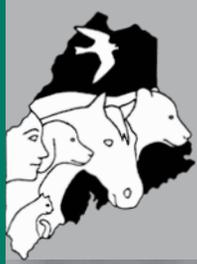


2021 NEWSLETTER



news

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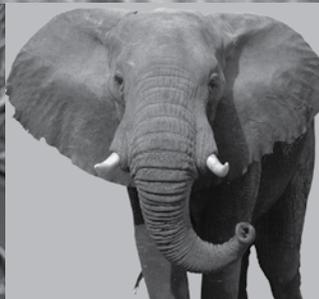
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Whatever Happened to the Animal Welfare Advisory Council (AWAC)? *by Robert Fisk, Jr.*



In August 2000, after years of public outcry led by Maine Friends of Animals (MFOA), the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry held an emergency hearing and three work sessions chaired by State Senator John Nutting of Leeds. It

was determined that the way Maine was handling animal cruelty needed serious review and changes.

Shortly thereafter, Commissioner of Agriculture Robert Spear met with Department Program Manager Peter Mosher and myself to appoint a 12-member committee representing diversified interests in animals. The purpose of this “working group” was to recommend improvements to the Animal Welfare Program (AWP), with everything from its structure, leadership (or lack thereof), Department relationships, database/case management, enforcement, prosecution, training, accountability and funding to be examined.

On March 15, 2001, the working group produced what became known as the “Red Report”, which served as the foundation for legislation to revamp the AWP. The report found “that there is a substantial problem with the Animal Welfare Program administered in Maine” and cited 18 areas of concern that included written policies and procedures, investigation of animal cruelty cases, complaint follow-up, lack of leadership, training for State Humane Agents, coordination with Animal Control Officers (ACOs), and working in the Maine Court System, as well as the need for greater and improved oversight.

Subsequently, the State Animal Welfare Program Director and State Veterinarian were removed, legislation was passed, operational changes were implemented, an Animal Welfare Advisory Council (AWAC) was formed, and a new AWP Director was hired. We finally saw the foundation for significant and much needed advancement in animal welfare in Maine.

Norma Worley was hired as the new AWP Director and immediately changed the culture of the program by increasing the number and training of humane agents, creating ACO investigative training, working to institute the “Spay Maine” program, increasing funding, speaking to groups about the link of domestic violence and animal cruelty, seizing more animals in need, partnering more effectively with local shelters, viewing animal protection advocates as resources, and in general, bringing a much needed understanding, effectiveness, and transparency to the AWP, most often with the active involvement and collaboration of AWAC.

The 11-member Animal Welfare Advisory Council included some members of the Red Report Working Group and immediately we became a strong voice for animal welfare working with the new director. After much media coverage, legislative action, animal welfare activism, the removal and replacement of the former AWP Director, and the formation of AWAC, the program’s direction was on a strong track and, in fact, continued to improve throughout most of Ms. Worley’s tenure.

The originally proposed AWAC membership was comprised of 13 individuals. At the 11th hour, however, at the insistence of two Agriculture Committee members, representatives of “a Maine-based animal advocacy group” and “a national animal advocacy group” were removed, despite the initiative and leadership of AWP’s revamping from myself, Maine Friends of Animals; Hillary Twining, the Humane Society of the United States; and Don Harper, Maine Animal Control Association. In 2003, legislation was passed that included “a Maine-based animal advocacy group” as the 12th AWAC member. AWAC remained a collaborative and vibrant group for most of the next ten years, keeping animal welfare the primary focus.

In the original discussion regarding the make-up of the group’s membership, there was concern about balanced representation of those who had a more direct concern for the animals’ welfare with those who had a more commercial interest. This dynamic was unfortunate, but necessary. However, that dynamic and several other things happened that weakened AWAC and its innate mission of ‘animal welfare.’

The Committee began to lose some of its original strong animal welfare advocates because of term limits. This caused two significant problems: 1) loss of institutional history and advocacy, and 2) the beginning of numerous member groups not being able to find someone to serve or regularly attend meetings. This was exacerbated by the administration not filling positions for long periods of time.

Then, in 2007, pressured by commercial interests, Norma Worley unfortunately gave the okay for legislation that added “a member who holds a kennel license” (originally part of the “licensed boarding kennels” member), as well as “a member representing licensed breeding kennels.” This increased membership to 14 and turned the Committee balance away from the animal welfare members and toward the commercial interest members. Near the end of Norma Worley’s tenure as Director in 2010, AWAC had noticeably begun to lose its greater purpose.

When Liam Hughes became Director in 2011 under the LePage administration, AWAC meetings under his (*Cont. page 3*)

Animal Heroes in Augusta

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Animal welfare issues and legislation are certainly not a priority at the state capital. Assuring they are heard and passed takes the right confluence of planning, circumstances, politics, and people, the latter being the most important, and why we take great consideration in who will sponsor and co-sponsor MFOA legislation. In addition to being “the face” of the bill, the lead sponsor in the House and Senate play an important role.

While some sponsors introduce the bill at a hearing and do little else, the opposite is a legislator who eagerly embraces the issue, has an innate humane side, is respected by other legislators, provides testimony, promotes the bill in caucus and with fellow

legislators, and speaks on the floor for the bill. Every once in a while, Maine animals get someone who strongly and genuinely has their interest at heart. In addition to seeing the legislation through the process, the legislator's active support also assists MFOA in generating enthusiasm with supporters about the bill and its chances of passage.

We would like to honor five such individuals who have been instrumental in recent years advancing animal protection legislation. There is not enough space to list the many specific ways and bills impacted, but we can be proud that Maine is a more humane state because of these individual legislators.



Sen. Ben Chipman
(Portland) I / D
(H) 2011-2016
(S) 2017-



Sen. Donna Bailey
(Saco) D
(H) 2016-2020
(S) 2021-



Rep. Gary Knight
(Livermore Falls) R
(H) 2004-2014



Sen. Mike Carpenter
(Houlton) D
(S) 1977-1986,
2015-2020



Sen. Stan Gerzofsky
(Brunswick) D
(H) 2001-2008
(S) 2009-2018

Continued from page 2 (AWAC)

leadership as “Clerk” became more controlled, less transparent and more problematic for animal welfare cases to be discussed. Meetings in the past were not always easy with the diverse opinions, but nevertheless, all stakeholders felt included.

It became increasingly difficult to get AWAC support for animal protection legislation with the unbalanced membership and the Director's lack of support. Sadly, many animal protection bills that passed through the legislative process did so without the support of AWAC. In the recent 129th legislature, MFOA worked exceedingly hard to successfully pass three animal protection laws, none of which had the support of the Director or AWAC. Moreover, the legislative committees which review proposed legislation perceive AWAC as the guardian of animal welfare, which unfortunately is not always the case.

In the last 10 years, AWAC has continued to be marked by irregular attendance due to term limits and lack of interest. Vacancies

have not been filled and often the member of a represented group does not attend a meeting unless there is an issue on the agenda that may have some effect on that group. The AWAC purpose and its members are not even listed on the state animal welfare website, and the Director uses the current dysfunction to further advance his own agenda or give a stamp of approval to his decisions.

AWAC has morphed into something much different than its 2001 origin, which was to consider animal welfare - not business welfare or Department welfare. It operates with little credibility within the animal protection community in the state, and sadly, does not always operate in the best interest of those they have been appointed to protect.

Governor Mills, in a much needed move, is to appoint an entirely new membership to the 14-member AWAC, including vacancies under the LePage administration. Possible appointments include several strong animal advocates and we are encouraged by this move toward resuming AWAC's mission of animal welfare.

AUGUSTA WATCH



Pet Custody Legislation

Maine Friends of Animals (Falmouth) and the Maine Animal Coalition (Portland) have partnered to sponsor a pet custody bill, “An Act to Provide for the Well-being of Companion Animals Upon the Dissolution of Marriages.”



The way in which society views pets has evolved over the years, along with the discussion of companion animals being sentient beings yet still considered as property legally. Pet custody matters have

grown over the last decade or so and some judges are viewing pets more akin to children than dining room sets, recognizing that people have an emotional attachment to their animals.

Four states (AK, IL, CA and NH) have passed laws allowing

judges to decide ownership of a pet by taking into consideration “the well-being of the companion animal” or “the care of the pet animal.” Other states are following suit and so should Maine, to once again be in the forefront of progressive companion animal legislation.

Current state law provides no special provisions for pets in which marriage dissolution is based on traditional property classifications, reducing them to inanimate objects during divorce proceedings. This proposed bill will have unique authority to assist judges in determining the pet’s interest in considering its care and custody.

Please write, email and/or call your State Representative and State Senator and ask them to vote and support, “An Act to Provide for the Well-being of Companion Animals Upon the Dissolution of Marriages.”

Franky's Law (cruelty case assistance)

In 2016, MFOA learned of new Connecticut legislation often referred to as “Desmond’s Law.” Under this legislation, a judge presiding over an animal abuse case involving a dog or cat has the option of appointing a volunteer, either a supervised law student or an attorney, to work with the court to advocate in the interest of justice. Low priority animal cruelty cases that are often dismissed or pled out can now be more thoroughly and vigorously pursued.

It was outside-the-box thinking, so MFOA visited the UConn law professor and the Connecticut State Senator who helped pass this first-in-the-nation legislation. MFOA immediately decided to introduce it to the Maine legislature and in 2019, Maine became the second state to pass this type of advocate legislation by enacting “Franky’s Law.”

Connecticut’s Desmond’s Law is named for a shelter dog that had been adopted, but sadly repeatedly tortured and ultimately strangled to death in 2012. According to the *Hartford Courant*, “Despite a recommendation by the prosecutor for prison time, the man charged in the crime received accelerated rehabilitation, which meant that his charges were dismissed and his record was wiped clean.” The public outcry was immediate and Desmond’s Law was born!

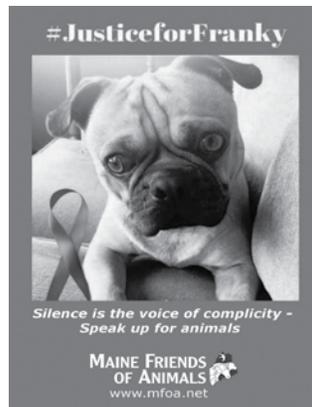
A similar gruesome torture and aggravated animal cruelty case resulting in the death of a pet dog occurred against Franky the pug, in Winter Harbor, ME last year; hence the renaming of the Maine bill to “Franky’s Law.”

The attorney or law student advocate works at the courts direction and may monitor the case, consult with individuals who may have information helpful to the judge, e.g., animal control officers (ACO’s) and veterinarians; perform legal research; submit written recommendations in briefs to the court; attend hearings; focus on issues besides sentencing, such as animal ownership (see MFOA’s 2021 pet custody bill), financial restitution, etc. prior to plea bargain or sentencing.

This legislation is a win-win-win in which the court receives a needed resource, the student advocate receives valuable court experience, and an increase in animal cruelty cases that are won serve as a strong deterrent against abuse such as Franky endured.

The legislation requires an operational framework and initial organization. Eventually, the program will be managed by a small, separate non-profit, but MFOA has accepted the responsibility of instituting an implementation plan.

Behind the scenes this year, MFOA has been organizing that plan including the advocate applications, court appointment forms, data collection and tracking, working with the Maine Bar Association and with the University of Maine Law School, soliciting student and pro-bono attorney advocates, writing Franky’s Law informational fact sheets, etc. The sharing and gathering processes will help assure a smooth rollout and positive reception while keeping in mind pandemic guidelines and restraints.



Scarborough Downs Closed

MFOA's decade-long campaign and legislation to end harness racing in Maine has finally come one step closer with the closing of Scarborough Downs!

The racing industry needs an outlet to rid itself of horses that are deemed unproductive; sadly, slaughter often awaits these animals that have nobly served mankind for so long and so well. They become a disposable commodity. In 2010, MFOA organized a four-year public and legislative awareness campaign, followed by legislation in 2013, to ban horse slaughter for human consumption in Maine, as well as the transportation of horses through Maine to slaughter plants in Quebec. The Maine House of Representatives became the first-in-the-nation to pass such legislation, but unfortunately the bill lost in a Senate conference committee.



Maine harness racing has remained in MFOA sights and, in fact, was cited again in 2019 with legislation that would have reviewed the continued state funding and subsidizing of this outdated, cruel form of entertainment that has drastically faded in popularity. Although strong lobbying defeated the bill, nothing could save the sport's precipitous decline in attendance and revenue. Following the closure at Scarborough, there are now only two harness racing tracks in New England: one in Bangor and the other in Massachusetts.

MFOA Animal Welfare Support Line

For over 20 years, MFOA has been providing support to the Maine community by responding to calls and emails on a wide array of animal welfare issues, including our 'Dogs Chained for Life' initiative, which not only educates people about the cruelty of leaving a dog outside 24/7, but also assists in how to respond to report this abuse.

In 2021, MFOA will expand on this service with the MFOA Animal Welfare Support Line, which will provide Maine residents assistance regarding animal-related concerns via our new online web form or by phone. This structured program,

MFOA News

• Susanna Richer first came to MFOA in 2006 as a well-known dog rescuer from "Dogs Deserve Better," became a Board member and led MFOA's campaign, "Dogs Chained for Life." In 2007, she became the office manager and continues in that position today. Working from the MFOA Falmouth office, she manages the day to day responsibilities, assisting legislative campaigns, responding to member inquiries and correspondences, and assuring the implementation of the Board of Directors' agenda. 2021 will mark Susanna's 15th year helping MFOA and Maine animals.....

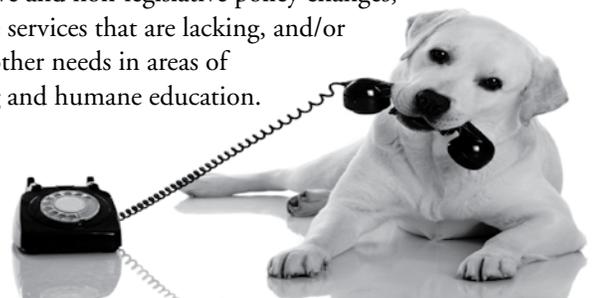
• If you have a passion for animals and experience in fundraising, consider serving as Vice-President of Fundraising Affairs on the MFOA board. MFOA's Board of Directors not only gives vision, organization and direction, it provides a means to engage in various aspects in the operation of an effective advocacy group. You not only serve as a MFOA goodwill ambassador, you create and work directly in effecting change and making a difference.....

• Marissa Oves has joined the Board as Vice-President of Volunteers & Outreach and is looking forward to connecting with volunteers and will be reaching out to them in the coming months. If you are a new volunteer, let her know how you would like to support MFOA, whether by working at tabling events, writing letters to legislators and newspapers, fundraising, providing office support, helping with specific programs, or participating in demonstrations and rallies. To learn more contact Marissa at volunteering@mfoa.net

• MFOA received its largest single contribution ever from an Anonymous donor this year to whom we are immensely appreciative. In 2020, MFOA also received generous legacy and memorial gifts in honor of these animal advocates.

Barbara Niro Ronald Jean Andrew Kosinski
We are deeply saddened by their loss, but thankful that a legacy of love for Maine's animals will live on in their memory as a result of their generosity.

besides offering advice and information, will also track and analyze data and allow MFOA to detect issues and trends. This proactive approach will determine priorities for potential legislative and non-legislative policy changes, indicate services that are lacking, and/or define other needs in areas of training and humane education.



Maine's Obsession With Killing Coyotes

From 1999 through 2002, Maine Friends of Animals (MFOA) joined with northern Maine wildlife activists in an intense two-year campaign on legislation to end the gruesome activity of coyote snaring. However, due to the fact that the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W), its legislative oversight committee, and the hunting and trapping lobby were one in the same being politically, ideologically, financially and socially connected, the legislation died in committee.

For the next ten years, the same hunting and trapping groups continued to sponsor bills on various forms of coyote killing while time after time evidence continued to show none of those ideas worked. Today we have the same amount of coyotes as we did 30 years ago. But the bills kept coming each legislature and then in 2011, SAM rolled out its integrated Coyote Control Plan, with input from MDIF&W, that included various hunting methods such as foothold traps, baiting, bounties, calling, hounds, or coyote-specific hunts known as coyote killing contests. Nothing was left to chance.

I spoke at the hearing against that legislation; my testimony was simply presenting a dozen newspaper articles condemning coyote management programs as a waste of taxpayer dollars and the MDIF&W time and resources. Many of the articles were from wildlife biologists - including in the MDIF&W - citing department angst in historically wanting nothing to do with the programs. I pointed to the newspaper articles as evidence that pursuing such legislation continues to be pointless, as I then noted that all the articles were ten or more years old from the coyote snaring campaign! The point is we have been here before. Why do we keep doing this? Nevertheless, between the Department and the Aroostook County Conservation Association, over 6,000 coyotes were killed. While locals in wintering habitats noted the deer situation as "improved some", most contribute grueling winters, lack of cover and habitat, and lack of food as more likely the reasons for fluctuations in deer populations. Moreover, deer populations are flourishing in New Hampshire and Vermont and other areas in Maine.

Still after that, here we are: ten years later and the same hollow arguments are put forth to allow these practices to continue. Thirty years later, the remaining arguments have now boiled down to largely anecdotal evidence of improvement in wintering habitats and "doing something is better than nothing." Hence, coyotes in Maine can be killed any time, anywhere, any season, by any means, no matter how useless and cruel it is.

Coyote killing contests in Maine are under the guise of



conservation and wildlife management. So again, it is important for the public and legislators to understand that our own state and MDIF&W, as well as USF&W biologists, understand that over 100 years of war on the coyotes have only resulted in expanded coyote populations. Repeat:

their predicate for killing contests is population control, but no science-based wildlife management proposal supports that assertion.

As organized events, they promote the arbitrary killing that many people find abhorrent. High powered weapons rip apart the animals. Contests produce piles of dead animals; a few used for fur, but most are carcasses just thrown away once

they are weighed. These contests for money and/or firearms are fundamentally inhumane and increasingly viewed as pointless, sadistic and wasteful with no sound reason to exist.

A coyote is 98.6% genetically the same as your pet dog. No one would do to a dog what we do to coyotes without a resultant aggravated animal cruelty felony charge. Are we so removed that we cannot associate the same terror, suffering and pain for both? What makes it so egregious is its needless, wanton killing.

Killing contests harm our state's reputation, and violate conservation hunting ethics. They are designed to reward people for indiscriminately killing as many animals as they can - a concept that conflicts with hunting values and in opposition to Maine's long tradition of sustenance hunting. Blood sports like this are damaging to the reputation of responsible and ethical hunters.

In 2019, New Mexico became the eighth state to pass legislation banning killing contests; in five of those states (AZ, CO, CA, WA, MA), the legislation was propelled by the state wildlife agency. Banning coyote killing contests is a small component of the larger issue of coyote management, but it is the most egregious and its negative ramifications far outweigh any perceived benefit.

Man cannot regulate coyotes. They are imminently resourceful. Native American cultures view them as powerful mythical figures, respected for their intelligence and mischievous nature. Simply killing them does not solve the problem; in fact, it has proven to be counterproductive as birth rates typically increase. They exist in deserts and in Chicago alleyways. So, why not try and understand this animal and learn how we can best co-habituate?

First, a stable coyote population is critical to a healthy ecosystem. We know they only filled the spot and habitat taken by wolves and big cats before humankind (*Cont. page 7*)

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

We want to thank those who have donated financially to Maine Friends of Animals. We could not list all our donors in the space allowed, but all donations large and small are most appreciated, and are used entirely to make the life of Maine's animals a better one. MFOA is a 501 c3 non-profit and your donation is tax deductible. A special thank you to our major donors.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

THANK YOU to all who have joined MFOA over the years in our common quest to end animal abuse in Maine in its many forms. We have accomplished much in the way of education, advocacy and legislation, but unfortunately there remains a great deal more to be done to end animal suffering and cruelty in Maine. Twenty years has given MFOA a tested structure and credibility with the legislature, media and the general public, and we feel positioned to increase the scope and effectiveness of what we do. The only limit is the corresponding funding. You will make a difference by renewing your membership to MFOA by sending in your donation, large or small, that will help increase our ability to protect and aid those that are being needlessly harmed by humans. Donate today and join us in giving Maine animals a voice.



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Continued from page 6 (Coyotes)

exterminated them. Let them do their job. They help control populations of rodents and rabbits, regulate smaller predators, eat animals who harbor ticks / Lyme disease, and cull sick animals. Coyotes are ecologically vital top carnivores in Eastern US biodiversity.

Healthy coyote families are typically wary of humans, and attacks are extremely rare. Irresponsible human behavior is most often the root cause of wildlife conflicts. There are many simple ways we can eliminate or reduce coyote interactions such as keeping cats indoors, walking dogs with a lease, not leaving out pet food, securing garbage cans, eliminating artificial water sources, clearing brush, using motion lighting,

walking trails with a whistle, etc.

As we continue to expand into wildlife habitat and coyotes adapt to our increasing presence, encounters will naturally occur. It is up to us to reduce, if not eliminate, negative interactions.

Instead, what are we left with? A wildlife management tool that does not work and a legislative committee that kills any bills to reform or eliminate these historically proven coyote management mistakes. The useless obsession to kill coyotes is a sad reminder that Maine's long tradition of hunting is demeaned when it continues to allow blood sports like canned hunting ranches, bear trapping and coyote killing contests.



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Janice Kasper's Animal Paintings

Janice Kasper is a MFOA member and long time Maine painter whose oil on canvas or board paintings have a nontraditional and unique interpretation of the natural world. While the animals are viewed as a known species, her paintings are often portrayed in imaginative settings.

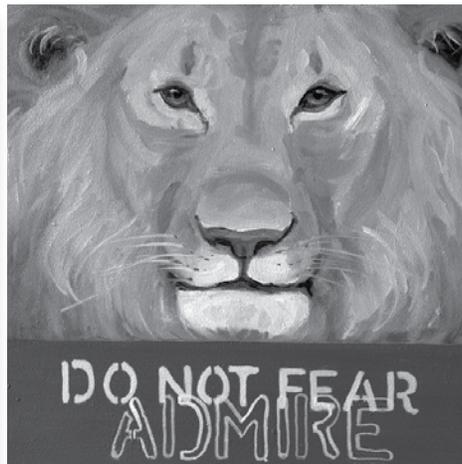
She works in series formats, including “What Animals Dream” which was featured in MFOA’s 2007 newsletter. “Wildlife: A Point of View”, “Shadow Species”, “In Our Hands”, “Small Things” and “Do Not Fear” are her most recent animal perspective works and are currently on exhibit at Caldbeck Gallery in Rockland. Her work has been shown widely

throughout New England with paintings included in collections of the Portland Museum of Art, The Farnsworth Art Museum and The University of Maine at Presque Isle.

This last series consists of portraits of animals that people tend to fear or dislike. In many of the paintings, the animals are confronting the viewer, looking directly into their eyes. Although some of these animals may pose a danger to humans in the wild, her art demonstrates that we need to understand their greater role in the cycle of life on this planet which we share. For more information: janicekasper3@gmail.com



Porcupine - Know



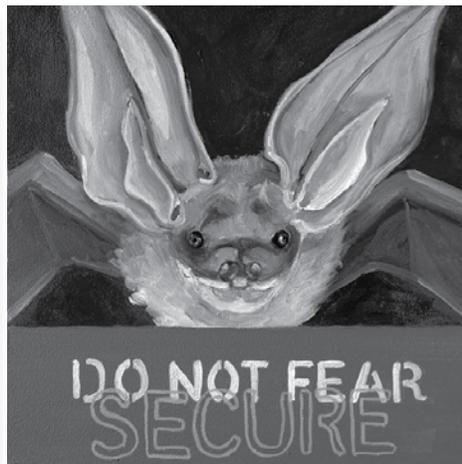
Lion - Admire



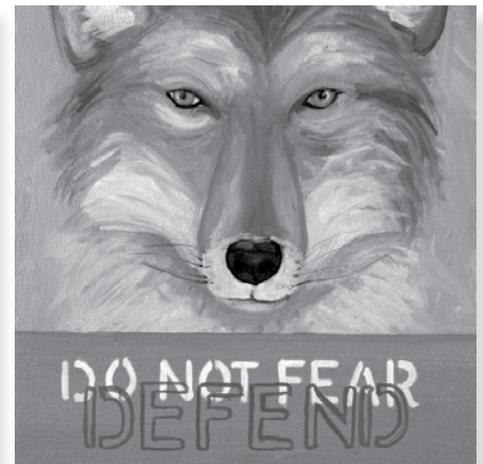
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Bear - Respect



Bat - Secure



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