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January 2, 2009

Ms. Susan Turner-Lowe
Vice President for Communications
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, CA 91108

Re: Request to Suspend the Trapping of Coyotes on the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens Grounds and Instead Implement Non-lethal, Humane and Effective Alternatives to Mitigate Human-Coyote Conflicts

Dear Ms. Turner-Lowe:

We are writing on behalf of the more than 10.5 million members and constituents of The Humane Society of the United States (The HSUS), Project Coyote, and the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), including over 1.2 million members and constituents in California, to request that the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens (the Huntington) immediately cease the coyote trapping program currently being conducted on its grounds. This program has sorely neglected animal welfare as well as visitor safety concerns. It embodies a poorly justified and ambiguous set of concerns over coyotes and the need for their removal. We wish to offer an alternative, proactive and non-lethal approach to better mitigate those issues that arise from human interactions with seemingly brazen coyotes.

First, we understand from a telephone conversation with you (December 10, 2008) that the Huntington is justifying the lethal control of coyotes based on a peer-reviewed journal article from the University of California-Davis (Timm *et al*., 2007). This article from *Pest Notes* discusses lethal control options for managing coyote conflicts, but nowhere does it advocate for a continual, cyclical trapping program, such as that being carried out by the Huntington. In fact, findings from the longest-term study of urban coyote ecology to date (Cook County, IL) show that the void created by the removal of non-problem coyotes may actually be filled by loner coyotes who are less wary of humans (Fox, 2006; Gehrt, 2004). In other words, the current coyote removal program is effectively counter-productive to what the Huntington is attempting to accomplish. Why then is the Huntington choosing to enact a recurring, twice-yearly lethal control program?

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Timm *et al.* also affirm that "modern strategies to manage coyote damage… [rely] on lethal removal only when other techniques are ineffective or impractical." When asked what other means the Huntington had taken to mediate coyote conflicts we were informed that low-lying bushes had been trimmed around portions of the property. Clearly there are a suite of other non-lethal approaches outlined in the referenced article (and elsewhere) which seem to have been neglected. Why was the decision made to ignore the recommendation to first consider non-lethal strategies?

Of paramount importance are the alleged concerns that have arisen since the initiation of the current trapping regimen. We have heard a number of reports describing a coyote running around the grounds of the Huntington with a snare cable wrapped around his neck. You confirmed this and reported that the Huntington is not intending on taking any steps toward rectifying this matter. As we are sure you can imagine, callousness of this sort is alarming not only in terms of animal welfare, but also since an injured animal may present an increased safety risk to Huntington visitors.

Moreover, the suggestion that neck-snared coyotes "sit quietly, calmly and patiently in the trap" and do not attempt to struggle free and therefore do not suffer in anyway is misleading and simply inaccurate. As detailed in *Coyotes in our Midst: Coexisting with an Adaptable and Resilient Carnivore* (Fox & Papouchis, 2005; p. 16):

> *"Neck snares…consist of a light wire cable looped through a locking device and are designed to tighten as the animal struggles. While small victims may become unconscious from strangulation in five to ten minutes, larger animals may suffer for hours or days. Trappers use the term "jellyhead" to refer to a neck-snared animal whose head and neck are swollen with thick, bloody lymph fluid...Trapped animals are subject to dehydration, exposure to weather, and predation by other animals. Young may be orphaned as well if adults are trapped and killed. Coyotes are usually bludgeoned, strangled, or shot before they are removed from the trap."*

An article by conservationist Ted Williams in *Audubon Magazine* (2002) provides more details about the effects of neck snares on coyotes (please see attached for full article):

> *"Coyote snaring is a mean-spirited government program whose sole intent is to catch and strangle wildlife with a wire noose, for some perceived biological gain," Chuck Hulsey, one of Maine's seven regional wildlife biologists, told me, emphasizing that he was speaking for himself and not his department. "You cannot stockpile deer like money in a mutual fund, to be enjoyed at a later date. Spending many tens of thousands of dollars to snare a few hundred coyotes is a poor use of public dollars."*
>
> *Among wildlifers it is considered "unprofessional" to fret about humane issues. But there's a limit; when cruelty to wild animals becomes sufficiently severe and senseless, good biologists get involved. "Killing an animal by strangling it with a wire loop often results in a slow, painful death, some times lasting days..." wrote*

Hulsey to his bureau director. "It would violate state humane laws to treat a domestic dog in the same manner."

Hulsey is just one of many department biologists speaking out. Last fall Wally Jakubas, the agency's top mammal scientist, got concerned when, checking 94 snared coyotes during a study to determine the genetics of the beast, he noticed a large proportion of carcasses with grotesquely swollen heads, bullet holes, fractured limbs, and broken teeth. Of particular interest to Jakubas were the animals with swollen head, "jellyheads," the snarers call them. When the snare doesn't close sufficiently it constricts the jugular vein on the outside of the neck, cutting off blood returning to the heart; meanwhile, the carotid artery keeps pumping blood into the brain, eventually rupturing its vascular system. In a memo to his supervisor, Jakubas wrote: "I think it is also safe to say that [this] is an unpleasant death. Anyone who has had a migraine knows what it feels like to have swollen blood vessels in the head. To have blood vessels burst because of pressure must be excruciating." Almost a third of the animals Jakubas looked at were jellyheads. Almost another third had been clubbed or shot, indicating that, contrary to department claims, the snares hadn't killed them quickly."

It is quite evident from the above passages that the use of neck snares gives rise to ample humane concerns.

Furthermore, we understand that the Huntington believes that the trapper, Mr. Jimmy Rizzo, is checking the traps 2-3 times daily; however, we question this assertion given that a dead coyote was recently found in a snare on the grounds. Worse yet, there is reason to believe that the decaying body (now over two weeks old) has simply been lightly covered with dirt and left on the Huntington property. Clearly, such activities present a threat to human health and well-being while raising serious concerns about how animals are being handled. If such statements are accurate then we must assume that very little, if any, oversight is being afforded by the Huntington and that the trapping methodology being employed may be in direct violation of the State of California, Department of Fish and Game trapping regulations (Title 14, C.C.R. §465.5). Moreover, strangling snares inflict extreme suffering in a short period of time such that even if traps were checked 3 times a day, it would be unlikely to prevent the cruelty neck snares are commonly known to inflict.

Equally concerning is the indiscriminant nature of neck snares. It is widely acknowledged that neck snares can and have resulted in non-target animals, or in this case those other than coyotes, being caught in traps and killed. Some species of wildlife, such as raptors, deer, and foxes, may be particularly vulnerable (Fox & Papouchis, 2005). Domestic animals are no exception and there are innumerable media reports documenting the unintentional deaths of cats and dogs in wire cable snares. Neck snares may similarly pose a risk to humans, and in particular small children, who may happen to stumble upon a set trap. All of these risks raise legitimate reservations about the use of snares in a high public use area such as the Huntington.

It should also be noted that coyotes play a vital role in maintaining healthy and viable ecosystems in urbanized environments. Their crucial function as top predator aids in directly regulating the abundance of small rodents and indirectly increasing the diversity of songbird species (Crooks & Soulé, 1999). Likewise, as opportunistic carnivores and scavengers, coyotes help reduce rabbit and insect populations (Fedriani *et al*., 2001) and actively feed upon carrion of large wild animals (Timm *et al.*, 2007). Through their highly adaptable nature, coyotes impact various portions of a community's food web and their importance in such ecological systems cannot be overstated. By arbitrarily removing coyotes from the environment, the Huntington may be setting off a cascade of negative environmental consequences.

Moreover, the efficacy of lethal coyote control in reducing coyote populations and conflicts has been challenged extensively in the literature (Fox, 2006; please see attached for full article):

> *"Summarizing some of the findings in the ongoing study of coyotes in Cook County, Illinois, Gehrt (2004b) concludes that removed coyotes are likely to be quickly replaced by "floaters" from the larger coyote population; removal of non-problem coyotes may result in their replacement by coyotes with less fear of humans, thus potentially increasing conflict; and, in the absence of conflict, coyotes should not be removed. These results underscore the importance of determining and addressing the ultimate causes of human-coyote problems (e.g., direct or indirect feeding) and the potential negative repercussions of indiscriminate removal (Gehrt, 2004b). Gehrt (2004b) adds that public education should be a prominent component of any urban coyote management plan.*
>
> *Moreover, research suggests that to suppress a coyote population over the long-term, more than 70% of the coyotes would need to be removed annually (Connolly and Longhurst, 1975). Aside from the ethical questions such intense control efforts raise (C. Fox 2001, M. Fox 2001, Fox and Papouchis 2005), such practices may not be effective over the long-term since lethal removal may stimulate improved reproductive success and pup survival in the remaining coyote population, thus compensating for the human-caused mortality (Connolly and Longhurst 1975, Connolly 1978, Davison 1980, Sterling et al. 1983, Stephenson and Kennedy 1993, Parker 1995, Crabtree and Sheldon 1999)."*

Lastly, we understand that an employee of the Huntington was allegedly terminated for removing a coyote from a snare trap. If this account is true then we must question the appropriateness of such action. We ask that you confirm this dismissal and the justification for it.

ALTERNATIVE HUMANE SOLUTIONS

We offer below an alternative approach to aid the Huntington in alleviating concerns regarding possible coyote encounters. Likewise, to provide more useful and pertinent resources we have included two peer-reviewed articles. The first outlines general

information pertaining to urban and suburban coyote management, while the second highlights a template community in Vancouver, British Columbia which has a long-term, successful and non-lethal centered coyote management program (see attached studies – Fox, 2006 and Worcester & Boelens, 2007).

Below is a suggested coyote management plan for the Huntington, specifically:

Habitat Modification:

1) Remove any and all coyote attractants in areas of heavy human use. This includes, but is not limited to, securing trash bins, picking up fallen fruit from fruit trees, preventing bird feeders from overflowing, containing compost piles and prohibiting dogs and cats from being allowed to freely roam on the grounds.
2) When possible, limit coyote access to vegetable gardens or orchard trees using heavy duty garden fencing or 6' standard wire mesh fencing extending the bottom at least 6" vertically and then 12" horizontally below the ground (to create an L-shape) and equipped with a Coyote Roller system (www.coyoteroller.com). Electric fencing with five to nine strands may also be used in some localities.
3) Outfit building entrances with motion-activated outdoor lighting to deter night-time coyote visitors.
4) Strategically place motion-activated sprinkler devices (e.g. Scarecrow brand) along known coyote paths (and where there is access to water hoses). Be sure to occasionally rotate the positioning of these devices to minimize the potential for habituation.
5) Continue to remove dense weeds and brush piles and trim low-lying bushes where appropriate as such places may offer cover for coyotes and an abundance of small prey.
6) Limit access to any possible denning areas directly around or under human dwellings (such as porches, patios, etc.).
7) Provide trained security personnel with rubber bullets or paintball guns to use in a highly selective manner for only those coyotes which may be displaying increasing brazenness despite other non-lethal methods being employed (Project Coyote can provide training in the use of such aversive conditioning techniques).

Public Education & Outreach:

1) Provide educational signage in key visitor areas offering brief information on coyote natural history and emphasizing the dangers of feeding coyotes and other wildlife and why it's not good for the animals themselves. Teaching the public not to feed coyotes (intentionally or unintentionally) is the single most important way to discourage coyotes from coming around and habituating to people. Project Coyote can provide template educational signs.
2) Offer coyote educational programs to visitors and neighbors detailing methods of how to identify coyotes, recognize and remove coyote attractants and understand coyote behavior to know how to react in the event of a coyote sighting or encounter.

Camilla Fox of Project Coyote and the Animal Welfare Institute can provide a variety of educational forums tailored to different audiences.

3) Add a component on the Huntington website devoted to increasing the understanding of and appreciation for coyotes living in and around the grounds. Here a number of educational resources can be offered such as benefits of coyote ecology (i.e. natural rodent control), domestic animal safety advice, coyote encounter behavior tips, how to reduce coyote attractants on homeowner property and means of effectively deterring coyotes. Alternatively, Huntington can link to existing websites that offer such information such as Project Coyote's (www.ProjectCoyote.org).
4) Develop a brochure or incorporate into the Huntington newsletter publication a brief synopsis of the coyote management efforts being undertaken by the Huntington as a means of gaining broader support and cooperation for the non-lethal program. Project Coyote can provide template language for newsletters and other public outreach materials.
5) Encourage cats in the surrounding neighborhood to be kept indoors. If cats are allowed outdoors, ask that pet food be removed before nightfall.
6) Request that dogs in the surrounding neighborhood be walked on 6' leashes at all times. Also, encourage dogs to be spayed or neutered as coyotes may be attracted to, and attempt to mate with, unfixed domestic dogs.

Coyote Encounter Advice:

1) Remember that sightings alone do not constitute an encounter or conflict!
2) In the event of a true encounter, attempt to slowly leave the area without turning your back to the animal. If followed by the coyote, then stand tall, make loud noises, wave your hands in the air, and make every attempt to appear "big and bad". If there is little reaction on the part of the coyote, pick up sticks or another object and throw it toward the ground near the body of the coyote. If necessary, toss the object at the coyote's hindquarters. Remember to keep yelling and making loud noises simultaneously.

* * *

Please note that The HSUS, Project Coyote, and AWI recognize and wholly support comprehensive and ecologically sound coyote management efforts intended to protect human and domestic animal safety. However, the current on-going coyote abatement program at the Huntington is a far cry from any legitimate coyote conflict mitigation plan. Moreover, the program ensures job security for the hired trapper -- as there will be a constant source of coyotes from the surrounding preserve and San Gabriel Mountain region every time there is a population reduction effort-- but fails to address the more systemic causes of conflict (localized food sources and other attractants).

No stretch of the imagination can justify the integrity of a human-coyote conflict resolution program that is not addressing the main causes of the conflict and instead is indiscriminately and needlessly killing a large number of wild animals and potentially jeopardizing the safety of visitors to the Huntington.

For all these reasons, we request that you immediately terminate this program in light of the pivotal issues raised here.

Given the urgency of the issue, we respectfully request a prompt response to this letter. We hope to be able to reassure our members and constituents in California and elsewhere that this matter had been addressed and our concerns answered without a need to make a broader public issue of this case. As a courtesy to you and the Huntington we will not, then, notify our membership in southern California or contact the media about our concerns pending your prompt response. Thank you for your consideration of this request for immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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** Indicates articles that are attached for your review.*