

of the threat to wildlife with a wide range of treaties and regional agreements.

Species that are under special threat — such as polar bears, whales, northern fur seals and migratory birds — are the subject of separate treaties designed to restrict the killing or trading of these animals. Africa, Europe and the Americas have all concluded regional treaties to protect habitats and there are four wildlife treaties that are of global significance: the CITES Convention on trade in endangered species; the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; the World Heritage Convention; and the Bonn Convention on the conservation of migratory species. These four treaties form the legal basis of the World Conservation Strategy — an international plan to conserve and protect the natural world.

With so many laws and treaties in place, it might well be asked: Why is it that wildlife is still being so ruthlessly exploited? The answer is that the international laws that do exist tend to reflect compromises between states. Simon Lyster writes that “the greater the number of participants in the formulation of a treaty, the weaker or more ambiguous its provisions are likely to be since they have to reflect compromises making them acceptable to every State involved”.

Individual nations that stand to lose most from measures to protect wildlife have to be persuaded by public pressure from inside and outside their borders to accept strict, enforceable regulations and to allocate national resources to the policing of these regulations. This is why the targeted campaigns of international organisations like Greenpeace International, Friends of the Earth, World Wide Fund for Nature, are so important.

The threat of extinction and serious depletion of some species of whales and elephants has, perhaps more than anything else, mobilised public opinion and brought considerable pressure to bear on the international community, individual countries and commercial companies. And this pressure is having results.

### The will

It is quite clear that the law is changing — it is beginning to play a positive role in regulating humanity's exploitation of the animals. But the extent to which the law can turn the tide in our relations with the animal kingdom depends entirely upon the value society places on animals in their own right. Do we value all the creatures of nature enough to demand laws that will be effective in protecting them from exploitation? We will only get such laws when the will to structure our relations with animals on the basis of respect and compassion has the strength and political clout in society it needs if it is to overcome the powerful forces of vested interest. There is a long way to go, and a lot of educational work to be done, before the animals will get the law they deserve, but we can at least rejoice at the fact that a start has been made — and we can be grateful for the work of the lobbyists and campaigners who truly have the interests of animals at heart.

Margaret Cooper, *An Introduction to Animal Law*. London & Orlando, Florida, Academic Press, 1987.

Simon Lyster, *International Wildlife Law*. Cambridge, Grotius, 1985.

David Paterson & Mary Palmer (eds), *The Status of Animals: Ethics, Education and Welfare*. Wallingford, UK, CAB International, 1989.

## COMMUNICATION AND COMPANIONSHIP

There have been a number of books and articles published over the years that describe experiences of exceptional degrees of communication between humans and animals. In the book *Kinship with All Life*,<sup>1</sup> J. Allen Boone describes how he established a form of telepathic rapport with the German Shepherd dog, Strongheart. He wrote, too, of the distinction between training an animal and educating one. In his view training an animal was relatively easy and placed emphasis on the physical level and upon the authority of the trainer. Educating an animal, on the other hand, places emphasis on the mental rather than physical aspect. The animal is treated as an intelligent fellow being and the educator works with intelligence, integrity and imagination to help it make use of its thinking faculties and so develop character.

These ideas correlate closely with the Ageless Wisdom teachings which emphasise the importance of communication between humans and animals. Alice Bailey writes that it is through the power of human-directed, controlled thought that we will “eventually bridge the gap” existing between the animal kingdom and humanity.

Diana Reiss, who studies communications among captive dolphins thinks that “there may be something fully analogous to human language in the behaviour of animals — a something that's not even vocal”. Increasing use of domesticated animals to help the blind, the elderly, the handicapped and those in hospitals and other institutions may

prove a useful aid in developing human understanding of animal language.

Throughout the world there are now programmes, such as Riding for the Disabled and Guide Dogs for the Blind, where animals provide needed companionship, skill and support and improve the quality of life of the people who need assistance. Many creative initiatives are being pioneered in this field. As an example, the Guide Dog Association of New South Wales, Australia, started its Pets as Therapy programme in 1978. Since then over 1,000 dogs have been placed in hospitals, nursing homes, homes for the mentally handicapped and with disabled people. Honey, “dog in resident”, at a major city hospital is typical. She provides companionship for long-term, elderly patients in the hospital, reducing the negative side of institutional life. Her presence has been found to be of enormous benefit to both patients and staff. The benefit to the companion animal may be less obvious, but can include the development of a sense of responsibility evoked by a demanding job well done.

*Anthrozoos* is a new journal that explores the nature of interaction between humans, animals and the environment.

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1. J. Allen Boone, *Kinship with All Life*, London and New York, Harper and Row, 1954.