

REVOLT OF THE BATS



M. LARIONOV (1913)

North America, Turtle Island, taken
by invaders who wage war
on the world,
May ants, may abalone, otters,
wolves, and elk rise!
and pull away their giving
from the robot nations.
~GARY SNYDER

The animals are fighting back. By tooth and claw, by wing and paw, they are waging a war against human tyranny and destruction. Sympathetic humans are burning down farm and fur ranch equipment, demolishing butcher shops, and trying to stop rodeos, circuses, and other forms of "entertainment," but the animals are also acting as their own defenders, fighting for their own liberation.

These actions of revolt are done by individual animals, as well as by whole communities, and take many forms. Escape from captivity is a common tactic employed.

Here I would like to remember and salute the orangutan who escaped from his prison cell at the Kansas City Zoo in June 1990, by unscrewing four large bolts. The West African Cape clawless otter who, in December 1991, pushed her way through the wired cage at the Portland, Oregon zoological incarceration facilities. The alligator who climbed a high ramp at a Seattle science exhibition in October 1991 and vanished for several hours. The elephant at the Louisville zoo who escaped in June 1994. The sea otter "Cody" (captor-given name) who in September 1993, armed with a fiberglass bolt pried from the floor of the Oregon Coast Aquarium took aim at a window and shattered one of the glass layers. The chimpanzees "Ai" and "Akira" at the Kyoto University Primates Research Institute, who used keys taken from a guard to open their cages, cross the hall to free their friend, the orangutan "Doodoo," and bolt to freedom.

In April 1990, a cow destined for a Turkish slaughterhouse, leapt from the truck onto the roof of a car carrying a provincial governor, completely crushing it and injuring the official. The fate of the cow was not reported but one hopes she was able to make her way into the hills. A decade earlier, near the town of Salem, Ore., "Rufus" the bull knocked down the door of a truck carrying him to be butchered and roamed freely for a few days until captured by bounty hunters and returned to his "owner." And in Cairo, in June 1993, during the Muslim Ed-Al-Adha ("feast of sacrifice") a bull escaped upon catching a glimpse of the butcher's knife. The animal chased its would be slaughterer up to his third floor apartment, wrecking furniture and forcing him to hide in the bedroom.

Some of the animals were recaptured and returned to their prisons, but the otter, who was last seen crossing the roadway between the Portland Zoo and the Museum of Science and Industry, making her way into the nearby forests, is a true inspiration and hopefully a harbinger of many more daring dashes.

Sometimes free animals are in a strategic position to resist greed and profit. In 1991, a bald eagle blocked plans for a \$3 million road expansion project in central Oregon by nesting near Highway 20. An eagle standing in the way of motorized mania is a beautiful sight to behold.

There are animals who carry the battle a step farther, like the wren nesting in a Washington, D.C. traffic light who swooped down to attack business people. Other birds commit suicide by entering military plane engines and decommissioning them. In a show of solidarity with a fellow animal, the mule "Ruthie" kicked her rider, Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus, as he loaded a murdered elk onto her during a hunting trip. Andrus suffered a broken nose and deep lacerations.

A Belgian spaniel who discharged a shotgun, killing hunter Jean Gillaume, the elephant who gored hunter Alan Lowe in Zimbabwe, and the cow who killed a Quebec farmer, Origene Ste-beanne, when he tried to steal her newborn calf, are also worthy of our respect. I prefer persuasion and education to the taking of life, but there is poetic justice in these accounts.

When animals band together they are able to unleash a mighty power. Several years ago in the depths of the suburban wasteland of Springfield, Massachusetts, ring-billed gulls bombarded a new golf course and its patrons with golf balls. The shocked golfers were forced to withdraw from their favorite

BY ALON K. RAAB

water and land wasting activity for several weeks and consider the fact that for many years these lands were nesting grounds for the birds.

In the summer of 1989 the busy downtown area of Fort Worth, Texas, came to a halt when thousands of Mexican free-tail bats descended on the city. In the early years of this century, bats wrecked much havoc on many Texas towns. In Austin, bats invaded the courthouse, flying through court sessions, stopping trials and nesting in the dark and cool building as well as in the old limestone Capitol building.

The bats that appeared in Fort Worth disrupted telephone lines and interrupted business as usual. The bats were a reminder to the local population, encased in glass and steel tombstones known as "offices," that this world is much more complex and wondrous than anything taught in management courses. After a day the bats vanished as they had come, into the unknown.

In the ancient myths of humanity a special place of respect is given to animals. The animals affected people in mysterious ways. Embodying particular qualities they acted as messengers, as bearers of souls and gifts and as symbols of all that was wonderful and magical. Birds, fish and animals (and their many combinations with humans) were presented in myriad ways. A common theme was their ability to fend off hostile human attacks through trickery, playfulness and wisdom. Coyote and Raven of the northwest coast of Turtle Island, the Keen Keeng of Australian dream time and the sacred Bee of Rhodes are but some of the many magical beings who protected themselves and the lives of other animals and plants.

Once writing developed, accounts of animals opposing human arrogance and avarice abound in the literature of natural history. We need only look at the inspiring reports provided by the Roman, Pliny the Elder. He marvels at elephants who trampled hunters, refusing to fight their kin in circuses and attempting to break loose from their shackles. Pliny also wrote of dolphins who rushed to rescue other dolphins from captivity, and of wild horses, loons, oxen, dogfish, rabbits and giant centipedes who resisted and often won. His accounts include many instances of alliances between animals and aware humans, each assisting the other and gaining mutual love and respect.

The medieval work, *On the Criminal Persecution of Animals*, provides in great detail the legacies of pigs, cows, sparrows, ravens, sheep, horses, and even worms, who brought destruction upon the human world. Animals disturbing church services, interrupting religious processions at their most solemn moment and spoiling food supplies were common occurrences. As ancient traditions celebrating the sanctity of nature were rooted out and replaced by an anti-life world view, these animals were accused of being in league with demonic forces. Christian courts held them responsible for their actions. The "criminals" were tried in regular courts of law, convicted and punished severely. In their pious zeal the accusers missed the fact that the two-legged and four-legged beings (as well as winged and finned beings) were engaged in guerilla warfare. The animals, birds and fish were revolting against humans who were attacking the rivers, valleys and forests. They were opposing the invaders who were engaged in that process of control, euphemistically called "domestication," which in reality is enslavement and ecocide.

We are now living in the age of rationality and science in which well-meaning people feel no shame blurting out clichés like *"Finding the balance between the environment and economic interests,"* or *"managing wildlife"* as if wilderness was a commodity to profit from, control and manipulate.

The destruction of the wild (out there, and in our own souls) proceeds at an ever-maddening pace. Let us hope that acts of self-defense and resistance by animals, fish, birds and their human brothers and sisters will increase. Let these actions multiply and intensify until human tyranny is thrown off and replaced by a community of free living beings, assisting each other in this magical journey and re forging the ancient bonds of beauty and camaraderie.

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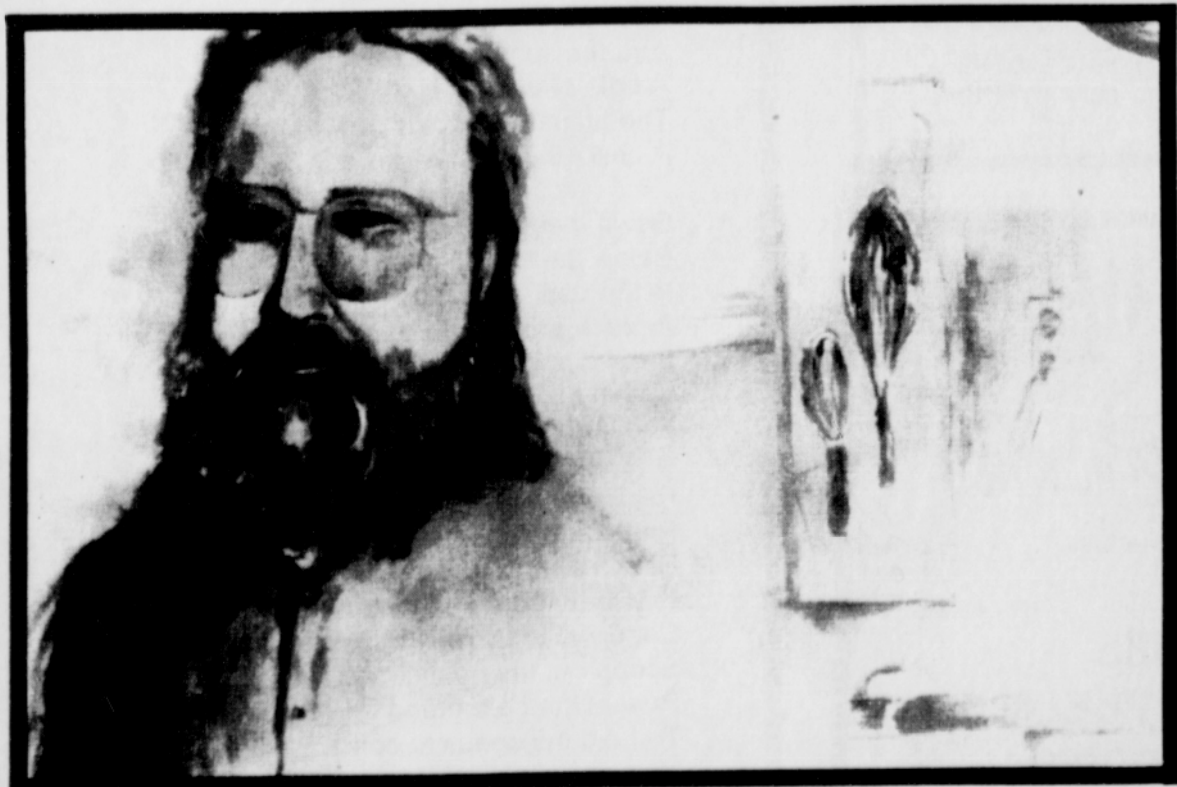
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