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COMPASSIONATE FRIEND



Journal of Beauty Without Cruelty - India
An International Educational Charitable Trust for Animal Rights



In this issue:

Owls
Bulls
Plastics
Greyhounds
Sea deterioration
Animal-derived
household products



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Spotted Owlet. *Photo courtesy: Neeraj Mishra*

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Editorial

**Deterioration of the
 high seas**

In the western Indian Ocean, coral reefs are key ecosystems that support large sectors of the countries' populations and economies, through tourism and large-scale investments.

A "Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean Program" was created to respond to the degradation of coral reefs throughout that ocean due to the extensive bleaching and mortality of corals that occurred in 1998.

Mining destroys coral reefs, which sustain millions of tiny creatures. Coral jewellery should be boycotted in favour of Red Jasper, which has similar properties.

If only marine ecological problems were limited to coral reefs. Last June, a scientific panel reported to the U.N. that a combination of factors is threatening a mass extinction in the oceans similar to earlier prehistoric extinctions. Fish, sharks, whales and other marine species are in imminent danger of catastrophic extinction at the hands of humankind. Their findings were supported by a group of marine biologists and climatologists who met at Oxford University.

The threats stem from acidification, dead zones, fishing, and so on. No

one mentioned human overpopulation as a factor, but it accelerates ocean degradation all the same. Fishing, for example, has cut some fish populations over 90 percent.

Ocean acidification, from the absorption of carbon dioxide emitted by fossil fuel burning, is occurring faster than previously understood.

Researchers have also recorded hypoxia, or lower oxygen levels in the water. Ocean dead zones, believed to be caused by runoff from agricultural pollution, appear to be growing in size.

The longer the delay in reducing emissions, the higher the annual reduction rate will have to be, and the greater the financial cost. Delays will mean increased environmental damage with greater socio-economic impacts and costs of mitigation and adaptation.

The rate at which CO₂ is getting absorbed by the oceans is higher than it was roughly 55 million years ago when, geologists and palaeontologists say, upto 50 percent of deep-sea species became extinct. Studies have also revealed traces of detergent pollution in Arctic and Antarctic waters, showing that coastal runoff is more pervasive than many had assumed.

Past mass marine extinction episodes were accompanied by major disturbances in the carbon

cycle, and some symptoms of those types of disturbances are being observed now.

In “War and Peace,” Tolstoy described a dream the central character, Count Pierre Bezúkhov, had one night: “And suddenly he saw vividly before him a long-forgotten, kindly old man who had given him geography lessons in Switzerland. ‘Wait a bit,’ said the old man, and showed Pierre a globe. This globe was alive — a vibrating ball without fixed dimensions. Its whole surface consisted of drops closely pressed together, and all these



When will tourists start noticing the effects at, say, Puri Beach?

Photo courtesy: A. Dasgupta

drops moved and changed places, sometimes several of them merging into one, sometimes one dividing into many. Each drop tried to spread out and occupy as much space as possible, but others striving to do the same compressed it, sometimes destroyed it, and sometimes merged with it. ‘That is life,’ said the old teacher.”

Today, the drops may symbolize various forms of life on this planet and like them man, but a drop, encroaches on all the other life-forms, including those found in the oceans.

Governments must make decisions that benefit the oceans before a total collapse of marine ecosystems.

There is a lot of plastic in the oceans. From the accidental to the deliberate dumping of trash, humans have been unloading plastic products into ocean ecosystems over decades. Due to ocean currents, the plastic waste has been collecting in large patches in the Pacific and the Atlantic.

In these oceans and in those adjacent to India fishers, who support conservation as long as their livelihoods are not threatened, could be persuaded to catch plastic instead of fish. They could be given special nets and other equipment for catching plastic debris and bringing the junk back to shore for recycling. As recycling plastic gets more profitable, the trash may become more valuable a catch than fish.

One way to present a moral argument against cruel acts like fishing is to use Kant’s argument regarding animals: if a person acts in cruel ways towards such entities then his humanity will be damaged. Since, as Kant saw it, humans have a duty to show humanity to other humans, such actions would be wrong. This would not be because the victim was wronged, but because humanity would be wronged by the person damaging his humanity through such an action.

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Tragedy unfolds for birds of the night

By Geetha Jaikumar

Twyadoo . . . twyadoo . . . a ghostly form drifts through the darkness on noiseless wings to swoop on an unsuspecting mouse and carry it away silently. The night patrol is still on its rounds — but for how much longer?

The Indian subcontinent is home to 32 species of owls, 30 of them from India. However, the future for India's owls is bleak, with large numbers being sacrificed at the altars of superstition, black magic and manic religious rites. Variousy dubbed the harbingers of good fortune, foretellers of death, and erroneously endowed with supernatural powers to cure a variety of illnesses, owls are being poached in increasing numbers for their body parts, including their skulls, feathers, ear-tufts, blood, nails, bones and beaks, which are used by tantrics in rituals for amassing wealth, curing ailments and passing exams, to name just a few purposes.

Because owls are nocturnal birds, they are also associated with secret spiritual powers or with death. While the precise numbers of owls being traded for black magic are unknown, TRAFFIC, the UK-based wildlife trade monitoring network, says that

this practice is threatening several owl species.

Owls feed on small mammals, birds, frogs, lizards and insects, and are at the apex of the food chain. As prime consumers of rodents such as mice and rats, owls can be beneficial to humans. A single family of hungry barn owls may consume more than 3,000

in India are listed under Schedule IV of the Act. The international trade in owls is regulated by Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which restricts trade in these species. However, despite legal protection, poaching of owls is rampant.



These spotted owllets may be sacrificed by the superstitious. *Photo courtesy: Neeraj Mishra*

rodents in a nesting season, thus maintaining the natural food chain balance. The importance of owls to agricultural communities has led to the birds being incorporated into farmers' rituals.

Protected on paper only?

Hunting of, and trade in, all species of Indian owls is banned under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The recently re-discovered Forest Owlet, *Heteroglaux Blewitti*, is listed in Schedule I while all the other owl species

Of the 30 Indian owl species, those most highly sought by traders are the larger ones, especially those with ear-tufts — feathered extensions of the head — thought to bestow magical properties on the birds. The top five owl species preferred by traders are the Eurasian Eagle, Brown Fish, Dusky Eagle, Collared Scops and Mottled Wood.

The trapping and trading of owls occurs mainly in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan

and Gujarat. They are also hunted in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand, and sold in West Bengal, Delhi and Bihar.

Those caught in the Western Ghats and smuggled to North Indian states, Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, can fetch up to ₹8 lakhs if of the desired ideal height (more than 50 cms.) and weight (2.5 kgs.).

In 2011, a few environmentalists wanted the Forest owl, Blewitt's Owl or *Duda*, crowned the state bird of Maharashtra instead of the yellow-footed green pigeon or *Harial*. This was because the critically-endangered owl's habitat continued to either vanish (20 per cent decrease in prime habitat since 2004) or degrade due to encroachment and inappropriate forest management.

However, the Maharashtra Board for Wildlife decided against changing the state bird, as some experts felt the owl's elevation would do more harm than good; a large number of photographers and wildlife enthusiasts would seek out the bird in hitherto unknown forest areas and, if "call replay" was used to spot the birds, adverse physiological and behavioural effects would occur. Call replay, a method increasingly used by birdwatchers, plays pre-recorded bird calls in the forest to lure birds. When

birds hear the calls, they check out the interloper in their territory. If this is done often, it leads to adverse behavioural changes, as the birds get confused as to what is a real call and what is not. Rather like crying "wolf" too often.

Superstition creates demand

In some countries, owls are associated with misfortune and death, but in parts of India, a white owl is considered a companion and *vahana* (vehicle) of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and, therefore, a harbinger of prosperity. Hence, sellers convince the gullible that owls are lucky so, by worshipping them, they can get rich.

Owls are sold mainly during religious *melas* because that is where customers are easily found. Owls used for black magic are killed.

Indian astrologers perceive *amavasya*, the last day of every calendar month, to have negative connotations. These moonless nights are the darkest. Black magic and sacrifices are usually performed on *amavasya* to attract evil forces easily.

Sacrifices of nocturnal owls and bats, particularly on *amavasya* of Diwali, seem to be increasing because tantrics are recommending *pujas* using owl body-parts, and stating that owls with ear-tufts have greater magical powers.

Owls' blood and feathers are offered as *aahuti*/oblation in *Havan Samagri*. So-called cures are for overcoming financial difficulties, infertility, the absence of male children, illness, and the *nazar* or evil eye. Some even believe they can develop power over targeted individuals via owl sacrifices.

Owls are normally sold for ₹20,000 but cost up to ₹200,000 for sacrifices on the *amavasya* of Diwali. Tantrics claim the power to capture and transfer the soul of a murdered owl into a *taviz*, or talisman. Every conceivable part of the owl is precious for believers, and it is felt that possessing a *taviz* consisting of owls' eyes, or some particular organ of theirs, has magical or medicinal powers for the wearer, keeper or user.

Every Diwali, a threat looms over India's owls. As Jairam Ramesh, former Minister of Environment & Forests has put it, "Owls are as important to our ecosystem as the tigers or any other better-known charismatic species. It is important that the threat to owls is brought to light during the festival of Diwali, and concrete ground action is undertaken to curb such trade."



Geetha Jaikumar is the BWC city representative in Chennai, and an associate professor of commerce.

Fact, not fancy

Plastics

By Nirmal Nishchit

We need to know the ingredients used in the manufacture of plastics because almost everyone assumes, mistakenly, that plastics can never be of animal origin!

Thermosets and thermoplastics

Plastics are classified by their chemical structure and by the production processes used. As production is inexpensive, the range is fantastically wide, making their use common parts of everyone's lives. Basically, there are two types of plastics:

Thermosets or thermosetting plastics/polymers are items such as vulcanized rubber, bakelite, duroplast, polyimides, melamine and epoxy resins. They melt and harden just once, after which they remain solid and can never be melted down again for recycling. They are used for products such as electrical light fittings and handles for kitchen utensils. However, prior to "curing," thermoset materials are malleable and could be turned into other products like adhesives.

Thermoplastics require heat or chemicals to harden from a liquid state to the desired shape, but they can be re-

melted and re-moulded more than once because they do not undergo chemical changes in composition when heated. They are used to make consumer and industrial products, ranging from toothbrush bristles to car bumpers. Some examples are polyethylene, polystyrene, polyvinyl chloride and polytetrafluoroethylene.

Raw materials

Some plastics originate from petroleum/oil or natural gas. They may be synthetic or semi-synthetic organic solids. Natural plastic materials are from plant resins and shellac (lac insects). Chemically-modified natural materials are rubber and nitrocellulose (both from plants), collagen (connective tissues of animals) and galalite originating in milk. Completely synthetic molecules' examples are bakelite, epoxy, polyvinyl chloride, and polyethylene.

For years, scientists have been trying to develop plastics with different renewable materials, to replace petroleum. Many feel that keratin (derived from feathers, hair, hooves, horns and wool) can lend strength and durability to thermoplastics. Research using chicken feathers, said to be "inexpensive, abundant, and a waste product of the poultry industry", to make plastics has been undertaken. Plant proteins and modified starch, from corn and peas, are also being experimented with.

Additives and processes

There are scores of additives used for and during the manufacture of plastics. Some are of animal origin. Others are said to cause cancer.

Bone black pigment not only produces jet-black coloured plastic items, but is also used to tone plastics (and linoleum), as it does not drown other colours out. Its use avoids streaking, and results in a uniform colouring on finished products.

Slip agents, consisting of fatty acids derived from tallow, are added to polymer formulations as lubricants, thus preventing polymers from sticking to metal surfaces during extrusion or mould release.

Packaging films, or thin plastic sheets required to move on a machine's metal surface at high speed, also need slip agents, e.g. oleamide – mainly used in polyolefins like shrink wrap or film. Erucamide is a non-animal-origin slip agent.

On consulting the Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology, BWC re-confirmed the above information and got to know that clear plastics are very likely (but not absolutely certainly, because ingredients differ with manufacturers) to be without animal substances.

Apart from animal substances, there are other problems with plastics although they are considered one of the greatest

innovations, being lightweight, durable, re-usable, and having gone a long way in helping the world economy, used in just about everything and found everywhere.

Slow degradation

It has been widely publicised that plastics degrade very slowly and are consequently harmful to the environment, but no one has been able to say exactly how long they take to decompose because plastic has only been in existence for just over half a century! Like other items, they are bound to take hundreds of years to decompose. A glass bottle can take more than 4,000 years, and leather up to 5,500 years – an ancient leather shoe was found in an Armenian cave by archaeologists in 2010.

However, certain places have a tremendous amount of plastic rubbish to dispose of and dump it indiscriminately, giving rise to toxic waste problems. Some incinerate these plastics, resulting in poisonous gases being produced which, in turn, cause acid rain and pose health hazards.

Cling film used for keeping food fresh, thin plastic found in *mithai* boxes, milk pouches,

bags in which foodstuffs and other items are packed, plastic sachets, cello-tape, and stickers should be segregated and handed over to local garbage collectors separately for recycling or proper disposal.

No plastic should be simply thrown away, leave alone be used as “plates” to feed



Plastics are often mistaken for food by animals because they are soft, flexible, and retain the taste of their former contents. BWC has requested the Ministry of Environment & Forests to enforce rules against plastic litter in wildlife habitats. *Photo courtesy: Mahendra Parikh*

stray dogs, cats or cattle. Surgeries frequently need to be performed on animals to remove indigestible plastics from their intestines. Autopsies on cattle have revealed as much as 55 kgs. of plastics in their stomachs.

Zoo animals like deer have suffered and died due to eating plastics thrown into their enclosures by pranksters. Similarly, wild deer and monkeys have consumed plastic bags and small empty

gutka sachets, suffered and expired. Plastic in an animal's gut prevents food digestion and leads to a slow and painful death, but the cause only gets known after a post-mortem.

Deadly

Plastic bags can also be death-traps for fish and other creatures when they find their way into streams. Some forms of marine life have mistaken plastic for jellyfish, consumed it, and died.

A scientist has recorded evidence of 170 species suffering from the effects of discarded plastic items. We need to realise that, if we are not careful in our disposal of plastics, they may be inadvertently consumed by animals, including creatures that live in

bodies of water. Also, some birds accidentally strangle or suffocate themselves with plastic bags.

In view of the indispensability and ubiquity of plastics today, BWC feels that all we can, and should, do is: try to reduce their use wherever and whenever possible; to recycle; and, last but not least, be careful to make sure never to leave plastic litter anywhere – in urban, rural or forest areas, on land or in water.



Under Definitions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, under which Act this Notification has been issued, the word "animal" means any living creature other than a human being.

Therefore male, female, young, old, neutered, castrated, (whatever be the stage, or condition of the legally protected animal) of each of the enlisted species, the same is mandated to be covered and governed by this Notification dated 11 July 2011.

Furthermore, oxen, bullocks (castrated), cows, calves, male and female, etc., are all covered under the classification of "Bulls" in this Notification in absence of specific distinction. The central government has not discriminated against castrated or non-castrated Bulls because it intends to afford equal protection to all six types of enlisted species of the animal kingdom including a castrated Bull irrespective of the fact as to whether a surgical operation for castrating was performed, or the castration was carried out non-surgically.

Some circuses had castrated lions, which were also given up because of the initial Notification, and no one questioned it then on those grounds, nor was it brought up by the Indian Circus

Federation, who had challenged the initial Notification in a court of competent jurisdiction. For the record, it is said to be easier to tame castrated/neutered animals to perform.

Hence, in this context, castrated animals have been extended the same level of protection under the applicable benevolent law without meting out unequal treatment to the same biological species, member of the subfamily Bovinae, family, class, phylum, type, and genus.

Biologically Phylum of all Bulls remains the same because Phylum signifies the primary subdivision of a taxonomic kingdom, grouping together all classes of organisms that have the same inveterate, inherited, and congenital body plan.

The word used in the Hindi Notification for Bulls is *Saand*. The meaning of

Saand is given as male of cow. The Hindi version of the Notification also lists the male of the species.

On the same analogy as the Lions, this Notification covers castrated bulls/bullocks, etc., to afford the same legal protection to eradicate the peril of cruelty to animals.

The Notification herein is aligned to the object and purpose of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and according to the very object of the Act this Notification should even more be deemed to apply squarely to the castrated bulls as well.

There is no doubt that the Notification is specie specific. Therefore on the basis of this Notification, *Jallikattu*, *Dhirio*, bullock-cart racing, and all other forms of exhibition, training or performing of Bulls (as clarified above) are illegal every where in India.



Illegal bullock cart race at Chincholi Morachi, Maharashtra. Photo courtesy: www.chincholimorachi.com

Do you house dead animals?

Like the food we eat and the clothes we wear, the houses we live in reflect our values and lifestyles. They bear the stamp of our choices – and sometimes of our ignorance of the origins of products we display, or use.

No ethical person would decorate a home with ill-gotten wealth. The environmentally aware would not decorate their houses with much wood, especially wood obtained from virgin forests. The same philosophy applies to decorating one’s house with animal-derived materials, or living creatures like fish in tanks. Trophy wild animals adorning walls would be in shocking taste these days – and illegal, of course.

Not only do wild animals have their lives taken away to decorate the houses of the vain; common domestic animals, and others of the streets and fields, are the sources of most household items.

Perhaps the cruelest but, unfortunately, least-known method of obtaining a product from an animal is the plucking of hog bristles. The pig is held immobile, underfoot, by one person

Item	Possible animal content
Ash-trays	Shells
Bedsheets, pillow-cases, bedspreads, blankets	Silk, wool, fur
Brushes	Animal bristles/hair
Candles	Beeswax, scale insect wax, tallow, scent
Carpets	Wool, silk
Chandeliers	Shells
China vases, flower-pots	Bone, shells, shellac
Coasters	Bone, shells
Cocktail/party picks	Shells
Crockery, China, Bone China, Fine China	Bone
Curios, ornamental items, fancy items, key chains, paper weights, knick-knacks	Silk, shells, pearls, coral, beeswax, wool, leather, shellac, bone, horn, skulls, ivory, butterflies, insects, feathers, fur, animal tails/nails/hair/heads, etc.
Curtains	Silk, wool
Doilies	Bone beads, pearls, shells
Fans, brooms, anti-static dusters	Feathers, wool
Figurines, carvings, in-lay work, decorative door-handles and knobs	Ivory, bone, horns, skulls, shells, pearls, coral, shellac
Knife- and cutlery-handles	Bone, horn, shells
Lamps and lamp-shades	Bone, horn, shells, fur

Item	Possible animal content
Mirror- and picture-frames	Bone, shells, leather
Natural sponge	Living sea organisms
Paint on walls, doors, etc.	Animal fat, oil or various substances from shrimps, crabs, molluscs, sea snails, etc., <i>choona</i> , hog-hair painting brushes
Polished flooring	Beeswax, shellac, scale insect wax
Quilts, duvets, pillows, cushions and their covers	Eiderdown or down (feathers), silk, wool
Sealing wax (red and black)	Shellac, scale insect wax, beeswax, bone
Sofa sets and chairs	Leather, wool, silk
Suitcases, hand luggage, jewellery cases/boxes, laptop cases, mobile cases, wardrobes, etc.	Leather, silk, wool
Tapestry, upholstery, car seats and accessories	Wool, silk, leather
Trays	Bone, shells, shellac, scale insect wax
Trimmings	Silk, shells, wool, leather, feathers, fur
Trophies	Mounted wild animals' heads, stuffed creatures, skulls, antlers, horns, tusks, skins, pelts
Wall hangings	Wool, silk, leather, fur, pelts, feathers, butterflies, insects
Wind-chimes	Shells, leather
Wooden furniture and fixtures	Polishes containing shellac, scale insect wax, beeswax

while its hair is painfully yanked out by another, the fully conscious pig screaming in pain all the while. Hog-hair brushes are commonly used for painting walls, though nylon bristle brushes and rollers do the job just as well.

It is not uncommon for people to purchase items unthinkingly. Such items are picked up because they have utility, or simply because they look attractive.

Alongside is a list of objects found in houses, along with their possible animal contents, which may help keep homes free of cruelty to animals. Imitation (non-animal origin) products with similar names should not be confused with these items.

Caution

Sometimes an animal substance is only a part of the finished product. To cite three examples: a wooden statue of Buddha with bone for teeth; upholstery containing a mixture of cotton and silk; and a marble vase with an embossed shellac design.

The cost of an item should never be the criterion for judging whether it is of animal origin or not. Cheap stuff may well contain fur, silk, or leather. For example: Chinese-made cat-and-dog fur knick-knacks, and leather mobile cases.

Around the world

Mother bear exercises free will

The Chinese media have reported an extraordinarily tragic case of a mother bear making an existential choice to save her cub from a lifetime of torture by strangling it, and then killing herself.

The bears were kept in a farm located in remote northwest China. The bears on the farm had their gall bladders milked daily for “bear bile,” considered a remedy in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).



Miserable accommodation for the cash cows in a horrifying business. Photo courtesy: www.greenmuze.com

It was reported that the bears are kept in tiny cages known as “crush cages,” because they have no room to manoeuvre and are, literally, crushed.

Their bile is harvested by making permanent holes or fistulas in the bears' abdomens and gall bladders.

As these holes are never allowed to heal, the animals are subject to various infections and diseases

including tumours, cancers and death from peritonitis.

The bears are fitted with iron vests, as they often try to kill themselves by hitting their stomachs when unable to bear the pain.

A person who was on the farm described it as inhumane, and said that a mother bear broke out its cage when it heard its cub howl in fear before a worker punctured its stomach to extract bile.

The mother bear broke out of its “crush cage” and hugged its cub to death, to save it from a painful life of bile extraction.

The workers ran away in fear when they saw the mother rushing to its cub's side.

Unable to free the cub from its restraints, its mother hugged the cub, and eventually strangled it.

It then dropped the cub and ran head-first into a wall, killing itself.

Many TCM practitioners have denounced the use of bear bile in their treatments, as there are cheaper herbs and synthetics that can be used in its place.

Bear bile is traditionally used to remove “heat” from the body as well as to treat high fever, liver ailments, and sore eyes.

Canada's secret slaughter industry

Tucked away amid the pristine beauty of American Amish country in Shipshewana, Indiana, lies one of Canada's dirtiest secrets.

Near the end of a quaint rural main street, where clip-clopping horses pull carriages and children ride ornate carousel ponies, less fortunate equines are paraded before buyers who supply a burgeoning Canadian slaughter industry.

From the surrounding fields where these horses spent their lives, they will be shipped 1,300 kilometres north across the border to one of four Canadian slaughterhouses specializing in horse-meat production.

After long journeys in cramped transport trucks, they will be killed – shot with a .22 calibre rifle placed between their eyes – and slaughtered, their meat eventually landing on dinner tables in Canada, Europe and Asia.

It's a \$70 million Canadian industry that's flourishing despite growing concerns over the treatment of the animals and a debate over the potential health risk to humans posed by the drugs they are fed.

At one “kill” auction, more than 60 horses were crammed into pens without hay or water in temperatures topping 35 degrees Celsius.



What BWC means to me

By Bharat Kapadia

Bindu Parekh, a family friend, introduced me to BWC in 2002 by gifting me a life membership. Before that, I used to read *Compassionate Friend* at her place. I was attracted to BWC's activities. The idea of compassion towards all beings, including animals and other creatures, fascinated me. The contents and information in the quarterly were not only informative and thought-provoking; they also forced me to think of sharing them with others.

During my life I have received some favours from society, regardless of whether I deserved them or not. I often felt an urge to repay society. That is why I had been on a trust to help the destitute at Rajkot.

The same urge drove me to associate with BWC. Last year, I offered my services to translate English materials into Hindi for BWC. The

chairperson, Diana Ratnagar, welcomed the idea, and supported it wholeheartedly.

In March this year, I visited BWC, Pune, to meet the people with whom I was working. I was delighted to find the team friendly, focused on their ideology, and co-operative. During my stay, I found their workings transparent and user-friendly. It transpired that we could



restart BWC's Hindi Newsletter *Karuna-Mitra*. Consequently, *Karuna-Mitra* was reincarnated from August 2011.

Starting last March, Bindu and I undertook a campaign to promote BWC's cause and activities, and to augment its membership. We started making presentations before various groups including Rotary. That evoked such

a stunning response from audiences that we realised there was considerable scope for the expansion of BWC's network in Gujarat. That is because BWC's cause coincides with Gujarati people's lifestyle in general. Most Gujaratis are vegetarian animal-lovers with philanthropic tendencies.

Our approach is to convince people to become BWC members before contributing to it in other ways.

Our appeals are usually received with enthusiasm and, within a few months, we have garnered 200-plus new members from Ahmedabad, Nadiad, Vadodara, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Gandhinagar, Rajkot, Mumbai, Pune, Bilaspur, Durg, Indore, and even abroad. We hope to strengthen and spread the BWC network and philosophy further.

BWC has come to stay in my own life. It has widened my horizons by leading me to understand the pain suffered by animals, so I feel humane in a real sense.



Vegan recipe

For more recipes see www.bwcindia.org/Webforms/Recipes/VeganFood.html



Green pea and pistachio spread

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups green peas
- ½ cup shelled, unsalted pistachios
- 1 level teaspoon curry powder
- ¼ teaspoon chilli powder
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup water
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- Salt to taste

Preparation:

1. Purée all ingredients to a smooth paste in mixer.
2. Heat on low flame till cooked.

Serve on toast or use as a sandwich/wrap filler.

Readers write

A special dog

Some time in May, a petition form put out by BWC to ban Greyhound racing in India had been filled out and mailed back. This was duly acknowledged, thank you.

Since your editorial in the Monsoon edition, "Of human bondage," talks about bonding among various animal species and you are interested in greyhounds, I have no doubt that you will enjoy the true story below as much as I did! I read it at www.snopes.com. It involves a very special greyhound.

"In 2003, police in Warwickshire, England, opened a garden shed and found a whimpering, cowering dog. The dog had been locked in the shed and abandoned. It was dirty and malnourished, and had quite clearly been abused.

"In an act of kindness, the police took the dog, which was a female greyhound, to the Nuneaton Warwickshire Wildlife Sanctuary, which is run by a man named Geoff Grewcock, and known as a haven for animals abandoned, orphaned, or otherwise in need.

"Geoff and the other sanctuary staff went to work with two aims: to restore the dog to full health, and to win her

trust. It took several weeks, but eventually both goals were achieved. They named her Jasmine, and they started to think about finding her an adoptive home.

"Jasmine, however, had other ideas. No one quite remembers how it came about, but Jasmine started welcoming all animal arrivals at the sanctuary. It would not matter if it were a puppy, a fox cub, a rabbit, or any other lost or hurting animal. Jasmine would just peer into the box or cage and, when and where possible, deliver a welcoming lick.

one and sat down with them, cuddling them.'

"Jasmine, the timid, abused, deserted waif, became the animal sanctuary's resident surrogate mother, a role for which she might have been born. The list of orphaned and abandoned youngsters she has cared for comprises five fox cubs, four badger cubs, fifteen chicks, eight guinea pigs, two stray puppies, fifteen rabbits – and one roe deer fawn. Tiny Bramble, eleven weeks old, was found semi-conscious in a field. Upon arrival at the sanctuary, Jasmine cuddled up to her to keep her warm, and then went into the full foster-mum role. Jasmine the greyhound showers Bramble the roe deer with affection. 'They are inseparable,' says Geoff. 'Bramble walks between her legs, and they keep kissing each other. They

walk together round the sanctuary. It's a real treat to see them.'

"Jasmine will continue to care for Bramble until she is old enough to be returned to woodland life. When that happens, Jasmine will not be lonely. She will be too busy showering love and affection on the next orphan, or victim of abuse."

Marcia Sinclair
Mumbai



Pictured from the left are: "Toby", a stray Lakeland dog; "Bramble", an orphaned roe deer; "Buster", a stray Jack Russell; a dumped rabbit; "Sky", an injured barn owl; and "Jasmine", with a mother's heart doing best what a caring mother would do...and such is the order of God's Creation. Photo courtesy: www.snopes.com

"Geoff relates one of the early incidents. 'We had two puppies that had been abandoned by a nearby railway line. One was a Lakeland Terrier cross and another was a Jack Russell Doberman cross. They were tiny when they arrived at the centre, and Jasmine approached them and grabbed one by the scruff of the neck in her mouth and put him on the settee. Then she fetched the other

Correction

The article on snakes, in the Monsoon issue, stated that the Madras Crocodile Farm was the only institute authorised to extract snake venom. Haffkine Institute of Pune/Mumbai and Kolkata Snake Park also appear to have licences for doing the same. I have examined the Kolkata facility, and there may be others as well.

Shubhobroto Ghosh
New Delhi

Nylon shuttlecocks



I am an animal rights activist as well as a badminton player who avoids tournaments where feathered shuttlecocks are used. Few tournaments are conducted with nylon shuttlecocks; most are conducted using feathered shuttlecocks. F5 Ventures, an event organizing company, conducts corporate tournaments in which I have participated. They use nylon shuttlecocks for badminton, and non-leather balls for cricket. Nylon shuttlecocks perform exactly the same way feathered shuttlecocks do. Moreover, nylon shuttlecocks are more durable. Yonex is the shuttlecock manufacturing company, producing three

grades of environmentally-friendly shuttlecocks which match the performance of feathered shuttlecocks.

Praveen Raj, Ponraj
Chennai

Plastic envelopes

I was both pained and amused when I received the Monsoon issue. Why the change from a paper envelope to a plastic one? Even if paper means cutting trees down it's still a renewable source, whereas plastic does more lasting damage to the environment. Ironically, you had an article inside urging us to reduce plastic use! Why the anomaly?

Vasanthi Rajiv
Chennai

The recycled plastic envelope was free of animal substances and saved money on postage for more optimal use. More greenhouse and toxic gases are emitted during paper manufacture than in the production of packaging plastics and, from the environmental viewpoint, recycled plastics are preferable to paper. In our last issue, an item under "BWC news & views" suggested readers not throw plastic garbage away unthinkingly, where it may be consumed by animals. We didn't urge anyone to reduce plastic use, but to be careful how and where plastics are disposed of. Consequently, we don't see any inconsistency in our use of recycled plastic envelopes. — Ed.

FYI

Is it leather or not?

A reliable way to check if materials are leather or not is, to smell them.

If still in doubt, try to inspect its under-surface by, if possible, prying it open slightly. If it is leather, it will be very smooth. If it is not leather, it will have a uniform thread or a texture like woven material.

If possible, burn a corner: leather will burn without a flame and give off an odour of burning flesh, whereas synthetic leathers will catch fire quickly because they are polymer-based.

Another way to check is by applying a bit of saliva to the material; animal leather absorbs moisture – on faux leather it will not disappear, but remain on the surface till it dries.

Synthetic leathers have an unbroken, uniform pattern over their entire surface, whereas animal leather may be patchy, and looks similar to human skin.

If the material is stiff, bubbles are visible, or looks like it may crack, it is Pleather (plastic on leather) or Bicast leather which consists of a thick layer of plastic or polyurethane applied to bonded/reconstituted leather.

BWC news & views

Cattle smuggling

Beauty Without Cruelty congratulated the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the Border Security Force for their vigilance in seizing thousands of cattle, daily, on the India-Bangladesh border. Yet the smuggling of cattle, said to be closely linked to other illegal trades with cattle being used as currency, was not decreasing because tanneries and abattoirs were mushrooming along the Bangladeshi border.

BWC received reports of cattle being pushed into the fast-flowing river near Shantiniketan, with the objective of having them land up, illegally, across the border in Bangladesh downstream.

BWC feels cattle smuggling could be solved if inter-state cattle movement is not allowed. Animals from other states that land up in Assam and West Bengal are often smuggled out. We have requested the Chief Ministers of both states to stop the entry of cattle and step up security along the Bangladesh border.

Meanwhile, in August 2011, a comprehensive border management agreement was signed by India and Bangladesh. After having settled vexing boundary issues, it is hoped that border incidents may be greatly reduced.

Spread the word...

Firecrackers and animal rights

Exploding firecrackers cause noise, air, water and land pollution, are fire hazards, and injurious to those who manufacture, sell, and use them. Air pollution due to the explosions causes eye, throat and nose problems, results in headaches, respiratory and lung problems — it can even restrict breathing — throat and chest congestion, colds, coughs, allergies, asthma, bronchitis, laryngitis, sinusitis and pneumonia.

Noise pollution causes restlessness, anger, fidgeting, impulsive behaviour — hyperactive or withdrawn — high blood pressure, heart attacks, sleep disturbances and fear; and can result in hearing loss.

Mother earth — land and water — is polluted during the manufacture and "use" of firecrackers.

Animals, birds, infants, and the sick or aged get particularly distressed. Humans understand the source of the loud sounds but animals and birds don't, so they suffer more.

Last but not least, stearic acid (which can be of animal origin) is a firecracker ingredient. It is used to coat metal powders such as aluminium and iron in

order to prevent oxidation, thus allowing for longer storage. Yet another reason not to explode crackers!

For more information see www.bwcindia.org/Webforms/LearnAbout/BurstingCrackers.html

No more elephant polo

In August 2011, BWC brought elephant polo to an end in India. By pointing out the fact that a proposed elephant polo match at Jaipur was illegal, we were successful in getting the Carlsberg Elephant Strong Polo Cup withdrawn. This was followed by convincing the state government not to allow the illegal event to take place.

BWC lauds the efforts of all the animal activists who have worked hard, for years, to bring an end to elephant polo which offers snob value as entertainment for the influential and not-so-famous in India.



(See *Compassionate Friend*, Monsoon 2010 article, "Elephant polo: conservation activity or animal abuse?")

Live bait



In June 2011, Karnataka forest personnel trapped a leopard by using a live dog. BWC fails to understand why live bait was used. Once again, we asked the Ministry of Environment & Forests to send a circular to all Chief Wildlife Wardens informing them that using live animals to trap wildlife is inhumane and should never be practiced, since it attracts the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

It's now or never for greyhounds

Thank you, readers, for signing the petition to stop greyhound racing. As reported earlier, BWC-India invited Care of Animals & Protection of Environment-India to join the campaign in April 2011. Our petition was handed over to the Chief Minister of Punjab, on 19 July 2011, by the Chief Co-ordinator of CAPE-India.

Despite the overwhelming support of 4,269,772 persons, we were disappointed to learn that

the Punjab government planned to set up a dog-racing track on the outskirts of Ludhiana.

Simply stopping this track from materialising is not all we desire. Although the Punjab Wildlife Department wrote to BWC that they had issued a directive to prevent live hares being used during greyhounds' training or racing, we do not want greyhound/dog racing to be legalised. BWC-India and CAPE-India, therefore, doubled their efforts. Appeals in writing and in person, pointing out the animal cruelty and harm to society in legalising gambling, have been made to many more politicians and bureaucrats.

Gambling on greyhounds is illegal in the majority of US states as well as the US territory of Guam. Countries such as Jamaica and, recently, South Africa have refused to introduce it. It is hoped that India will follow suit.

GREY2K USA, the world's leading organisation for greyhounds, was the first to back our efforts, to help us spread the word, and to garner support. Also, Action for Greyhounds, UK, supported our campaign from the beginning. In August 2011 GREY2K USA, also launched a petition, at www.grey2kusa.org/eNEWS/G2K-081011.html, which generates appeals to the Prime Minister of India to prevent commercial dog racing.

Recently FIAPO-India jumped into the fray, issuing a joint press release in which the Dogs Trust, UK, also condemned greyhound racing. We continue to receive support from various organisations, namely Greyhound Crusaders/South West Animal Protection Team, UK, and BWC-South Africa.

It is hoped that the Animal Welfare Board of India realises the consequences for animals, and for themselves, if greyhound racing is legalised because enormous animal welfare needs will arise, particularly for organisations that work for the welfare of dogs.

The Greyhound Club of Punjab has a Facebook page which we have reproduced verbatim overleaf, highlighting some especially informative parts. This Facebook page boasts that dogs are being used to circumvent the law against hunting. Legalised greyhound racing will, no doubt, help in this subterfuge.

As soon as BWC-India came across the page, the Union Ministry of Environment & Forests' Secretary, Deputy Inspector General of Forests and the Additional Director, Wildlife Crime Bureau, were requested to take immediate action. It was also given by CAPE-India to the Punjab Wildlife Department. NGOs working for wildlife like WWF-India and Wildlife Trust of India have also been alerted.

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Greyhound Club of Punjab's notes

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They claim greyhound racing is legal, but it is not. — Ed.

www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=150292335027087

Modern Greyhound Racing and Hunting in Punjab - Overview

by Greyhound Club of Punjab on Monday, February 7, 2011 at 6:56am

The winter wheat across rural Punjab is a blur of green, the tender shoots rising fast to meet the mild sunshine. Not high enough yet to hide a dog, or even a hare. A fine time, many would say, for racing dogs. And an even better time to hunt with them. What about the ban? Well, for the avid shikari, the ban on hunting has only inspired ways to get around it. Enter the dogs—greyhounds, if you please.

But racing first, because, after all, it is legal. This winter, Punjab's rural calendar is chock-a-block with greyhound racing events, a race taking place every few days in one village or the other. It's a sport that has gained currency over the last 15 years or so. After all, with the rifles of the shikaris silenced by the ban, their retrieving dogs, reared with so much passion, had to be kept busy. About 500 greyhound races take place in Punjab every winter, and the craze is growing with every season. So is the prize money for the winner, which ranges from Rs 11,000 to Rs 1 lakh. Each race is like a carnival, with the villagers chipping in not just for the prize money, but also for pakodas, chai and hearty Punjabi meals. But for some of the female contestants on the track, it would be an all-male carnival.

Paramjit Singh Hundal is the quintessential Punjabi nri. Nothing can keep this owner of a flourishing textile business in Germany away from his native village, Kotli Raiyyan in Hoshiarpur district, during the winter months. Apart from good food and convivial company, the big draw for Hundal is the annual greyhound race he organises here in memory of his father. "In 1947, when we fled Pakistan and came to India, we left behind all possessions except our dogs. My father was so attached to them that he couldn't bear to part with them. So when he died, I decided to organise this competition as a tribute to his passion," he says, in between a couple of races at Kotli. As the event ends, he goes into celebration mode—his prize greyhound, Atom, a powerful creature with rippling muscles, imported from Germany for 2,000 euros, is the winner!

For other punters, it's hard business rather than sentiment that is the pulling force. Deepinder Singh Rikhi, originally from Jalandhar, is a truck driver in the US. "Each year, I bring four or five prize greyhounds from the US and sell them here," he says. A greyhound with a good bloodline sells for Rs 3 lakh to 4 lakh, and once a

dog has won a race, its pups are in great demand. For Deepinder and many nris like him, importing hounds helps pay for the winter holiday in Punjab. Since these 'businessmen' are also keen participants in the races, there is invariably a big nri presence at these affairs. Sukhbir Singh, an avid dog racer, says, "Each year, some 50 dogs are imported to Punjab from countries like the UK, US, Canada and Germany." Their owners pamper them like children, feeding them a high-protein diet that typically consists of half a kilo of meat, 200 gms of high quality animal feed, half a kilo of curds and four eggs daily.

But what do the dogs do the rest of the year, once the racing season is over? Simple, they train to run faster and faster. And here lies the story that dog racers don't like to talk about.

"The dogs are almost always trained on live hare in the countryside," says Sukhdeep Singh Bajwa, a farmer who formerly served as a honorary wildlife warden in Gurdaspur. "Each training session usually ends with the unfortunate hare being divided up between the dogs and the trainers."

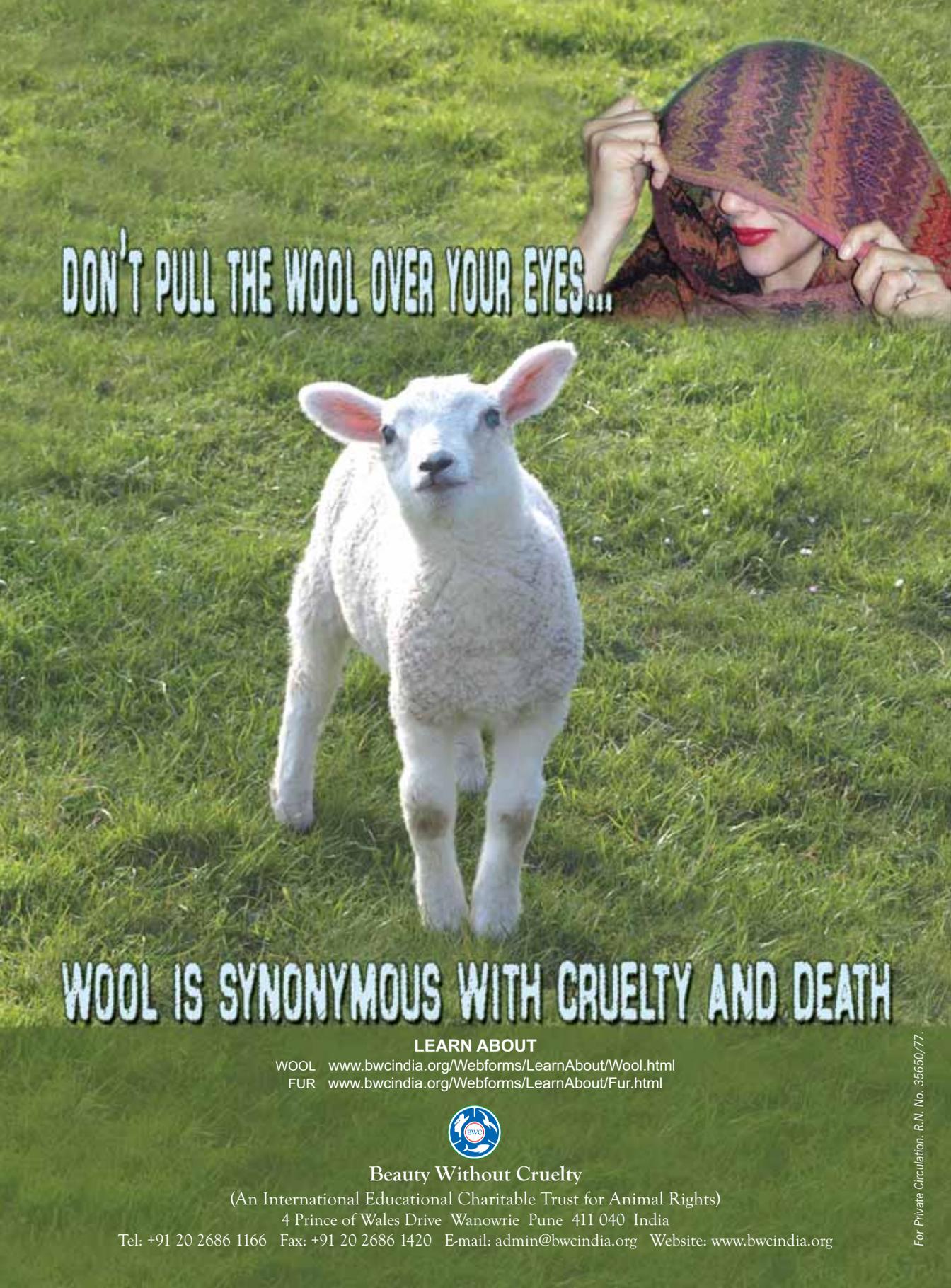
At the races, a decoy hare attached to the end of a wire is used to get the dogs running on the 100-metre track. The decoy gets the hounds gnashing their teeth and straining at their leashes. As the hounds chase it, a winch winds up the wire, drawing the decoy swiftly to the finishing line, and with it, the contestants. Often there is high drama, with the pair on the track (only two dogs run at a time) getting at each other's throats—so frustrated are they at not having caught the 'hare'. Last year, one of Hundal's dogs died during training when it over-exerted itself while chasing a particularly swift hare.

Killing wild hare, as indeed almost every wild animal, is illegal. But it's rampant across Punjab, says Bajwa. "It is very common to see groups of village boys and their dogs chasing hare in the countryside in the afternoon," he says. The training is usually done after the kharif harvest of paddy, when the fields are fallow, or in open scrub country.

It's not just well-off farmers who rear greyhounds. Even middling farmers with 15 to 20 acres like the cachet that having a greyhound or two tied in their courtyards brings. These are often not the expensive imported variety but humbler strains, which the farmers like to use for both racing and hunting.

"Gunshots attract attention, so people are increasingly using dogs to hunt for them," says Bajwa. The dogs chase, attack and kill the animal quietly and unobtrusively in the forest. From retriever to hunter, the shikari's best friend has taken on the role his master has defined. And every winter he—or she—runs as well, to the sound of cheers, claps and shouts of encouragement.





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