so much suffering and loss these past months, but together with you, our combined determination to help protect animals and nature in this new environment has ensured we will carry on stronger than ever.

In this edition, you will read about the many successes you have helped achieve. You will learn about our two recently published reports, the culmination of months of exacting research. *Crushing Cruelty: Animal Trapping in the United States* and *Silent Suffering in Our Own Backyard: Fur Farming in the United States* delve into how trapping and fur farming are regulated (or often aren't) in each of the 50 states. I invite you to read the full reports on our website and find your state's trapping report card. Please also join our campaign to shut down the sale of traps on Amazon by signing the petition on our website.

We've seen tangible, positive outcomes from our capacity-building programs in West Africa. Don't miss the story about how Born Free USA's training led to the seizure of more than 1,000 pounds of illegally traded shark fins. And, you can read about the development of a much-needed regional strategy to combat wildlife crime.

The Born Free USA Primate Sanctuary continues to shine. The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries recently reaccredited the sanctuary, validating it as a leader in providing excellence in animal care, operations, and management. The sanctuary also came through a harrowing winter storm, the likes of which Texas hasn't seen in decades. While the staff may have been cold, dirty, and utterly exhausted after a week without electricity, all of the monkeys emerged safe thanks to their propane-heated houses and the dedication of their human caretakers.

Over the last several months, while in-person meetings were not possible, we have explored new ways to connect with you – our dedicated donors and activists. Thank you for attending our virtual events, liking and sharing our content and videos on social media, and reading our blogs.



Born Free USA not only survived 2020, we thrived. We are doing more now than ever before to make real and lasting change. With your support and encouragement, we were able to expand our reach, increase our supporters and advocates, retain all of our staff, and we even added to our medical team at the primate sanctuary.

All of you who contribute to our work to save and improve the lives of animals have my profound gratitude for supporting our efforts and believing in our mission. All that we have done – and will do – for animals is because of you and your continued support. We are grateful to know you are at our side.

For the Animals,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Angela Grimes  
Chief Executive Officer  
Born Free USA

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We work to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs.

We seek to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world.

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# NEW REPORT EXPOSES THE CRUSHING CRUELTY OF TRAPPING IN THE UNITED STATES

In early April, we released a comprehensive report, *Crushing Cruelty: Animal Trapping in the United States*, amending and updating similar work carried out in 2017 and providing each state with a score out of 100 based on its action to protect animals from cruel trapping.

Disappointingly, only two states scored above 50/100, and almost half of the states scored just 25/100 or under. No state scored 100. The findings present a sobering insight into this practice, which causes suffering and death to millions of animals each year. In addition to inadequate regulation, Born Free USA found that traps, including those that are illegal to use in all 50 states, such as leghold traps for bears, are widely available for sale without restriction on online e-commerce platforms, such as Amazon.

While cruel leghold traps have been banned in more than 100 countries around the world, most U.S. states allow their use, along with Conibear body-gripping traps and snares. All these barbaric contraptions, which have barely changed in design in more than 400 years, are indiscriminate and cause immense suffering and harm to their victims. Incredibly, many states allow these traps to be set on public lands, including within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Along with scores for each state's position on trapping, the report explores the extent of trapping and the content of mandatory educational courses by some states for would-be trappers ahead of licenses being granted. Worryingly, we found that multiple states promoted the drowning of animals to death as "humane" as part of their formal education courses, despite the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) specifically stating that this is categorically not the case. In addition, commercially available trapping guides documented the accidental trapping of companion animals and provided advice on killing animals caught in traps, including disturbing suggestions that using wooden clubs to beat animals to death is standard practice.

The litany of concerns highlighted in the new research confirm that there is significant work to be done to protect animals from trapping, but we believe that change is possible. We have developed recommendations for each individual state and associated actions that you can take, in your capacity as both a constituent and consumer, to call for progress.

The report, state report cards, and campaign actions can be found at [bornfreeusa.org/crushingcruelty](https://bornfreeusa.org/crushingcruelty).

All these barbaric contraptions, which have barely changed in design in more than 400 years, are indiscriminate and cause immense suffering and harm to their victims.

# FROM THE BEST TO THE WORST, NOT A SINGLE U.S. STATE GETS FULL MARKS ON TRAPPING

Our trapping research informed the production of state report cards, which highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each state's legal position on trapping. Not a single state in the country got full marks. While California and Hawaii scored significantly higher than all other states due to their bans on commercial and recreational trapping within their boundaries, both states still allow trapping for "pest control" and by government agents. In California, such trapping is even permitted within 10 national wildlife refuges – places where animals should be safe from harm.

With the exception of California and Hawaii, all states allow trapping by private citizens for recreational and commercial purposes and have some form of licensing regime in place with regard to trapping. However, not all trapping activities require a license. For example, in Alabama, trapping of fur-bearing animals for commercial purposes requires a license, but other kinds of trapping, such as recreational

trapping, do not. Whether or not a license is required when trapping on private land differs from state to state and is contingent on the species of animal being trapped.

At the opposite end of the scale to the high scorers, we find Maine and Texas, which both scored a terrible 6/100. Maine is the only state that still allows bear trapping. While the lowest scores barely registered on the 100-point scale, the majority of other states did not fare much better. Indeed, almost half of the states scored 25/100 or under. Only six states have issued bans on leghold traps, five states have banned Conibear (body-gripping) traps, and 12 states have prohibited snares.

There is significant work to be done to end cruel trapping in the U.S. and you can be part of the campaign for progress. Visit our campaign page at [bornfreeusa.org/crushingcruelty](https://bornfreeusa.org/crushingcruelty) to access your state's report card and find information on how you can get involved. Together, we can end cruel trapping across the nation!

**ONLY SIX STATES HAVE ISSUED BANS ON LEGHOLD TRAPS, FIVE STATES HAVE BANNED CONIBEAR (BODY-GRIPPING) TRAPS, AND 12 STATES HAVE PROHIBITED SNARES.**





# TRAPPING VICTIMS' FUND HELPS SAVE LIVES

Every year, countless animals – both targeted and non-targeted – are caught in traps. Once trapped, these animals endure severe pain, stress, and trauma for days, and in some cases a week or more. They languish injured without food, water, or shelter, and the animals who manage to free themselves are usually severely injured and later perish from their injuries. Trapping is indiscriminate and any animal – including dogs, cats, and endangered species – can have the unfortunate luck of walking in the path of a trap.

Born Free USA shared the story of Maggie the puppy, known now as Bunny in her adoptive family, and her trapping ordeal, which resulted in the amputation of her leg and months of painful rehabilitation.

Sadly, Maggie/Bunny is only one of several dogs our Trapping Victims' Fund has helped save. River, a Great Pyrenees, lost most of the toes in



his front paw after being caught in a leg-hold trap. Somehow, River freed himself and was discovered by a Good Samaritan who took him to a veterinarian. Due to the extent of his injuries, River, like Maggie/Bunny, had to have his leg amputated.

Born Free USA's Trapping Victims' Fund helps save the lives of trapped victims. Because of your donations, we were able to help provide financial assistance to the Great Pyrenees Rescue in Montana. They took great care of River through his long rehabilitation, and River is now living happily with his adoptive family!

**Learn more about the Trapping Victims' Fund, and meet all of the fund recipients, at [bornfreeusa.org/trappingvictims](https://bornfreeusa.org/trappingvictims).**

## HELP STOP TRAPPING AND FUR FARMING!

As you read this, foxes across the United States are suffering in fur farms, being crushed by cruel body-gripping traps, and ultimately facing excruciating death. But, you can help save animals from this cruelty by adopting a fox!

For only \$1 per week or \$5 per month, you can protect these precious animals by symbolically adopting a fox! Your adoption gift will

support Born Free USA's work to fight trapping and the fur trade, and save foxes and other fur bearing animals from suffering and exploitation.

You will receive a virtual adoption package that includes a printable adoption certificate, a species information sheet, a digital photo of a fox, and updates about our anti-trapping and anti-fur campaigns.

In honor of the millions of lives lost to trapping and the fur trade, please adopt a fox today to help end trapping and fur farming!



**Adopt a fox today at [bornfreeusa.org/adopt-a-fox](https://bornfreeusa.org/adopt-a-fox).**

# SILENT SUFFERING IN U.S. FUR FARMS

Animals on fur farms experience miserable lives of extreme confinement and are bred and maintained to maximize fur output with little or no consideration for their health, comfort, or quality of life. The animals suffer throughout their short lives enduring extreme fear, stress, illness, and pain.

In November 2020, Born Free USA released *Silent Suffering in Our Own Backyard: Fur Farming in the United States*, a comprehensive report analyzing the fur farming industry and regulations across the country. As of 2018, there were an estimated 245 mink farms in 22 U.S. states producing 3.1 million animal pelts.

The report showed a severe lack of regulations, oversight, enforcement, and transparency across the states.

With hardly any recordkeeping and a tendency for legislators to remain static on this important issue, the United States has failed to match the progress made in Europe to close down fur farms, and the legislative landscape of U.S. fur farms today remains almost identical to that of decades ago. This is not only an enormous animal welfare issue, but with the ongoing threat of the coronavirus pandemic and the fact that mink are carriers of the virus, it also presents a significant public safety risk.



Read *Silent Suffering* and take action against fur farming at [bornfreeusa.org/silentsuffering](http://bornfreeusa.org/silentsuffering).

## FUR SAFE FROM PANDEMICS ACT

We are now over one year into the COVID-19 pandemic, and while there are signs of hope everywhere, there is one fact we cannot afford to overlook: the link between mink, fur farms, and the spread of COVID-19.

Mink are highly susceptible to COVID-19, and – even worse – can pass a mutated form back to humans. To maximize profits, mink fur farms pack animals into unsanitary, miserable environments that are not only inhumane, but also create an ideal setting for pathogens to develop and spread. As we begin to make inroads against this devastating pandemic, we should not ignore the fact that mink are kept in conditions

that incubate and alter the virus – or possibly create a new pathogen and the next global health emergency.

In order to better protect public health and limit the scope of cruel fur farms – notorious for the mistreatment of and cruelty to animals – Born Free USA has partnered with other organizations to develop legislation phasing out mink fur farms in the United States. The FUR SAFE from Pandemics Act would outlaw mink fur farms after a one-year phase-out period, while simultaneously creating a voluntary grant program allowing farmers to receive financial aid to responsibly transition out of the fur farming industry entirely. Finally, in a



call for increased transparency and safeguarding public health, this bill would require all fur farms – regardless of species – to register with the USDA. We hope to get the bill finalized and introduced in Congress this spring.



# A VICTORY AGAINST WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING: MORE THAN 1,000 POUNDS OF ILLEGAL SHARK FINS SEIZED IN WEST AFRICA!

## Born Free USA's law enforcement trainings yield big results in the fight against wildlife crime!

In February 2019, Born Free USA organized a training workshop for customs officers in Benin. The workshop covered – among other topics – the threats facing sharks and specific training on identifying shark and ray species and their fins. Sharks are vulnerable to overfishing and are slaughtered for their fins, which are used to make shark fin soup, considered as a delicacy in parts of Asia. Learning to identify these species is an important skill for customs and law enforcement officials.

Last year, in September 2020, this training paid off when customs officials at Benin's Cotonou Airport seized 106 illegally trafficked shark fins from multiple CITES-listed shark species, including the shortfin mako shark and hammerhead species.

The fins were shipped from Pointe-Noire in Congo as unaccompanied luggage on a passenger flight. A third party was then to retrieve the baggage at Cotonou Airport and organize ground transportation to Ghana for export to Asia. In addition to the seizure of the trafficked fins, the trafficker in Benin was arrested and sentenced to one year in prison and fined \$364 USD (200,000 CFA).

Then, two weeks following our training course for customs officers in Ivory Coast last October, the Customs Services at Abidjan Airport in Ivory Coast made its first ever seizure of shark fins: the confiscation of 257 pounds (116.4 kg) of fins, which was shipped from the airport of Pointe-Noire, Congo.

Three days later, the Forest Inspection Service at Abidjan Airport intercepted a shipment of shark fins weighing 772 pounds (350 kg) belonging to the same suspect and destined for Asia.

The trafficker, a Guinean national, was arrested in collaboration with the Airport Anti-Trafficking Unit, tried, and sentenced to two months in prison.

The consignments of fins seized contained parts of at least 10 different CITES-listed shark species.

These seizures are examples of how effective training is for authorities in West Africa, who fight every day to stop wildlife crime and its devastating impact on biodiversity and individual animals. We congratulate the officials in Benin and Ivory Coast on their accomplishments and commend all of the dedicated men and women who are on the front lines of the fight to stop illegal wildlife trade.

While seizures and arrests cannot bring back wildlife, these shark fin seizures and other confiscations are important steps forward in ending illegal wildlife trade, as they take wildlife products off the market and put traffickers out of operation. We will continue to organize and expand trainings so we can equip many more officials with the wildlife law enforcement skills needed for successful seizures as well as strengthen legal frameworks and increase sanctions for wildlife traffickers.



# ILLEGAL TRADE ROUTES PROVE THE NEED FOR BETTER COORDINATION BETWEEN WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The role of West African countries in wildlife trafficking is not fully understood, and very little is known about the routes used by wildlife traffickers in and through West Africa. These routes can be subject to rapid change and are often arbitrary.

Between 2017 and 2020, Born Free USA conducted extensive research to map illegal trade routes across West Africa. Some of these routes are used as exit points for specific species, while others are generally used as transit links between regions.

Born Free USA's findings show that Nigeria, Togo, and Guinea are transit hubs for wildlife from other West African countries destined for Europe, Asia, the United States, and Canada. Nigeria is a transit point and source country for trafficking in elephant ivory and pangolin scales sourced within Nigeria and from other African nations.

Ghana and Ivory Coast are key transit nations for trafficking wildlife from other parts of Africa, with species either sold in these countries or sent to other African countries, Europe, or Asia.

The complexity of these routes demonstrates that there is vital need for countries to exchange intelligence and coordinate their wildlife law enforcement initiatives. Born Free USA is working with authorities in the region to develop a strong framework for combating wildlife trafficking through the supply, transit, and demand chain, and to harmonize their legal response to wildlife trafficking including through the development of a West African regional strategy for combatting wildlife crime.

## Trade Routes Used for Illegal Wildlife Trade

(1997 - May 2020)



### SENEGAL

#### FROM

West, East, North and Central Africa; Mali; Niger; Nigeria; Guinea; Burkina Faso; Côte d'Ivoire; The Gambia; Ghana; Guinea-Bissau; Sierra Leone; Senegal; Algeria; Côte d'Ivoire and Benin

#### TO

West and Central Africa;

Algeria; Nigeria; Sierra Leone; Guinea;

Sierra Leone; Cameroon

Senegal; Mali; Belgium; other

France; Spain; Italy; Germany; Taiwan

USA; Canada; UK; France; Germany; Spain

USA; Canada; UK; France; Germany; Spain

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USA; Canada; UK; France; Germany; Spain

## INVEST IN NATURE. INVEST IN BORN FREE USA.

Your donation will help combat the illegal wildlife trade, protect endangered species and their habitats, and help abused captive animals. Please consider making a donation using the inserted envelope or by visiting [bornfreeusa.org/donate](https://bornfreeusa.org/donate).



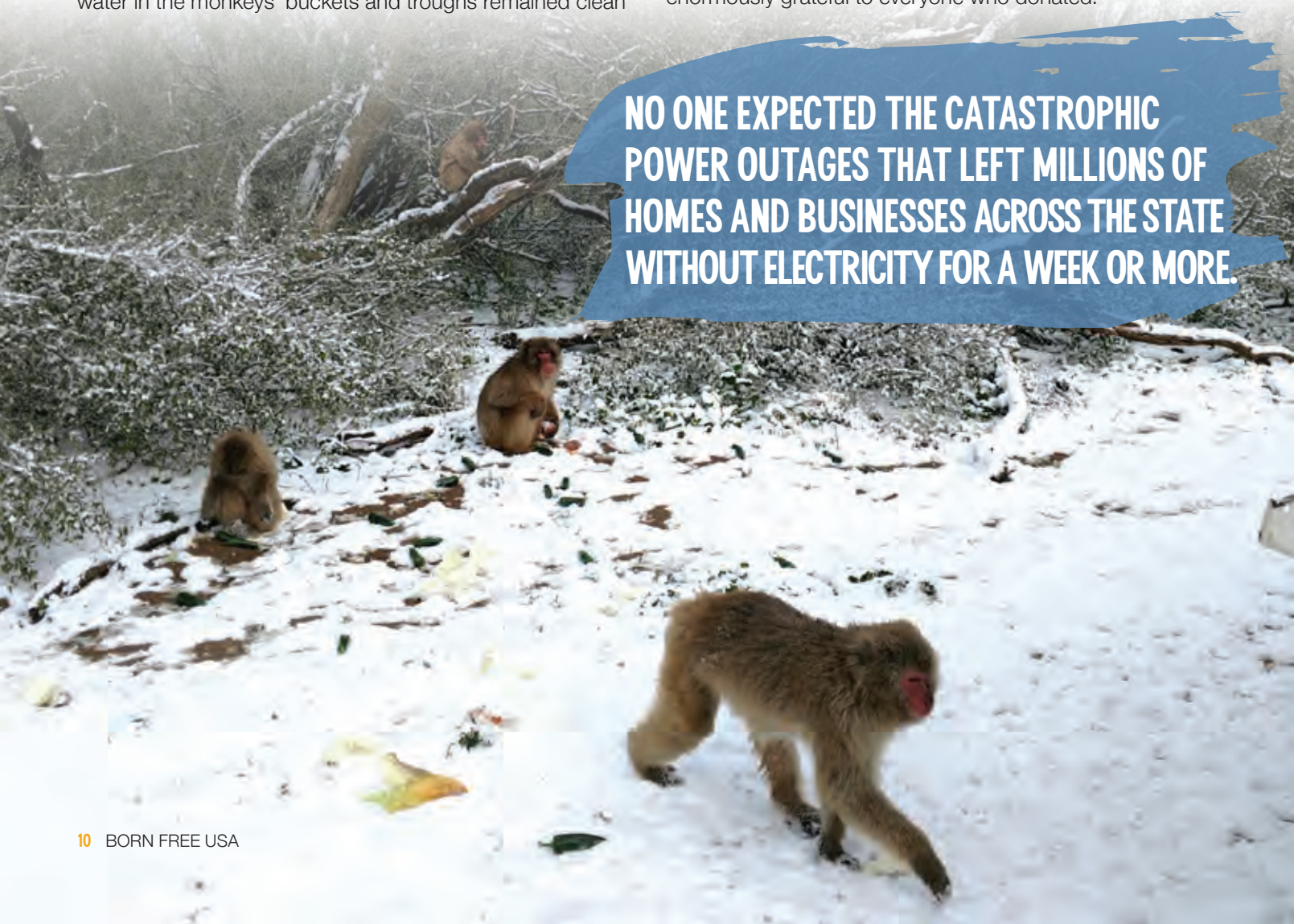
# WINTER STORMS RAVAGE SOUTH TEXAS BUT SANCTUARY MONKEYS REMAIN SAFE

**M**id-February saw south Texas, where our primate sanctuary is located, ravaged by winter storms not seen in the area for more than 30 years.

Our team knew the storm was coming and spent the days leading up to it ensuring that all the monkeys' heaters were in full working order and everyone had adequate shelter. But, no one expected the catastrophic power outages that left millions of homes and businesses across the state without electricity for a week or more. Thankfully, our enclosures are heated by propane, so the monkeys kept warm despite temperatures remaining well below freezing for days. However, our water pump, which provides clean water to both animals and humans, runs on electricity; no power means no water. Fortunately, due to the cold, the water in the monkeys' buckets and troughs remained clean

enough for safe drinking, although staff needed to break the ice on the water containers multiple times a day to ensure everyone had access to it. Staff rationed the small amount of bottled water they could find in local stores.

Power finally came back on, but it was two more days before the various burst pipes, leaks, and broken water pump were back in operation. The storm created significant unexpected costs, but thanks to the incredible response to our emergency storm appeal, our generous supporters donated funds to pay for the extraordinary expenses. It was a huge relief to know that the considerable costs of both propane for heating and damage repair were covered. We are enormously grateful to everyone who donated!



**NO ONE EXPECTED THE CATASTROPHIC POWER OUTAGES THAT LEFT MILLIONS OF HOMES AND BUSINESSES ACROSS THE STATE WITHOUT ELECTRICITY FOR A WEEK OR MORE.**



# MONKEY MOVES AT THE PRIMATE SANCTUARY

We are always trying to improve the quality of life for our monkey residents at the sanctuary, which involves ensuring that they are in the best possible living spaces we can provide. At the beginning of this year, we had four monkeys in an enclosure built in 2003 that had outlived its usefulness, and while we seek funding to build them new enclosures, we needed to find them a current solution.

Moving monkeys is not a simple undertaking. There are multiple factors to take into consideration; group size, dietary needs, health concerns, social dynamics, and individual personalities are some of the major considerations.

All considered, we devised a complex plan of around 16 steps involving 20 monkeys. The moves ranged from groups simply shifting through adjoining doors into adjacent enclosures, to being transported to different parts of the 175-acre property.

To facilitate the most stress-free moves possible, we built a tunnel system between three separate enclosures so individuals could move from one to another when we open the sliding doors between them. This does not always work. For example, when trying to move Mrs. Wilkin and Anna from one enclosure to another, we found that Mrs. Wilkin had trouble climbing up to the tunnel. We spent hours measuring,

cutting wood, and constructing a ramp that gently sloped up to the tunnel entrance so she could access it. We proudly presented it to her and... she refused to use it. In the end, we had to catch Mrs. Wilkin, place her in a transport crate, and move her to the new section.

That is one of the challenges of working with animals – they have unique personalities and may react in unexpected ways to anything we do! Despite the hurdles, everyone is now happily living in their new spaces and the old enclosure has been decommissioned. You can read a more detailed account of how this complex task played out at [bit.ly/sanctuarymoves](https://bit.ly/sanctuarymoves).

## ADOPTION ALERT – INTRODUCING GILBERT!



It is high time to introduce Gilbert into our adoption program! Gilbert, a long-tailed macaque, was kept as a pet for many years before arriving at our sanctuary. Pet monkeys often are the most challenging individuals to rehabilitate

because they do not have the opportunity to learn how to be monkeys, but Gilbert has blossomed into quite the character. Gilbert is one of the friendliest and chattiest monkeys at the sanctuary. He welcomes caregivers with flirty eyebrow flashes and noisy lip smacks. Please consider adopting Gilbert!

And, don't forget we have 17 other very special monkeys in our adoption program. For only \$1 per week (\$52 per year), you can help provide nutritious food, enrichment, and medical care to monkeys who have a second chance because of your support.

With each adoption, you will receive a package that includes:

- ✓ A photo of the monkey you adopt
- ✓ Your monkey's biography
- ✓ A personalized certificate of adoption
- ✓ An adorable plush toy

**Adoptions make great gifts, too!**

**Adopt today at [bornfreeusa.org/adopt](https://bornfreeusa.org/adopt).**

## SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:

# PHYLLIS AND ROGER SHERMAN

Born Free USA knows Phyllis and Roger Sherman because of their critical support for the monkeys at our sanctuary in south Texas, but they have also touched the lives of hundreds of cats, dogs, and wild animals.

Upon retirement, Phyllis and Roger moved to San Antonio, Texas. While exploring their new city, they quickly became aware of the city's many stray animals. In fact, they met their first dog, Sadie, a chow/German shepherd mix, while walking on San Antonio's famous Riverwalk. They took the stray puppy home and realized they had a new family member when she rolled over in submission to their two cats, Mozart and Amadeus. Sadie's rescue was just the beginning!

When Phyllis and Roger learned that their adopted city killed more than 56,000 animals per year, they decided to do something about it. They became involved in the Spay-Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP) that provides affordable spaying and neutering as well as veterinary care.

Roger served on the SNAP Board of Directors for 10 years. They also turned a lovely guest house into a sanctuary for foster cats, and their greenhouse became a medical isolation clinic. Phyllis and Roger raised numerous kittens and found

the reward of seeing him during walks with his new, forever family.

Phyllis and Roger have been Born Free friends for many years. Several years ago, they hosted a luncheon where Born Free Co-Founder Will

Travers OBE entertained the audience with a slide show about Born Free campaigns. In the audience that day was a woman from a local wildlife rehabilitation facility – Angela Grimes! As you all know, Angela is now our CEO and became part of Born Free USA shortly after the gathering.

A few years ago, Phyllis and Roger moved back to Minnesota to be with family. While they miss San Antonio and all the

many wonderful animal supporters, Phyllis and Roger still offer a welcome home to rescues, Charley, a loveable terrier mix, and Ramsey, a small cat with a huge personality.

Born Free USA sends a big thank you to Phyllis and Roger for helping so many animals, including the monkeys at our sanctuary!



homes for them. In 2008 and 2009 alone, they took in 64 dogs and cats. Their good works became so well known that they often found dogs and cats in their yard, abandoned overnight. One morning, they found a blind white Labrador tied to their gate. They were able to adopt the sweet boy, whom they named Bentley, to a good friend and had



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY, VIRGINIA!

The board and staff of Born Free USA join the worldwide celebration of our co-founder Virginia McKenna's 90th birthday! Virginia exemplifies the idea of compassionate conservation, and her lifetime dedication to the protection of wildlife is an inspiration to us all.

Virginia may be best known for her portrayal of Joy Adamson in the film *Born Free*. Virginia's empathy for the orphaned lion cub Elsa, and her fierce determination to have Elsa live free in Kenya, transcended the role she was playing. What the audiences responded to was not simply Virginia's legendary acting ability, but a conviction from the core of her being that wild

animals belong in the wild and not in confinement or exploitative conditions.

For the past five decades, along with her son, Will Travers, and late husband, Bill Travers, Virginia has been an eloquent voice for wildlife. From its inception as a small grassroots organization, Born Free has grown into an internationally respected authority on animal protection.

Thank you, Virginia, and the very happiest of birthdays!

— **Brook Ashley,**  
**Born Free USA**  
**Board Vice President**



## WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

Your estate gift creates a legacy of hope and compassion for animals for the next generation. When you name Born Free USA in your will or trust, you support the lifetime care of animals at our sanctuary, help protect entire species, and keep wildlife in the wild.

Please contact us at [info@bornfreeusa.org](mailto:info@bornfreeusa.org) or by phone at (301) 448-1407 to discuss a planned gift.

# U.S. LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2021

While it is hard to choose just one top legislative priority for 2021, the Big Cat Public Safety Act (H.R. 263/S. 1210) is right at the top of the list. This bill would prohibit the private possession of big cats and also ban the public contact – such as cub petting and photo ops – that drive the rampant, irresponsible breeding and interstate trade of captive big cats. Keeping big cats such as lions, tigers, and leopards in captivity and breeding them unchecked is cruel to the animals, dangerous for the public, and may contribute to illegal international wildlife trafficking.

This bill enjoyed unprecedented exposure and momentum following the sensational Netflix docu-series *Tiger King*. The Big Cat Public Safety Act passed in the House of Representatives last December with a strong bipartisan vote. However, time ran out before the Senate could vote. With the onset

of the new two-year Congressional session, the bill was reintroduced in the House of Representatives in January and in the Senate in April. Born Free USA has been a leader on this legislation since it was first introduced a decade ago, and we will be there when it finally crosses the finish line – we hope this year!

Another longstanding priority has been the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act. While it has not been reintroduced yet this year, this bill is vital in limiting the scope of trapping on federal lands. Indiscriminate traps on public land – including near hiking trails and on national wildlife refuges – puts both humans and unintended targets, including imperiled species and companion animals, at serious risk.

The Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act would prohibit the possession or use of all body-grip traps on national wildlife refuges. The purpose of

these lands is to be a sanctuary for native wildlife, and yet trapping is allowed on approximately one-third of refuges. The use of cruel body-gripping traps violates the mission of the refuge system and is a safety threat for wildlife, humans, and pets.

Our priorities do not stop there. We will also be working this year on federal legislation that protects primates (the Captive Primate Safety Act); phases out mink fur farms (FUR SAFE from Pandemics Act); limits the scope of trophy hunting (CECIL Act; ProTECT Act); saves the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale from extinction (SAVE Right Whales Act); and addresses the global health risks posed by wildlife markets (Preventing Future Pandemics Act, H.R. 151/S. 37).

We have a busy year ahead of us, and we are grateful we can count on your support and activism!

**STAY UP-TO-DATE ON THE LATEST WILDLIFE NEWS AND WAYS TO TAKE ACTION FOR ANIMALS BY JOINING BORN FREE USA'S EMAIL LIST! SIGN UP TODAY AT [BORNFREEUSA.ORG/NEWSLETTERS](https://bornfreeusa.org/newsletters).**



# COYOTE KILLING CONTESTS:

# POINTLESS CRUELTY

It is monumentally frustrating for an animal advocate when the law and the science are both on your side, and it does not matter!

Early this year, Cheshier's Outdoor Store, in Belleville, Ontario, announced a coyote killing contest. We had been through this before. Coyotes are "managed" provincially, and under the province of Ontario's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, Section 11, unless specifically authorized by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, it is illegal for a person to (a) hunt for hire, gain, or expectation of gain; (b) hire, employ, or induce another person to hunt for gain; (c) trap for hire, gain, or the expectation of gain; (d) hire, employ, or induce another person to trap for gain; or (e) pay or accept a bounty.

The contest clearly violated provincial law, so Born Free USA mounted a challenge aimed at stopping the contest.

The current provincial government has enacted a plethora of anti-environmental, anti-animal, and anti-wildlife legislation. Across the province, environmentalists are fighting a range of habitat-destroying plans and initiatives hastily enacted with minimal public input and no regard for science-based warnings and objections. Therefore, it was no surprise that (with a bit of tweaking) the contest was allowed to go ahead, lasting through the month of February.

Coyotes, like all wildlife species, play a crucial role in maintaining the health of their ecosystems. Yet, coyotes are widely disliked by farmers because they sometimes prey on sheep and other farm animals. Predator killing contests are intended as a way of controlling populations of "nuisance" wildlife, and a bounty is supposed to provide an incentive for hunters to kill enough animals to reduce the population. But, science shows that incentivizing killing

does not achieve that effect for a range of species, including coyotes.

Thanks to "compensatory mortality" (or "population rebound"), a reduction in coyote numbers leads to less competition among remaining individuals, enhanced health and fecundity, and ironically, a growth in population following the next breeding season. It is different with some other species, such as wolves, where incentives for killing can indeed lead to extirpation.

In addition to the misguided attempt to use the killing contest as population control, the contest was also a threat to a nearby endangered wolf species. The endangered Algonquin wolf lives within an easy drive to Belleville. There are only a few hundred and the species is supposedly fully protected by law. They are visually quite similar to coyotes in appearance, although bigger on average. Since one of the categories for reward was size – a prize for the biggest coyote – there was a serious risk that the contest would put endangered Algonquin wolves under threat of being mistaken for large coyotes, and killed.

Cheshier's claims it was within the law, but if the words of the law mean what they say, the contest was illegal. Legal or not, the fact is that predator killing contests are cruel to the animals, dangerous for endangered species that might be mistaken for target species, and useless for achieving the stated aim of "population control." Born Free USA will continue to fight to end these contests and protect wildlife from being killed in the name of "fun."



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